



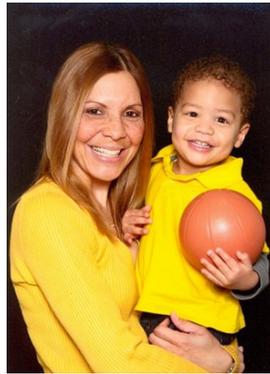
JULY/AUGUST 2014

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ENTER THE ZONE - DISCOVERY ZONE!

By Lea M. Griggs



Lea M. Griggs, Employee Development Specialist, MCCS Camp Lejeune and son Jaylen

You just attended a phenomenal training class and you are anxious to get back and share your new ideas and perspectives on how to implement the awesome information you just learned in class with your department. Excited and eager to share, you ask your team to gather so you can go over the highlights of your training and all the ways you feel this new information can increase productivity and provide solutions to long-standing issues.

During your debrief however, you notice that some of your co-workers do not seem to share your enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, you catch a few of them openly showing their lack of interest by shaking their heads in disagreement and even doodling in their note pads. Not feeling supported and growing more and more disenchanted, you quickly bring your presentation to a

close, wrapping it up with, “I wish you could have been there.” When you return to your desk, you put the materials from the class along with all of your ideas in the bottom of a cabinet drawer with all the other class guides and ideas you’ve accumulated over the years, never to see the light of day again.

Has this ever happened to you? You attend a class or maybe read an article or book and you get jazzed about the information and see the potential for positive change if implemented, but you’re the only who has “seen the light” and thus trying to affect change becomes more of an obstacle if not an impasse altogether. What is the purpose of attending training or sending our employees to training if afterwards it is difficult or next to impossible for them to apply anything they have learned?

Like most Training Departments, we too were faced with this same age-old dilemma. We realized that one of the biggest challenges was the fact that only one or a few employees from a department attend training classes. Then when they return to their departments they are a minority trying to affect change amongst a majority that is not motivated to make any changes. On top of that was the fact that there is a limited number of departments with the flexibility to send their employees

to classes because we have quite a few activities that cannot afford to have large numbers of staff out at the same time. Our Child Development Centers and Youth Pavilions must maintain ratios and our Retail activities have to have coverage on cash registers and on the floors, making the availability to be gone for half the day to attend training slim to none. Not to mention activities that have peak seasons like the Beach during summertime and Clubs and Catering during Ball Season where it’s all hands on deck until the season is over.

Despite the mountainous hurdles, we developed a solution that has become a huge success and even more beneficial than we could have even hoped to imagine. Introducing, the “Discovery Zone” (or “DZ” for short), our mobile training courses. Discovery Zone (DZ) courses are compact, two-hour courses that are typically a condensed version of one of our half or whole day courses. DZ sessions were designed to provide World Class training opportunities to those areas that have difficulty sending large numbers of staff to training, so that those employees can still benefit from training classes without putting their departments in a bind. So when ratios and coverage becomes an issue that prevents employees from coming to us, we go to them! (cont’d p.2)



NEXT ISSUE :

PROFESSIONAL CAREER TOOLS

Send us your favorite professional development career tools to:
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ENTER THE ZONE - DISCOVERY ZONE!

By Lea M. Griggs

Additionally, and one of the biggest benefits is that DZ's provide excellent team building opportunities by allowing staff who work together to receive the same training at the same time to strengthen and build work relationships and cohesion. Now, work teams and departments can receive the same awesome tools and practices together, and gain practical, customized work related action steps for applying what they learned immediately. With everyone hearing the same message and receiving the same principles at the same time, accountability increases exponentially and implementation can begin instantly yielding faster results.

"Teams that train together begin to connect and bond in new ways, strengthening relationships and growing them beyond simply being "co-workers", rather turning them into "teammates."

Another valuable benefit that comes from the Discovery Zone courses is the morale boost. When employees see they are valued by being provided with the opportunity to grow personally and professionally, they feel better not only about themselves, but about their leadership and the organization. Teams that train together begin to connect and bond in new ways, strengthening relationships and growing them beyond simply being "co-workers," rather turning them into "teammates."

Prior to launching the DZ option, our Director of Human Resources, Mr. Andy Ennett, gave a brief pitch at the weekly Director's meeting informing the Executive Office and all of the Division Heads that this new training service was now available. Following an information piece describing the program went out electronically and then it was off to the races. Word of mouth was the primary driving force as more and more requests were being made and classes being scheduled. Success stories started spreading like wild fires. Positive ICE Comments, emails and phone calls were coming in more and more frequently. We have received tremendous feedback and support from Supervisors and Managers across the organization. Here is what one Administrator in our Marine and Family Programs Division had to say, "This option [DZ's] allows us to achieve training and still maintain ratios and manage our salary dollars effectively. It is an AWESOME opportunity that I hope you will keep available!"

