

## **Will we ever see less bums on training chair seats and more careers for talented people?**

### **Andrew Gibbons**

The continued existence of any organisation is entirely dependent upon learning.

If learning isn't happening, there is no readiness for future challenges, and no new and better ways of doing things are developed and embedded.

Organisational learning is a function of humans developing new and improved competencies. The collective value of this individual development creates organisational learning. No organisation can develop by by-passing humans.

Despite this brave new world of thoroughly impressive job titles, and grand claims of talent managing, too few organisations provide real incentives to learn. Too few people with serious potential capability are given the time, the support, and the freedom to make mistakes from which to learn without the fear of exposure and career risk.

Until many more organisations put as much effort into how best to retain talent as they do to threaten with punitive measures those who leave after significant investment in them, the truly talented will not be encouraged to do what it takes to enhance their value to their currently employing organisation.

Far too few organisations provide a career plan for the few talented people on whom future organisational success is dependent. Most organisations continue to be very unclear as to who these unusually competent, and self-aware, people are – and seem oblivious or uncaring of their interest to other, often competitor organisations.

I continue to be, shall we say very disappointed when I see the astonishment clients feel when a valued colleague makes known their intention to leave. For me, this shows a distance in relations, and a costly lack of awareness of their ambition, frustrations, aspirations and ultimately disengagement.

Herding people in groups onto training courses with broadly the 'right' title and published content is still the norm, and still soaks up massively more budget than any other way of 'meeting' development needs.

The problem is, this is all too often as total a waste of money and time as it ever was, and we really by now, should know better.

Some training courses are worth the cost. Some inform people in cost-effective numbers of information needed for compliance, of statutory obligations, and very rarely, prompt sustained behaviour changes back at work that can have significant impact. That's fine, the trouble is, most don't.

Every individual sat on a chair, too often in unhelpfully large numbers, far too often being told things they feel they already know has unique and very personal needs. Group-based training rarely achieves a value of applied learning that justifies its cost, and far too few organisations have the appetite to use simple processes to discover this.

After 34 years in the learning business, I will say it straight – I frankly expect much more sophistication in organisational practice than this.

Over the past rather many years, learning 'professionals' have received a massive, and very accessible body of information and insight that should by now have changed emphasis from administratively easy training, towards more challenging, and hugely more effective support for individual learning.

I want to see more organisations that live up to their proudly paraded values. I want to see those within them that manage learning confident to change the balance from training course provision towards creating meaningful careers for individuals with future capabilities that will drive corporate success.

I want my clients more often to share and to exceed my desire to create very serious measureable returns on investment, and not simply to deliver a 'make no waves/ rock no boats' training course without interest in the value resulting from the application of real learning, and the financial returns from changing organisational practice.

Such a shift requires real courage in the context of typical organisational life, and is too radical for most. Too few organisations have learning functions led by those rare and special people that have the will and confidence to change practice and spending patterns.

For many this would be a reckless and unwise action, and they will keep the training chairs industry buoyant – those bums on seats wear out upholstery at such a rate!

Andrew Gibbons

[andrew@andrewgibbons.co.uk](mailto:andrew@andrewgibbons.co.uk)

[www.andrewgibbons.co.uk](http://www.andrewgibbons.co.uk)