Building a Learning Organization: Investing in the Infrastructure

Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service Professor, Professional Development Program

Organizations that promote learning as they confront intense competition, advances in technology, and increased knowledge change have been inspired by Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization* (1990). His vision to fashion an organization made up of employees who are skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge was founded on research indicating that such organizations are both nimbler at adapting to the unpredictable, and better able to quickly adjust to change. From this thinking emerged the goal for organizations to create and sustain themselves as learning organizations— able to acquire knowledge, and adjust and innovate rapidly to changing business conditions.

Learning organizations encourage and support continuous employee learning and critical thinking, and value employee contributions and risktaking; this results in an invigorating and exciting workplace, in which employees are engaged, productive, and experience success. Findings from the Towers Watson *2012 Global Workforce Study* further support the belief that organizations that engage employees exhibit greater overall success.

However, putting Peter Senge's concept of the learning organization into practice and sustaining it over time has proven to be challenging. David A. Garvin of the Harvard Business School in his article, "Is Yours a Learning Organization?" (Harvard Business Review, 2008), identified three essential "building blocks" needed to create a learning organization. Each is reported to rest on a series of "sub-blocks" that support the learning organization foundation in this way:

1. Building block one: environment— the learning organization fosters openness to new ideas, appreciation of differences, and time for reflection;

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Professional Development Keys to Success

Julie Patrick, Facilitator
American Society for Training & Development

Julie Patrick

There is a story frequently told in the world of professional development about employers who hesitate to provide training to their employees. When discussing the potential for staff development opportunities, an employer says,

"What if I train my employees and they leave?"

and the training professional responds,

"What if you don't train your employees and they stay?"

As staff development is the main focus of PDP's work throughout New York State and beyond, PDP is a leader in promoting the importance of developing employees in order for organizations to be successful.

One of the keys to success is making sure that employee development opportunities support the goals of the organization. Trainers and training developers must work closely with employers to make sure that training programs align with desired organizational results. Those results may include such measures as increased client satisfaction or decreased incident reports.

Another key to success is communicating to employees why they are participating in training. Connecting the training to work that needs to be done is an effective way to show employees what is in it for them. Employees want to know how their investment of time and effort in a development opportunity will help them and the organization. Illustrating the connection between what they are learning and how it applies to their jobs is essential. Employees want to contribute to the success of the organization, and the more information they have about the desired results, the greater the chance for success.

PDP "walked the walk" earlier this year when they offered the Training Certificate Program from the American Society for Training & Development (http://www.astd.org/Education/Certificate-Programs/Training-Certificate) to a group of their instructors and instructional designers. This program supports the goal of improving organizational performance for the public workforce; it gives training professionals tools and techniques to analyze the needs of the workforce, design and develop training to support organizational performance, implement development opportunities, and evaluate the success of the training. The content, exercises, and discussions facilitate the connection between the training and application on the job.

Aligning development opportunities with organizational goals and helping employees make the connection between the development opportunity and the work that they do is imperative to the success of any staff development opportunity. PDP not only supports that success for others, but embraces it for PDP staff, as well. *PDP*

News and Views

PDP Wins a Third United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) Award

For the third time, PDP has bested the competition in the Best Practice in Distance Learning Programming category sponsored by the United States Distance Learning Association. *Passport to Partner Services,* an e-learning course consisting of 15 modules, is this year's winner of the gold award in the category. PDP developed the course and a customized learning management system for the New York State STD Prevention Training Center, which is funded by the Centers for Disease Control.

PDP won a bronze award in 2010 for its tobacco recovery e-learning project and a gold award in 2011 for *Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome,* one of the online courses for our Early Childhood Education and Training e-Learning Catalog. **PDP**

Lisa Futtner Receives 2012 Executive Director's Award

Lisa Futtner was presented with the 2012 Executive Director's Award for her work in the areas of domestic violence and family engagement. Lisa first joined PDP as an Education Specialist in 1989 working on the SCR Hotline Conversion Training. In 1993, she accepted a position as Project Staff Associate and moved to the Local District Permanency Planning project. Since that time, she's been involved in the design and development of many child welfare trainings, including the recent domestic violence training.

