



"Using Vuepoint Learning System"
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Abstract

Training is an investment in the future and organizations spend enormous sums of money and time in an attempt to deliver the best training programs possible. Current approaches center primarily on the student as the recipient and the trainer as the deliverer of knowledge. This pedagogical model has its place, but when the goal is to shift peoples thinking and behavior, training needs to become an experience causing such a paradigm shift.

Internet/Intranet training, based on a learner-center constructivist model, will address the challenges of the current pedagogical model and focus on the development of a training curriculum in which the goal of the user is to create their own knowledge. This curriculum will have the distinctive advantage of not being time or environment bound. It will be customizable by the user, adapt to any industry and market, provide a rich authentic environment to apply the lessons, and use technology to users best advantage.

This unique, challenging program exists in "**Vuepoint Learning System.**"



Rationale

Internet/Intranet leadership training is crucial to the success of the leaders in any organization. Most of who are unaware of the need for further training. Senge states, "Learning disabilities are tragic in children, but are fatal in organizations" (Senge, 1990, p.14). Organizations invest heavily (\$40 -- \$100 billion per year (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Eurich, 1985; Scheckley, Lamdin, & Keeton, 1993) in training and education. Not only is the investment staggering but 90% of the training may make no difference on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p. 63).

Corporate training programs usually find themselves in a position of delivering the best practices in the industry. The focuses are to deliver, teach and distribute knowledge. We seldom think of the focus of corporate education as the process of learning or understanding. Senge (1990) discusses "the learning organization;" Scheckley, Lamdin, & Keeton (1993), propose "the continual learning cycle"; and Candy (1991) uses the term "lifelong learning." So, these quotes do not support final analysis. The focus needs to be on understanding the process of learning and the implication learning has on delivery modality and content selection.

Learning has many different definitions depending on ones' educational philosophy. Learning, in this application, is a two-step process where the learner creates knowledge. Kolb, states "Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it" (Kolb, 1984 p.41). Another explanation of learning, is "meaning making" (Perry, 1975). Meaning making is crucial to successful application on the job from the learner's perspective. Lastly, learning should be viewed from a social-cognitive point of view (Bandura, 1986; Howes, 1990; Lave, 1988; Saxe, 1990). The social cognitive view suggests that learning happens in the social environment of the learner. While the constructivist view suggests that an individual, based on sensory input and mental process, converts the sensory input into something personal. Howes (1990, p.14) states:

"The mind possesses what might be called innate ways of thinking or, more exactly, innate ways of understanding. These capacities are applied to sensory experience. They interpret such experience in the sense that they add their own particular content or way thinking to the sensory elements."



The common point of the learning theorists cited above is the ability of the learner to construct meaning out of their experiences.

The challenge for educators is how to influence learning in an organization's best interest. There is a need to create a learning system that allows for social construction of meaning for each leader within the organization. The proposed system will have as its foundation a leadership curriculum accessible via the Internet/Intranet. This curriculum will not be time or place bound and the learner will have many choices on how to accomplish the curriculum goals. The Vuepoint Learning System (VLS) will be both the learning environment and the learning method.

The Vision

There is a need to develop and deploy a fully supported leadership curriculum centered on self-directed learning. Vuepoint Learning System (VLS) is such a program. This education system will reside on the Internet/Intranet and be accessed via the individual leader's desktop and/or home computer. The goal is to anchor each learning experience to the competency model developed by the individual corporation to achieve their strategic plan.

Learning as an investment is viable only if it helps the organization reach its goals. Connecting the learning experience to the strategic plan will help ensure that leaders are investing in those areas crucial to strategic success. Through a design of self-directed learning, VLS will be able to target individual learning needs, level of competency and learning style preferences. The proposed Internet/Intranet system will address the variety of learning styles through the use of multi-media, use of group work, individual reading and research, and through an open design that allows the learner to contribute to the method in which they will learn.