Another Program Manager shared this, "Having the trainings

on-site mitigated many of the historical challenges we have had with teambuilding training. Through the course of these trainings our team has been able to resolve problems related to processes, communication and also identified our shared values as a team. As a result of the trainings our team dynamic has improved significantly from where it was when we began this process over a year ago and I am very grateful for the support of the Human Resources Training Department, the DZ trainings and Lea in accomplishing that."

So what does a Discovery Zone look like, and how is it developed? Designed similarly to all of our training courses, every DZ consists of the following:

- Learning objectives and the competency it fulfills
- Presentation
- Participant's Guide to include key learning points and an Action Plan
- Activities to support learning objectives
- Course Evaluation

In the two-hour course, DZ's open with an introduction of the topic and typically an opening activity or video. We also take the time in the beginning of the class to explain what a Discovery Zone course is (for those who have not experienced one yet), and how it differs from the other classes offered in Human Resources (HR), as well as give a brief description of what "full" course the DZ was created from so that employees still come to our training classes in HR. Since the foundational purpose of all DZ's is building cohesion within work teams, activities and group

discussions where the class can be broken up into smaller groups so that employees have to work with different co-workers than they are used to is a key element in the design of the course. All of the Discovery Zones are facilitated via Prezi, and in some rare cases, PowerPoint.

Each class comes with a Participant's Guide that includes the learning objectives and supportive information as well as activities and/or reading material that reinforce the content, and closes with an Action Plan. Supervisors and Managers are encouraged to use the Action Plan as a foundation for follow-up team meetings and even support for setting and accomplishing employee and team goals. The Action Plan is also designed as a tool for leadership to measure return on investment. Each employee will have written documentation of what they learned and their plans for implementation. Supervisors can gauge what improvements and changes they see as a result of the training and subsequent utilization of the Action Plans.

All Discovery Zone courses are interactive. Team activities and group discussions are one of the most important features of the DZ's. Videos and sound clips are also frequently used to support and enhance the topic. Keeping a well-rounded balance of the different learning styles is very important in the design of any training class. However, with only a two-hour window, hands-on, tactile learning methods have been proven to be the most beneficial for ensuring a higher rate of content absorption and class participation. (cont'd on p.3)

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At the conclusion of each session a course evaluation is given to every attendee. Each DZ has a custom tailored evaluation specific to that course to ensure that we are on target with achieving the learning objectives and meeting the participant's needs. We particularly pay close attention to the open-ended questions: "the best and least part of the session was?" to see if we need to make any adjustments that will enhance the class.

With the latest addition of my colleague and office roommate Anne Doty, there are now two of us (Employee Development Specialists) that develop and facilitate Discovery Zones. Under normal circumstances, development of a DZ, from cradle to grave, typically takes less than two weeks because we are creating a condensed version from an already developed full course (half to full day course). So the foundation and outline are already in place which can be one of the longest parts of course design to complete. What takes the bulk of our time in creating DZ's is researching and creating activities that support the content that differs from the full class so that employees who attend both get two completely different experiences.

It is essential that employees who can still come to our full training class do so, and not use the DZ's as a substitute. The hope is that the Discovery Zones lead more employees to attend full classes because they want more of the information than what they can receive in the short DZ version. There are occasions when Supervisors and Managers make a special request for a DZ that does not currently exist or is not branching off of a pre-

existing training class. In those cases, development from cover to cover can take up to a month or so as all of the foundational research and course design will have to be done from scratch.

You can find our 2014 Course Catalog online at: <http://www.mccslejeune.com/hr/training.html> to see the course descriptions for the Discovery Zones as well as all of the training classes we offer. Our current list of DZ's includes:

- Building Effective Teams
- Ego Builder: Attitude
- Ego Builder: Communication
- The Energy Bus
- Generations
- Jungle Escape
- Lessons From the Geese
- The Power of Teamwork
- Soup
- Tall Ships
- Whale Done!
- Who Put a Lizard in My Lasagna?

Lastly, the Discovery Zones have not only benefited our employees and departments, they have also increased our training numbers, supporting our department's mission and goals. Through our DZ's we are able to reach 10 times the number of employees that we do in our Training classrooms alone. To date we have trained over 722 employees in just Discovery Zone courses. Our services are now in high demand because Managers and Supervisors are seeing an immediate return on investment for time spent and application of principles. It's a Trainer's dream to see employees excited to come to training and

have a genuine desire to attend versus feeling "volun-told" or forced. Because of our DZ's we are able to introduce and reinforce good business practices and soft skill development into our culture quickly and see results, enabling us to make a positive difference in the lives of those we exist to serve.

Enter the Zone! Feel free to contact me if you would like more information on developing your own Discovery Zone.

About Lea M. Griggs

Ms. Lea M. Griggs has been an Employee Development Specialist in the Training Department at Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) Camp Lejeune for the past year and six months. She originally joined MCCS Camp Lejeune as a Human Resources Technician in the Staffing Department in May 2012. Lea has over 15 years of professional experiences in a myriad of industries to include: Human Resources, Consulting, Marketing, and Education (both domestic and international). Born and raised in Pennsylvania, she has a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Psychology with a minor in Education from the University of Pittsburgh and is naturally a die-hard Steelers fan. Her personal and professional commitment is to make a positive difference in the lives of others and be the best living example possible for her baby boy Jaylen.