Over the past year, Lisa has played a major role to advance the OCFS Domestic Violence agenda by integrating it with family engagement practice. Recognizing Lisa's strong interpersonal and organizational skills as well as her working knowledge of domestic violence practice, she was asked to head a workgroup charged with developing curricula on this topic which included practice guidance on moving the engagement agenda forward with families affected by domestic violence.

Lisa was driven to get the job done right. She worked with OCFS and staff at the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services to engage a national expert to consult on the development of practice guidance. Lisa facilitated the ongoing collaboration between all parties. She drafted the guidance documents, and supervised the development of two training DVDs, and a statewide teleconference produced by PDP to introduce caseworkers and domestic

Deborah McGuire accepts the USDLA Award

violence advocates across the state to practice guidance. She brokered the resources for and organized four Domestic Violence Practice Forums for OCFS, bringing the expertise of national consultants on safe domestic violence practice to those administrators, caseworkers and domestic violence providers across the state to help them implement family engagement. Lisa also facilitated the development of a draft Child Protective Services Domestic Violence training, the first to be co-trained by staff from the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) and a child protective services trainer.

In recognition of Lisa's excellent work in developing resources addressing family engagement in cases with domestic violence concerns and for her many outstanding contributions to other projects and products in her 23 years at PDP including her participation in the team that established outcome-based Core training for New York State's Child Welfare workers she was presented with this year's Executive Director's award. **PDP**

Lisa Futtner accepts the PDP Executive Director's Award

Meeting with Kenya Delegation

On June 25, 2013, PDP met with representatives from the Kenya Parliamentary Strengthening Program (PSP). Kenya's new Constitution, which establishes 47 new county governments at the sub-national level, was adopted in 2010. Since then, the State University of New York's Center for International Development (SUNY/CID) has provided assistance to Kenya in implementing its transition to devolved governance. SUNY/CID hosted the delegation and arranged the visit to PDP. Two other groups visited in 2012.

PDP staff made presentations and engaged the Kenyan delegation in a conversation on needs assessment and curriculum development, training evaluation, and e-learning development and deployment. The lively discussion highlighted similarities faced by both organizations in providing training to a widespread public workforce.

During their week-long study visit, the delegation also met with the University at Albany's Center for Technology in Government, the New York State Economic Development Council, the Small Business Development Center, the New York State Department of Health, and the New York State Office of the State Comptroller. **PDP**

Ed Murphy Receives PDP's Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Award of Excellence

Ed Murphy, the Executive Director of the Workforce Management Institute was presented with the Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Award of Excellence at the May 21, 2013 Rockefeller College Alumni Dinner and Awards Ceremony.

Murphy's professional career began in the late 1960s as an intelligence agent for the US Army in Vietnam. He returned to America as a Vietnam expert and veterans' activist and continues in this role today as the president of Pathfinders Institute, which deals with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders in support of veterans.

Murphy's public service career began in the early 1970's as a program evaluator for NYC's Human Resource Administration. He then continued his public service work in San Diego, California for a not-for-profit agency, Ocean Beach Community Services providing social services to the beach area population of San Diego. He moved back to NYS and the Capital Region in the late 70's, first working for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and then moving on to become Deputy Director of the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs where he did research, training and much advocacy work. His leadership skills did not go unnoticed. He was soon serving as the Director of Workforce Management Services for the NYS Department of Civil Service and in 1989 developed NYS's first workforce plan. He subsequently moved on to the NYS Department of Economic Development and worked on implementation of Neighborhood-Based Initiatives, Conservation Corps, and other youth programs.

Ed Murphy

In 1999, Murphy came to work with the NYS AFL-CIO, establishing the Workforce Development Institute where today he serves as Executive Director. The WDI is now an independent, non-profit, statewide organization dedicated to gathering workforce intelligence, and developing education and training of unionized workers. WDI also provides economic development, advisement, policy analysis, and cultural services for working families.

Additionally, Murphy was one of the founders of the NYS Apollo Alliance, bringing together organized labor, business, environmental organizations, educators and proponents of environmental justice to address energy concerns. Most recently, Murphy was selected to participate in the Clinton Global Initiative, focusing on workforce issues and jobs.

