

LEADERSHIP, TRAINING & THE WAVES OF CHANGE



Consider the notion that if it wasn't for change, people would care a whole lot less about leadership. Simply stated, leaders "get" change. They not only recognize its disruptive potential, they are acutely aware of its inevitable presence. And, while frequently recognized for their ability to "chart the course," it is really a leader's capacity to effectively "navigate unforeseen reality" that merits distinction.

That's nice, but you may be wondering what any of that has to do with training. On the basis of our combined experience over the years, we would suggest — quite a bit!

In the November/December 2017 issue of Training Industry Magazine, we co-authored an article entitled "[Training is Who We Are.](#)" In essence, it identified a number of companies that leverage the reputations of their training functions as viable sources of competitive advantage: Why should you come to work at this organization? Because you will receive world-class training that (at a minimum) will position you for any number of important and exciting career options.

So how do "world-class training functions" establish and maintain those reputations? Among other things, they consistently help the organizations they support identify and respond to "unforeseen realities" (i.e., change). Stated differently: The training function can be a built-in source of reality testing for organizations to gauge the viability of their mission, stated objectives and departmental priorities.

IDENTIFY

At some level and in some capacity, the training department is responsible for conducting effective discovery. Traditionally, those discovery efforts consisted of comparatively simplistic needs assessments distributed to a defined target audience that informed the design and development of instructor-led events. Suffice it to say discovery in the realm of the training function has expanded exponentially. It currently targets any number of non-traditional stakeholders (like the next-level managers of those participating in training) and addresses pressing, emergent and highly complicated challenges (e.g., the electronic dissemination of information to a global audience in a world besieged by threats related to cybersecurity).

There are also the often overlooked opportunities the training department has on an ongoing basis in order to gather valuable information. For example, it is not uncommon for a leadership training program to begin by asking learners to identify their most pressing leadership challenges. In real time, answers to those questions, especially if there is thematic consistency, can be leading indicators of noteworthy trends that may signal the need for a course correction.

RESPOND

When you view change through the lens of leadership what you see is regression. By its very nature, change disrupts. It takes focus and alters it. It takes commitment and challenges it. It

takes routine and dismantles it. In some cases, it can take experience and render it irrelevant.

On the other side of all that commotion is the need to learn new things. Consider the training function as a "first responder" of sorts in service of that need. In that regard, it is difficult to imagine a true change initiative that somehow didn't also include a visible

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component of "retooling." That retooling had better be relevant. It had better teach employees what they need to know and how they need to practice what they just learned in a manner that will accelerate development of an updated skill set. That retooling had also better be engaging. The training needs to be delivered or experienced in a manner that simultaneously builds both learner confidence and commitment.

So, we suppose you could say that without change, there would be far less of a premium placed on leadership. And, without proactive and responsive support from training, leaders would be drowning in the waves of change. ☺

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