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ARE YOUR LEARNERS ACTIVE?

By Dr. Steven W. Schmidt



Dr. Steven W. Schmidt
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“Rather than being a passive recipient of information, active learning helps learners put knowledge to use.”

Before starting this article, take a moment to consider a memorable learning experience: A time when you, as a learner, were truly engaged in what was going on in a class. Now consider the circumstances surrounding that memorable learning time. What did you learn, and what made the incident memorable? Chances are, those memorable experiences involved times when you were doing something, or when you were actively engaged in something going on in the classroom. It’s also likely that these memorable learning experiences did not involve passively listening to a lecture or a talk. I have asked this question in several recent presentations I’ve given on active learning, and the results have been consistent. The memorable learning experiences are the times when learners are actively involved in the classroom. The development of active learning strategies for the classroom helps create those experiences and, as a result, helps facilitate the learning process.

Rather than being a passive recipient of information, active learning helps learners put knowledge to use. Active learning helps students to think at a higher level, taking learning beyond memorization and recall toward active thinking, learning and engagement (Queens University). When learners are actively involved in the classroom, they are engaged and thinking and that is when learning occurs. In – class projects, case studies, debates, simulations, games, hands-on experiences, and student discussions are all examples of activities that can be done right in the classroom to make that class-

room more active. Research has shown that keeping learners active is the key to their learning. Studies on the benefits of active learning have shown that it can increase content knowledge and retention of information taught in class; it can improve the learner’s critical thinking and problem-solving abilities; it can improve communication and interpersonal skills; and it can also increase enthusiasm for learning.

Despite what we know about active learning, most of our classroom instruction still revolves around lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and an occasional question for class discussion. These more passive forms of learning may not be as effective as other methods, but they are familiar to us, as instructors. Chances are they are the methods used when we were students. They represent “the way we’ve always done it”, and that mentality can be difficult to change. However, I am working with more and more organizations, in a variety of fields, that are making major overhauls to their curricula to make their classrooms more focused on active learning and less focused on passive methods of instruction. The movement to active learning is a major shift in the way education is being conducted. It is happening in higher education, workplace training, and many other venues, including the military. Are you prepared for this change? Are your classrooms active? Are your learners engaged?

The good news is that all classrooms can be active learning classrooms, and the shift from passive to active learning can happen regardless of the subject being taught. There are several things that must be in place, however, for this shift to be successful. Your organization must support the move to active learning, and it must support instructors who want to try new things in the classroom. Providing instructors with opportunities to learn about active learning and providing resources, such as equipment and materials to use in learning activities, are a few of the ways organizations can support the move to active learning. Instructors must have a thorough understanding of what active learning entails. This includes knowledge of how to find or develop meaningful classroom activities. Activities should be appropriate for the level of the learner, the learning goals, the physical constraints of the classroom and the time available. The instructor should also prepare a plan for the evaluation of each activity. Knowledge of how to facilitate and manage activities in the classroom is also important, as the role of the instructor is different in active learning classrooms. In these types of classrooms, the instructor guides and coaches the student through activities. This is different than the passive classroom, in which the instructor lectures or presents information. In addition, students have to be prepared to be actively involved in a class, and classroom facilities (such as classroom space) must be able to support active learning. (cont’d on page 5)

ARE YOUR LEARNERS ACTIVE?

By Dr. Steven W. Schmidt

The shift to the active learning classroom does not happen overnight. Instructors can start small; using a case study to reinforce content presented in a lecture, for example, or planning a discussion or debate about a lesson topic. Based on the results of that activity, future activities of a wider variety can be developed and employed. Ultimately, an instructor will start a course with a “tool boxes” of activities that they can use for each lesson in the course. Starting out, however, it is a good idea to start small, set modest expectations, and thoroughly prepare and evaluate each activity used.

Active learning can transform your classroom and improve your effectiveness as an instructor. This article included some tips that can be used to get you started on the road to active learning. Active learning is effective only when done with proper preparation and management. With proper preparation, the results can be interesting and engaged learners in your classroom.

Reference:

Queen’s University. Definition of active learning. Retrieved from: <http://queensu.ca/activelearningspaces/active-learning>

Useful websites:

<http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/effective-classroom-practices/interactive-classroom-activities>

<http://cfe.unc.edu/pdfs/FYC2.pdf>

Recommended reading:

Teaching Tips by Wilbert McKeachie and Marilla Svinicki. There are several editions of this book available (the newest is the 14th edition) but I think older editions are just as good and not as expensive as the newest edition. This book is an overview of all the different teaching methods that can be used in the classroom. Its focus is on teaching at the university level, but I know instructors in all venues have found it useful.

Learner-Centered Teaching (2nd Edition) by Maryellen Weimer. This book is a good overview of how to make your courses more focused on the learner. The active learning classroom is very learner centered, which is why I recommend this book.