Murphy has used his BA in American Studies, two years' graduate work in the history of social change and revolution, and a master's in public administration from UAlbany's Rockefeller College as a foundation to support his work as a public sector and non-profit executive, consultant to government, leader in organizational development, acclaimed writer, outstanding photographer, as well as adjunct professor for the New School for Social Research. Murphy has established a well-deserved reputation for his endless commitment to excellence in education, training and public service; he has definitely made a difference in people's lives.

For all he has accomplished in his career and for the many individuals he has supported along the way, he is a most worthy recipient of PDP's Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Award of Excellence for 2013. **PDP**

Ensuring that Staff Development Translates into Better Job Performance

Dr. Ruth Clark

Dr. Ruth Clark, a recognized specialist in instructional design and technical training, has authored seven books and numerous articles on training and instructional design. She offers the following advice on five key factors that will optimize the impact of staff development on improving operational outcomes.

Dr. Ruth Clark

1 Plan staff development as just one piece of the performance mosaic

Effective job performance relies on a variety of factors, including clear work standards; frequent, specific feedback; effective work processes that align different segments of the organization; incentives aligned to standards; effective work tools; and on-the-job performance support. Without alignment with other performance enablers, more often than not staff development will not pay off. Learners must return to a workplace where the work standards, feedback, and resources support the new knowledge and skills they acquired.

2 Base staff development on knowledge and skills aligned to organizational goals

To ensure transfer to the workplace, training must be constructed on a foundation of a systematic job analysis. The job and task analysis documents the steps, concepts, and facts that top performers apply on the job and writes specific learning objectives that reflect them. Without the linking structure of a job and task analysis, the job payoff of any training program will be hit and miss.

3 Demand accountability

Accountability for staff development resides in four main levels in the organization. First, senior leadership is accountable to define organizational goals and ensure that performance factors, such as job-specific goals, helpful feedback, and organizational alignment, support those goals. Second, supervisors are accountable to assign staff to appropriate training and to follow up to reinforce their new skills when they return to the job. Third, the training organization is responsible for providing a staff development program that states specific performance objectives based on best practices on the job and allows time for practice and feedback on those objectives. Finally, the learner must be held accountable to invest the time and effort needed to achieve learning outcomes.

4 Use evidence-based training methods

From learning styles to games, the training profession is riddled with fads that have no evidence of effectiveness. Evidence-based training involves using instructional methods that have been shown in controlled research studies to improve learning. For example, while there is no evidence for the validity of learning styles, we have considerable research regarding how and when to provide practice opportunities, feedback, appropriate visuals, and examples.

5 Ensure a learner-centered environment

We often associate staff development with hours of lectures. Instead, staff development programs should devote at least 50 percent of instructional time to job-relevant practice in the form of role-plays, case studies, and projects.

Finally, do less staff development— but do it better

In the end, effective staff development is just one piece of a larger performance picture. More is often accomplished by developing fewer individual programs while, at the same time, ensuring that those programs incorporate the five factors described above. *PDP*

For more information visit www.clarktraining.com.

2. Building block two: a network of learning processes and practices— the learning organization values and supports information collection, education and training, and information transfer;

3. Building block three: leadership— the learning organization reinforces learning as managers listen attentively and encourage multiple points of views that reflect and improve performance.

Establishing and synchronizing these three is essential to sustaining the learning organization.

Over its 38 years of operation, PDP has strived to incorporate these elements into its efforts to produce a culture that promotes and sustains the principles of the learning organization. PDP continues to support a number of learning initiatives, such as: funding the Extended Learning Scholarship Program, which provides financial aid for employees in pursuit of academic degrees; offering trainer certification programs; providing computer skills training; and offering leadership and personal growth opportunities. PDP has consistently embraced openness; our environment is one in which learning is encouraged and individual differences are respected. We are committed to reinforcing knowledge transfer and the education and training of all staff to enhance their technical competencies.

In benchmarking our level of commitment and investment in staff, we have used national data as a measuring stick. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) *State of the Industry Report* has served as a guide in gauging our cumulative progress. For example, the 2012 ASTD report indicates that the benchmarked organizations, which include fortune 500 companies, supported on average 30.5 learning hours per employee. Over the past 5 years, PDP has, on average, supported 25 learning hours per employee. The average costs expended in 2012 in the benchmarked organizations of the ASTD report was $1182 per employee; by comparison, PDP has averaged $900 per employee over the past 5 years. The

Eugene J. Monaco

MARK SCHMIDT

Staff Development for PDP

PDP's commitment to continuing professional development and helping create a more effective, efficient workforce is not limited to the sponsor agencies it serves, but rather extends inward to its own staff as well. This dedication to internal staff development is illustrated through regular internal staff development trainings and workshops.

