

A message from the Editor

Hello Gentle Reader,

As members of the Foreign Service, we pride ourselves on our ability to deal with, adapt to — even welcome — change. We voluntarily change our jobs, change our home, change the culture surrounding us many times during our careers. And yet, the biggest change most of us are ever likely to experience in our work environment has been gradually developing right here at home. The way we communicate, the way we organize ourselves, what we do, and how we do it are all changing dramatically.

In the private sector, these fundamental changes — driven by technology and competition — are in full swing. In the public service, we have to play catch-up. We can no longer allow ourselves and our colleagues to learn solely on-the-job or by attending the “School of Hard Knocks”. The answer is high quality, professional training.

Our private sector clients receive an average of 10 days

of training per year to ensure they keep up to date with the tidal wave of change. The public service averages 2.5 days per year and DFAIT averages 2.0 days. Clearly we have some way to go to keep up to our clients and their changing expectations of the service they can expect from us.

This issue focusses on efforts to overcome this training deficit and ensure we don't get left behind in this changing world. I hope you find it useful and I recommend you take every bit of training available. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue.

As we went to press, the Memo to Cabinet on International Business Development was completed. We'll provide details of its impact on us in the next issue.

Please let us know how we are doing and send your suggestions for future issues.

Rick Mann, Editor-in-Chief

A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

“From Then
to Now
and Beyond”

By Elizabeth
Hochster

Fifteen years ago, many people felt that a university education would last them a lifetime in the world of work. Everywhere were comments such as “I'm glad school is over, time to relax.” Ten years ago, organizations began to realize that their employees needed different skills than in previous decades. Organizations were recognizing the need to change the skill mix of employees and thus, formal workplace training was born.

Training and development was structured as a “system” for teaching adults called Andragogy, which has been adopted in organizations all over the world. Employees have attended millions of workshops and training activities and learned about everything from technical skills to management savvy.

Today, the pace of world change is so fast that organizations are increasingly turning to their employees to keep their skills up-to-date. Gone are the days when learning institutions could develop a course and deliver it for 10 years. In fact, the product development cycle for education is currently 2 years and getting shorter year by year.

Formal training and development is still integral to successful organizations but the pressure is on to deliver constantly current information in a way that is directly applicable to changing job packages.

As organizations turn to employees for initiative and creativity a parallel recognition must be made that investment in individual learning is imperative and that learning must become a part of the culture, values, attitudes and outlook of the organization. Tailored learning activities are invaluable to the organization as tools to communicate cultural values and attitudes and as ways to import current skills and information.

The bottom line is that organizations must adopt a genuine interest in employee learning and must reward individuals for this learning. Learning activities are no longer “a reward” or “something to do.” They are the key to organizational survival in the next century.

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