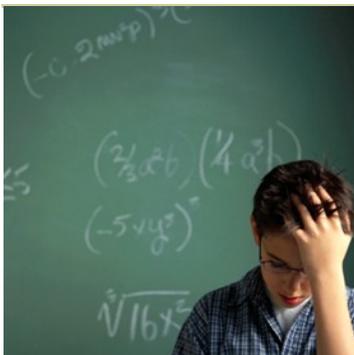
Case Studies and Activities in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, by Steven Schmidt. I have to recommend my own book, right? This is a good book for those of you interested in using case studies in your active learning classrooms.

About Dr. Steven Schmidt

Dr. Steven W. Schmidt is an Associate Professor of Adult Education at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. He is also the current president of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (www.aaace.org). Dr. Schmidt’s primary areas of research and teaching include workplace training and development, instructional design, educational program evaluation, cultural competence in the workplace, and online and blended learning. He also does consulting work in these areas for a variety of public and private organizations. Dr. Schmidt has

authored over 30 published articles on the above topics, and is author of the book *Case Studies and Activities in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (Information Age Publishing).

“ Your organization must support the move to active learning, and it must support instructors who want to try new things in the classroom.”



How Well Do You Know Your Students?

By Peter Baverso, Dr. Jennifer McCullough and Jeffrey Pearson

Ask the Right Questions

Teaching is tough. If you don't agree, please share your secret! Experience shows, despite our best efforts, a number of students will remain disconnected from the class and struggle to learn. Sound familiar? Have you ever wondered why that is? Undoubtedly, you have tried to help your students by employing popular classroom management strategies and the latest presentation gizmos. These do make a difference. Credible research validates the importance of good classroom management and a well-oiled presentation. However, most organizations continue to document poor student performance and collect less-than-stellar post-training surveys. These data indicate that something is still missing, but what? Maybe we should just ask the students! After all, does it make sense to wait to ask them about their unique learning styles, environmental requirements and other important factors until *after* the course is completed? While it may not be possible (or even practical) to meet the unique needs of *every* student in your class, you can significantly improve the odds by asking the right questions.

Employ the Right Tools

Right now you might be wondering what questions to ask and how to ask them. We can help with that... There are many acceptable methods available to help create questions, but we recommend the use of the Classroom Connection Canvas (C³). The C³ is a tool that is used to support course development and evaluations in Marine Corps

Systems Command logistics courses. The C³ tool will:

- Eliminate the guesswork associated with question development;
- Guide facilitation during individual interviews;
- Collect responses quickly and preserve them for future analysis;
- Ensure you are aware of the needs of your students.

In addition, using the C³ well in advance of your training event will allow you to more effectively tailor the learning environment to the needs of your students. The C³ has nine boxes that contain a series of carefully designed research questions that can be used as-is or customized for a specific need. Below is an example of one of these boxes.

The C³ is too big to include here, but will be available in its entirety upon request.

Success Factors

Can you recall a teacher who really knew how to meet your needs as a student?

What did he or she do that was different than the other teachers you had?

What does "good" instruction look like?

How do you know when training is effective?

Do you learn by seeing, listening, doing, or some other way?

Students can write their answers directly into this box, or they can be captured electronically (many Web-based survey programs will allow this). Once all of the blocks in the C³ have been completed, a student profile will begin to emerge. Combining the completed canvases from all of the prospective students will provide a snapshot of the type of support needed in the classroom. If this is a long term course of instruction consisting of multiple sessions over weeks or months, we recommend meeting with the student to evaluate their satisfaction with the learning process. Using the C³ as a facilitation tool during this discussion can yield valuable improvement recommendations. What is important to remember is that the research questions are not set and can be easily modified to support a specific requirement. Another unique feature - the C³ can be used to evaluate the performance of the teachers and staff individually, as well as the academic institution as a whole. Moreover, the C³ data become a foundational component of an organizational network analysis, a process that will assist in determining how individuals interact and how the activity that occurs supports, or detracts from, the desired outcome. The purpose of this article is to make you aware of a tool that can facilitate student satisfaction and the transfer of learning. Since we can't include the entire C³ in this short article, subsequent editions of the newsletter will focus on the different sections of the C³ tool.

Figure 1: Success Indicators section of the Classroom Connection Canvas

For more information contact the authors below:

Peter Baverso

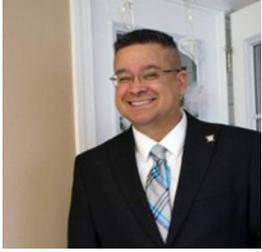
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Academic Degree Program (ADP)

By Charles E. Andrews
CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MANAGER

As the Civilian Leadership Development Program Manager for Marine Corps Base Quantico, (base employees), and the following tenant commands, MCCDC, TECOM, and Marine Corps Air Facility Quantico, the ADP program provides financial assistance to civilian employees seeking to obtain academic degrees, license, or certifications.