In March, SkillPath Seminars delivered training to PDP managers called *The 10 Steps to Leadership Excellence.* The training began with participants defining what constitutes a great leader, including best practices and characteristics, then defining their own leadership style and the characteristics of the people they manage. Various techniques for creative thinking, decision making, planning, prioritizing, team building, staff empowerment, and performance management were also covered in this high-quality, impactful two-day training.

Throughout this year, PDP has offered a series of professional writing workshops to its staff. The three Professional Writing workshops, *Mechanics*, *Composition*, and *Reports*, gave staff a chance to brush up on some of their writing skills and the opportunity to learn some new tips and tricks. In today's world of quick emails and text messages, these workshops served as a reminder that writing is a skill that must be thought about and practiced. The workshops were so well attended and highly regarded that *Composition* and *Reports* were offered a second time.

PDP not only brings in outside trainers, but also draws upon the wealth of knowledge of its staff to increase professional development. When Education Specialist Lakia Green approached her manager about presenting a diversity training to her fellow coworkers as a part of a personal study, PDP's senior leadership, which is especially supportive of staff development in this area, quickly approved the project. In May, a select group of PDP staff attended the *Personal Diversity Development Program.* This two-day training provided staff with an opportunity to learn basic diversity theory, apply these concepts in both personal and professional contexts, and increase cultural competency. Ms. Green will present on the results of the workshop at the Integral Theory Conference in San Francisco. After enthusiastic feedback from participants, the training will again be offered to interested PDP staff this Fall. **PDP**

PDP Presents:

The mission of the Professional Development Program is to make a difference in a changing world by linking the learning, applied research, and evaluation resources of the University with the continuing professional education needs of the public service. One of the ways this is accomplished is through contributions to conferences for professional associations. In the past year PDP staff presented at numerous conferences helping to link practice to industry knowledge.

Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing
Katy DeCorah

Continuing Education Association of New York's 40th Anniversary Conference
Eugene Monaco, Torie Seeger, Wendy Calabrese-Sampone

INTED2013— 7th International Technology, Education and Development Conference
Eugene Monaco

New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) Annual Conference
Wendy Calabrese-Sampone, Torie Seeger

New York State Public Welfare Association (NYPWA) Summer Conference
Lisa Futtner

New York Celebration of Women in Computing (NYCWiC)
Katy DeCorah

Upstate Training Forum on Supervisory Skills, sponsored by Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA)
John Thompson

2013 Lectora User Conference
Kasa Wahl, Dan Hill, Ed Skawinski

14th Annual NYS Alcohol and Substance Abuse Providers (ASAP) Conference
Ed Perka

International Conference on E-Learning in the Workplace
Kasa Wahl & Dan Hill

Katy DeCorah presenting at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing Conference

Wendy Calabrese-Sampone presenting at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) Annual Conference

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PDP's Economic Impact on the Capital District Region

PDP's contribution to the economic development of the greater Capital District region is highlighted below. Based on data from 2013, PDP's infusion of $11,942,315 into payroll and industry services, drives $19,107,704 annually into the local economy.

	Data	Multiplier (x1.6)*
Payroll	$11,090,054	$17,744,086
Hospitality	$223,917	$358,267
Supplies & Equipment	$44,356	$70,970
Printing & Video	$217,047	$347,275
Technical Services	$366,941	$587,106
Total	$11,942,315	$19,107,704

*The multiplier factor of 1.6 is a weighted average (unofficial) which can range from 1.5 to 2.5.
Source: Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

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average percent expended per payroll in 2012 was reported by ASTD to be 2.1%, while PDP has averaged 1.5% over the past 5 years. We remain convinced that our determination to support ourselves as a learning organization will continue to reap benefits that translate to quality of programming and service delivery to our customers, which ultimately brings a return on investment to the university system. While we continue to be encouraged by the results to date, these findings show that there is still more work to be done.

This issue of the Communiqué provides insights to a number of the infrastructure investments PDP has made in support of its ongoing commitment to being a learning organization. **PDP**

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