The VLS experience is a combination of tutorials, use of an electronic library for research, mentoring via e-mail, group work, and class sessions delivered in electronic classrooms. The system enables the learner to explore various subjects and create his/her own learning strategy. The learner will be exposed to questions, problems, issues and concepts, and develop their position based on their current thinking and individual beliefs. Some of these learning opportunities will be skill based and some philosophical. Skills in the areas such as accounting, Human Resource policy and competitive analysis, will be



attained through a project approach. The learner's goal is to identify the significance between the learning experience and their work.

The Challenge

Self-directed learning using VLS has challenges that have been addressed. These include a shift in thinking about learning for both the learner and the organization; development of the content and support system; and deployment of the technology. These challenges are manageable and have the potential to create opportunities. The opportunities include: on the job performance support, higher rates of transfer of training to the job, and a connection between learning and the strategic goals of the organization.

The most significant challenge that VLS faces is related to how the organization views learning and/or training. The current model of training is primarily based on the traditional classroom. Classroom training centers on a set curriculum. The classes are in half-day modules, usually have 12 - 18 students and are viewed without enthusiasm by managers. VLS contrasts this with an individual approach to learning. Development of content is also a challenge because of the multi-faceted nature of VLS. It requires integration of tutorial content, on-line mentors, on-line discussion groups, database, and a subject specific library.

Development of content needs to take into account the company culture and, when feasible, to incorporate those beliefs and viewpoints into the learning experience. In a diverse organization the content should be resilient enough to handle the variety of needs. This could be as simple as having multiple tutorials on a particular project management tool. It may be as complex as having to deal with different competencies within the same organization. The solution to these challenges is to include the business partner in the development phase where they provide guidance on their particular needs and desires. This will make them a more willing partner and/or marketer if they have played a crucial role in the development of the program.



Opportunities

VLS offers the organization and the individual learner great flexibility and support in achieving the strategic objectives. The "Learning Organization," as proposed by Peter Senge (Senge, 1990), is a dramatic shift in thinking from the past by developing a system's approach to performance support, whereas organizations can apply the scarce resources of peoples' time, money, and learning capacity to effective use.

The real advantage of VLS is its focus on performance support in addition to learning. Individuals need to move into the "performance zone" (Gery, 1991). The performance zone is where "people get it, where the right things happen, where the employee's response exactly matches the requirements of the situation" (Gery, 1991, p. 13) and they apply new skills to the job arena. As cited earlier with traditional training formats, actual transfer to the job may be as low as 10% (Baldwin & Ford 1988) and the common response is to eliminate training. In contrast, VLS is the best of both the performance support and the training worlds.

VLS offers individuals the necessary information and tools to get the job done. VLS is learner centered in that the user chooses the how and when of learning.

The electronic nature of VLS offers users an individual database that is applicable to the specific work environment. Learners will have unlimited access to VLS which will enable them to recall any research, previous solutions, and completed projects. This database will become a powerful resource for the individual and the organization.

VLS as a performance support system has the potential to dramatically improve the work and the nature of work within the organization. Having an organization that shares information, learns as a system and collaborates on projects will significantly improve productivity.



Conclusion

The Vuepoint Learning System (VLS) is an advanced learning environment that supports learner's knowledge, skill acquisition and occupational competency. It is a performance support process, not just an educational event. The VLS design allows users to direct their learning based on individual preferences, to their unique business and occupational objectives.

The underlying educational philosophy of VLS is to empower the learner to construct their knowledge in an efficient and personal manner.

Learner-centered education causes the learner, in communication with the VLS, to determine the where, when, and the pace of the instruction. VLS shifts emphasis from teacher and/or content directly to the user. The VLS leverages the learning experience through an Educational Conversation (EC). The EC (between the learner and the subject content) is an intimate learning experience where learners interact with the content in an individual manner (Wilson, 1996). The VLS will facilitate the learning experience using the Internet/Intranet as a delivery environment.

VLS's organization is a modular format that addresses individual learner differences through a variety of performance based experiences.

The VLS approach as a learning conversation that enables users to learn new skills and provides a powerful support system to their work environment (Gery, 1991). VLS is a dynamic Intranet/Internet system that adapts, grows and matures along with each learner and like a library or university, will develop the more it is utilized.



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