Participants must join the Civilian Leadership Development Program, have a mentor, and have an approved Individual Development Plan (IDP). Upon completion of sponsored academic degree training ADP participants must sign a Continued Service Agreement.

Funding is approved prior to attendance of courses and documented on a Standard Form (SF) 182. Based on availability of funds, in addition to tuition funding may include application and registration fees.

ADP is authorized for courses in Associate Degrees, Bachelor's Degree, Master Degree and Doctoral Degrees delivered

through classroom, or through the internet.

About Charles Andrews

In 1993, I graduated high school and joined the Marine Corps; I served one tour at Quantico, VA and returned to Silvis, IL. I started my DoD career with the Department of Army, at Rock Island Arsenal, IL in 1997 and attended Black Hawk College, then I received my Bachelor of Business Administration degree from American InterContinental University in 2005. In 2006, I transferred to the Department of Navy, Portsmouth, VA and in 2008, I relocated to Quantico, VA.



Want to know more about the Academic Degree Program (ADP) contact Charles E. Andrews, Marine Corps Base Quantico Civilian Leadership Development Program Manager at

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Vanessa M. Mason, Ed.D

Curriculum Development Education Officer, Marine Corps University (EPME)

Promoting Sustainable Professional Development in the Workplace through the Establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

by Vanessa M. Nason, Ed.D

Does this sound familiar?

A business hires a candidate that requires talent, skill, and leadership ability. From day one, the employee is provided with a new staff orientation, training module learning opportunities, and other forms of professional development to develop the employee's talent, skill, and leadership abilities in order to fulfill the position. Aspects of the orientation usually consist of job related activities that range from shadowing to reviewing of manuals related to specific job responsibilities and duties. Fast Forward to Day 90: Thanks to the professional development provided by the business, the employee has developed enough professional learning to stay gainfully employed with the organization. However, the employee is still unsure of how to employ his or her talent and skills in ways that consistently contribute to the values, goals, and mission of the organization.

In many instances, the results of this scenario usually involve an employee maintaining the status quo of working in silos and coming to work each day to complete assigned job tasks. But truthfully, the solution should be to develop the employee's talent, skill, and leadership potential

through continuous, quality professional development that allows the employee to collaborate with colleagues, apply knowledge, solve job related issues and workplace problems, and support the accomplishment of the goals of the business. One approach to be used regarding the ideas presented above is the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the workplace.

Professional Learning Communities in the Workplace

PLCs were based on the business sectors' notion that individuals within an organization could learn through the process of collaboration and reflection of work practices (Curry, 2010). Throughout the years there have been various definitions and models used to describe the term professional learning community. For example, some authors defined PLCs from a public school perspective with an emphasis on teachers and administrators working collaboratively to learn from each other in order to benefit collectively from the personal and professional strengths of its staff members (Dufour, 2004; Hord, 1997; Protheroe, 2008). Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas (2006) described PLCs as consisting of a motivated group of individuals who all believed in shared learning and inquiry related to their jobs. The focus was on exploring better methodologies to improving learning. On the other hand, Senge (2006) developed a five component model to describe PLCs: self - mastery, shared vi-

sion, mental models, group learning, and a system's approach to thinking.

According to Hord (1997), a PLC is not a model, but more so an approach for staff members to work together to obtain results. This approach to cohesiveness is based on three meaningful practices in which I believe should be included in a workplace PLC. These practices include the following:

- (1) shared vision, values and goals (Stoll et al., 2006; DuFour, 2004),
- (2) collective inquiry through collaborative teams (Stoll et al., 2006; DuFour, 2004)
- (3) problem solving using a results oriented approach (Stoll et al., 2006; DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997).

Shared vision, values, and goals within a PLC are essential to positive productivity amongst staff members. All members of the group must have an understanding of the purpose for meeting and the tasks that are to be accomplished. When individuals meet with no agenda or direction, meetings can become counterproductive and the Professional Learning Community can eventually become a breeding ground for gripe sessions and frivolous discussions. When colleagues are working on one accord, this opens up the PLC environment for more trust and creativity within the group.

Collective inquiry through effective collaboration is also pivotal to any workplace PLC.

This process begins with the supervisor's willingness to set a foundation within the organization that encourages staff members to meet consistently and collaborate, without the direct oversight of a supervising official. Staff members must have some autonomy to explore ideas and methodologies that could lead to better ways of meeting department goals and solving job specific, workplace issues. Working together with colleagues allows for better intercommunication, professional relationships, and a sense of team camaraderie within the office.

The final component involves accomplishing results through effective problem solving. Whether it's identifying a more efficient way of completing a task or attaining knowledge that will enable one to be more proficient in his or her job, the ultimate goal of a PLC in the workplace should center on obtaining results, which unequivocally contribute to successfully attaining the goals and mission of the organization. As such, individuals must embrace the concept of being result-oriented thinkers who work together for the overall betterment of the workplace.

A Few Easy Steps to Establishing a PLC

Starting a PLC is not a difficult task. It takes a concerted effort from both supervising officials and staff members to make this endeavor a reality. (cont'd on p. 9)

Promoting Sustainable Professional Development in the Workplace through the Establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

by Vanessa M. Nason, Ed.D

As a previous school administrator, PLCs were very effective in the learning institutions in which I worked. Since working for the Marine Corps, I have not yet observed or heard of PLCs being used in the military setting but believe that this approach could be beneficial in the military education environment. It is hoped that this article will bring more attention to PLCs and motivate more personnel to establish PLCs within their organizations. Below, are a few easy steps for starting a PLC at your office or within the general educational setting:

1. Select a lead - A non-supervisory staff member should serve as the lead for a PLC. This individual can be selected or volunteer, and should have a positive attitude, willing spirit and open mindset to others' ideas.
2. Obtain support and participation - The lead should send an invite or speak directly to colleagues to promote participation and buy-in. Commitment from staff participants is essential to maintaining stability within the PLC.
3. Provide the foundation for the PLC - At the first meeting, PLC participants should identify and agree upon the vision, goals, beliefs, meeting guidelines, day and time for meetings (it is recommended that PLC meetings take place monthly). These foundational components should be clear and concise, and agreed upon by members of the PLC.
4. Identify meeting topics - Group members should identify topics that support job improvement, professional growth, and problem solving in the workplace (particularly, job specific issues). Meeting topics can relate to project task assignments, identifying more effective and efficient ways to completing a task, teambuilding techniques, or other professional development learning areas that focus on improvement of job and career skills.
5. Ensure the availability of a meeting agenda and minutes - Each PLC meeting should have an agenda and minutes. These items can be formal or informal. The agenda will keep group members on task and the minutes will serve as a record of meeting proceedings that detail decisions, suggestions, and other information that transpired at the meeting.
6. Supportive leadership - PLCs must be supported by supervising officials (Hord, 1997). This is one of the most important components of a successful PLC (Eaker & Gonzalez, 2006). Efforts of support can include allowing time during the work day for staff members to meet, occasional visits to PLC meetings (serving mainly in the role as a participant), and assisting the PLC lead with obtaining resources that may be needed for PLC meetings. More importantly, supervisors must work diligently to establish a safe work environment which promotes growth and continuous learning.
7. Fun learning, growing, and collaborating with colleagues - Remember, the mission of a PLC in the workplace should promote collaboration and professional growth amongst colleagues. This is not a "formal" meeting, but rather a "meeting of the minds" with an intended focus and purpose. Staff members must feel like they are contributing to the needs of the organization, while at the same time, enjoying the time spent with their coworkers. When a PLC begins to feel more like a chore, rather than a professional learning group, then efforts must be taken to re-evaluate the PLC and readjust the practices.

with a quality orientation and integrated into a PLC that consists of staff members who voluntarily meet, one to two times per month during the work day to collaborate, brainstorm ideas and identify solutions to job specific issues. Fast Forward to Day 90: Thanks to the professional learning community process, the employee not only becomes an effective problem solver but also a value added leader who enhances the values, goals, and mission of the organization.

See Bibliography on page 10

Summary

Although PLC is not a new concept, more efforts toward establishing PLCs in the workplace could prove to be advantageous for all personnel. Not only could PLCs contribute to improved job performance with staff members, but if implemented properly, this way of practice could increase morale and potentially synergize the workplace by igniting a spark for learning, amongst staff members.

Just imagine that the same business mentioned previously hires another candidate for a position that requires talent, skill, and leadership ability. From day one, that new employee is provided

Promoting Sustainable Professional Development in the Workplace through the Establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

by Vanessa M. Nason, Ed.D

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Read more about Dr. Vanessa Nason



About Dr. Nason

Dr. Vanessa M. Nason has been the Curriculum Development Education Officer for Marine Corps University - Enlisted Professional Military Education since February 2013. She has worked in the education field for over 18 years and served as a teacher, coordinator, and school administrator in various systems throughout the United States. Dr. Nason has conducted studies in the area of Bullying, Sexual Harassment, and School Improvement, and presented at several national conferences on topics relating to curriculum and instruction, program evaluation, and professional development.

How to Get Management Buy-In for Civilian Professional Development

By Lynette Ward

“I’m hoping to generate interest and feedback from other people who have successful strategies in obtaining buy in for their programs. Please share your stories because many of us need fresh ideas to breathe new life in our leadership and professional development programs.”



Lynette Ward, Human Resources Specialist

Getting senior managers’ support for the civilian training programs is one of our biggest challenges we face today. Obtaining this support is a vital key to your success so developing an effective strategy is crucial to the leadership and professional development future within your organization.

This article focuses on steps to assist you in gaining senior management buy in for your training programs:

- Ensure there is a real need for the training. Conduct surveys with supervisors and participants to find the competency skill development that needs the most attention and focus on providing it. Don’t fall in the trap of tossing training at every situation thinking that will solve the problem. It may be that only more guidance and direction from leadership is needed. Take time to research the issue to better understand the advice that would most effectively support the request. If more on-the-job training is the answer, make that recommendation. It will give your training program credibility.

Also, make sure all staff members are using their Individual Development Plans (IDP) to determine their training needs for the year. This can be a very effective tool to assist the supervisors identifying their training requirements.

- Show the benefits of the instruction provided. This will require conducting internal and external evaluations, interviews, and surveys—both participants and their supervisors over a time period. If you are able to tie the training to your organization’s goals and demonstrate how this training will help the organization, including the type of benefits that can be obtained, you have a good chance of getting senior management’s attention and support. Make sure you have documented statistical information to share with senior management showing the return on investment. Maintain a database that tracks promotions, productivity, or area identified as needed by management of employees who participate in their competency development. Compare and contrast this data with those who are satisfied with maintaining status quo.
- Deliver and over-deliver in quality, time, and format. Quality -- the training provided matches—even exceeds expectations. Always conduct evaluations of the training and audit classes to see facilitator’s style and techniques. Time -- keep training on schedule. Time away from the workplace to

train is valuable. Make certain the time is not wasted— instructor needs to stay on topic. Format -- maintain training focus as outlined in program. Again, time is valuable—following the program’s format ensures all topics are covered in a timely, professional manner. Plus, it can be confusing to participants when instructors jump around in their training materials.

- Make your training stick. Conduct follow-up activities for participants attending the seminar, and maintain log of progress achieved. Share information with participants’ supervisors. Prior to leaving the class, have participants develop and commit to an action plan on how they are going to apply the new knowledge learned. Create a training partnership among learners, trainers, and supervisors. Supervisors could include the application of the skill(s) learned in their employees’ performance review. It does not have to be a large part of the performance review, just enough to attract their attention and give them the incentive to focus on their professional development.
- Establish credibility by following through with what was promised. Send quarterly progress reports to senior management of employee training and development status so they can see individual and group progress. This method is very effective at keeping your training program on the radar so make certain your reports

successful transfer of learning.

- Follow up and stay connected with those involved with management and stakeholders. Be empathetic to concerns and willing to work with others to find solutions. Encourage others to bring a solution with them when making you aware of a problem.

These are just a few ideas that have received measured success for getting senior management buy in for the civilian training programs. Use these suggestions as a guide at your command. Once you establish what works, your training programs have a much greater chance of survival and success. Good luck.

About Lynette Ward

Lynette Ward has worked 27 years for the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune, and has worked in training and development since 1993. She ran the tuition assistance program for active duty Marines from 1993 till 1999. She took a position at the formal schools as an Instructional Systems Specialist from 1999 till 2007. In 2007, she accepted her current position—Employee Training and Development Specialist, where she serves as the administrator for the civilian training programs as well as a certified instructor in numerous leadership and professional development topics.

Education background is BS, Marketing, University of NC; MBA, Golden Gate University, CA; MA, Adult Learners and Training in Education, East Carolina University, NC.

"Whether you are the adult learner, responsible for knowledge transfer and/or have other responsibilities within an educational institution - an effective strategy is important for success! Equally, individual learners absolutely must develop a strategy to be an effective learner. They need to adapt the organizational principles to their personal behavior. For example: are they still trying to do tomorrow's job with yesterday's skills? Do they deliver "ho hum" performance? Are they treading water waiting for retirement? If so, they have no right to complain when someone with a plan and a strategy pushes them out of the way. As is frequently remarked, winning strategy creates the situation of "Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way." Winning strategy leads!

To this end, we hope you find the below article by Dr. Dorociak illuminating in developing a strategy for yourself, your institution, and your learners."

Keep Your Customers Close and Your Competitors Closer

By Dr. John Dorociak



Dr. John Dorociak
Adjunct Instructor
Jack Welch Management
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Whether you're a front-line manager or an executive in the C-suite, there's no excuse for not knowing your competitors, your customers, and your own core competencies.

In his book *Winning*, Jack Welch proposes some great strategic questions that every company should constantly ask:

1. Why are we in business?

You would be surprised at how many businesses really cannot really answer this basic question. Over time, many businesses lose touch with the mission and purpose for which they came into being. You are not in business because you are supposed to be in business. You are in business to fill a need and create a value. Last week one of my MBA students asked me what to do when his company could no longer generate strategic options because there was literally nothing for them to do. I replied, "What's your exit strategy?"

2. How good are we?

One executive that I know told me that his best estimate was that his new business would have, at most, five competitors and he

knew that his company would be the best out of those. "Really?" I asked, testing his assumption. He then did some research and soon discovered he had more than 20 competitors and his company wasn't always on top.

Jack Welch recommends knowing what your competitors had for breakfast and lunch -- and having a good idea what they will have for supper. Make it your mission to dig in and root around to learn everything you can. Use public sources first and take information from anyone who will talk to you. I like to say, "Steal anything that is not nailed down, especially good ideas and information." In other words, if your competitors have a good idea or a benchmark process that you can use, and you can obtain information about it ethically, then use it and improve it. Most of the time a business is far from as good as it thinks it is. Great companies always have something to learn.

3. Where did the customers go?

Sometimes an organization's customers age or drift away. Sometimes they are driven away. Imagine trying to sell a single function electronic camera to someone today. A short time ago when I took a picture of a new great grand baby, one of our grandchildren made the comment, "A camera? A camera all by itself? Do you know how long it has been since I have seen one of those?" If your company is still trying to sell single function electronic cameras or something similar when customers have cell phones with multi-mega pixel resolution, or you are filling some tiny low-return market segment, ask: "Why?"

4. Can we sell that?

Find a lucrative market. Jack Welch wisely says that you cannot be everything to everyone. You cannot even be most things to most people. But you might be able to find a good niche market where you can be the right product for the right audience. The "where" depends on what you have, market saturation, and industry maturity. When you cannot find a market, either there is no market or you are looking in the wrong place. Maybe it is time for that exit strategy.

5. Are we a commodity?

As CEO of GE, Jack Welch dumped commodity items as fast as he could. He did this because of the ability to easily imitate, going back to Porter's Five Forces model. If the only thing that differentiates your product and another is the label, perhaps you would be better off manufacturing labels. It is okay for WalMart to compete on price. They control the distribution chain, they control the supply chain, and they herd customers like cattle. Most likely, as a commodity producer, you are one of those companies being controlled by the customer or the distributor and finding yourself herded, trying to have just enough quality to be legal and fighting such slim operating margins that you'll have to move a huge quantity to compensate for your low price.

So, blow up your own business. Ask your team all the time: "Why are we in business?" "How good are we?" "Where did the customers go?" "Can we sell that?" And, "Are we a commodity?" You'll come away better equipped to either do what it takes to win or know when to abandon ship.

About Dr. John Dorociak

John Dorociak is an instructor and expert on organizational behavior, leadership, and strategy. He has published on the topics of Information Technology to Organizational Strategy Alignment, contributed as Subject Matter Expert to Executive MBA Strategy, and Executive Certificates on Strategy and on Leadership. He has designed a New Faculty Orientation program used at the Jack Welch Management Institute. He is also an award winning Engineer and Information Technology specialist.

Dr. Dorociak has led sessions and courses with many executives and students in several development and graduate degree programs including Executive MBA, MBA, and post graduate Learning Certificates, Creating Winning Strategy and Becoming a Leader in the Online environment. He earned a BSc in Mathematics from the University of South Carolina, a BSEET from Weber State University, an MS in Information Technology from Capella University, and a PhD in Business from Capella University. In his research and consulting he has worked with organizations to improve their behavioral alignment to organizational goals, objectives, and strategy.

Dr. Dorociak is an Adjunct Professor at the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University and at Baker College. He is one of the original JWMI faculty and began with the program while an adjunct at Chancellor University. From 2008 Dr. Dorociak was adjunct faculty at Strayer University. He began instructing at Chancellor in 2011 and continued instructing at JWMI Strayer in 2012. He began instructing business courses at Baker in 2013. Before pursuing an academic career he spent more than 28 years in various engineering and leadership activities in international locations for the defense electronics industry.

Credits: published in *MISQE Quarterly* and paper presented at the Toronto AMCIS.

Education Community of Interest Resource Information

Education Community of Interest Office

Mission: To provide every 1700 Community member with the opportunity to continue to learn and reach their potential, to lead fulfilling and productive careers, and to contribute positively to the mission of the Marine Corps by enabling each of his or her constituents to fully maximize their talents, imagination, skills and character.

Vision: Successful, skilled, and innovative education workforce - engaged in positive, productive, and supported learning experience with high expectations for our learners and a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence and innovation in our Marines, our programs, and in our resources.

Purpose: The purpose of training, education and self-development is to provide a competent, efficient, and effective professional workforce equipped to accomplish the mission and goals in their assigned organization and the Marine Corps. The future capacity and capability of the Marine Corps can only be assured if employees are developed to meet projected requirements.

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***Please contact us for general information, funding for training, requesting training, submitting articles and any other inquiries or concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.*



Ed COI : FACTS & FIGURES

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ed COI supports 509 active appropriated funded employees
- 89% of the community's 574 billets are currently filled
- The community comprises only 3% of the total civilian workforce (19,982)
- Aging workforce with 58% in the baby boomer generation

- Community average age is 50, which is three years older than the average federal employee
- Our Community is at risk of losing "corporate knowledge" in our learning institutions as significant portion of the workforce is eligible for retirement over the next five years.
- Nearly 2/3 of the members in the education workforce retain a baccalaureate degree
- 1/3 possessing doctorate degrees
- 11% of the community supporting U.S. Title 10 requirements
- 4% supporting acquisitions
- 85% directly supporting our learning institutions

- Ed COI is moving from a traditional learning environment to high-skill, knowledge-based, technology driven learning alternatives.
- Changes in the learning environment demand an adaptable education workforce

***Source: FY 2013 Civilian Community of Interest Human Capital Assessment**