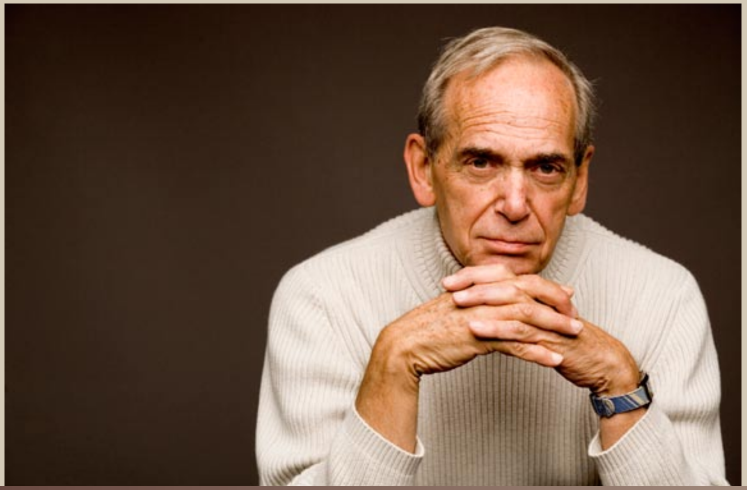
LX Briefing

A Newsletter for Learning Executives



Vital Topics and Quick Reads for the *Learning Executive*

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Volume 1, Issue 3, November 2006

ASTD Workplace Learning & Performance

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Are You Measuring the Impact of Learning?

Business leaders who understand what it takes to grow know that the workforce is their most important asset. But they want to know how investments in employee learning—like other business expenditures—impact the bottom line.

For 10 years, ASTD has published data from thousands of organizations in the annual *State of the Industry* Report. While the descriptive data were helpful for benchmarking, they could not be used to measure the efficiency or impact of the learning function.

With ASTD's new Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP) Scorecard™, an online, real-time measurement system that facilitates benchmarking and decision support, learning executives can:

– Determine which learning activities best support the organization's objectives

– Communicate the value of workplace learning and performance in business terms

– Diagnose strengths and weaknesses within the learning function

– Evaluate learning effectively within a Balanced Scorecard Framework

Organizations that use the WLP Scorecard will input data in three categories: Workplace, Learning, and Performance. Once these data are provided, Scorecard Reports may be generated in four areas:

– ***Financial*** – monitors and compares financial aspects of the learning function

– ***Operations*** – monitors and compares operational aspects of the learning function

– ***Customer*** – monitors and compares the internal learning function's customer behavior and satisfaction

– ***Innovation*** – monitors and compares innovative aspects of the learning function

Users of the WLP Scorecard may also generate Index Reports:

– ***Alignment Index*** measures the alignment of the learning function with organizational goals

– ***Efficiency Index*** measures the efficiency of the learning function

– ***Effectiveness Index*** measures organizational productivity, human capital, financial performance, employee retention, and satisfaction

– ***Sustainability Index*** measures the likelihood of the learning function sustaining its current level of success

– ***WLP Index*** is a combination of all four indices – it represents the overall quality of the learning function

Release of the WLP Scorecard represents a major step forward for the learning field. With this tool, learning executives can benchmark their enterprise-wide learning functions, understand how training investments impact business results, and determine changes for future growth and improvements.

The WLP Scorecard is a subscription-based service. Interested organizations may pre-register now, with full access available late in the first quarter of 2007. More information may be found at http://wlpscorecard.astd.org/.

Tony Bingham
President and CEO
ASTD

WLP Scorecard
ASTD

Merger Improves Bottom Line for Learning

The Lockheed Martin Marietta merger allowed the learning organization to save unexpected millions

More than a decade after the "merger of equals" when Lockheed Corp. joined with Martin Marietta in 1995, the company has become one of the largest aerospace, defense and technology companies in the world. It has also witnessed a total transformation of its learning function. Oh, and its learning organization saved about $30 million a year by creating a common learning culture.

"The official merger between Lockheed and Martin Marietta was in 1995," says Candice Phelan, director of corporate learning services for Lockheed Martin Corp. "The corporations spent the first few years merging the two infrastructures. When they saw the billions they saved by merging the infrastructures they thought there must be more (savings to be had). In about 1999, the corporation decided to create a shared services function. Within human resources they created (a learning function)."

The Learning Services function was asked to play a key role in creating a common culture," Phelan explains. Four learning-related areas were selected to create this common culture in a new, decentralized organization with 150,000-plus employees and 70 business units in 900 locations. Working with external experts, business cases were developed that measured the current state, identified the future state, described implementation and evaluation plans, and proposed a schedule and structure.

A key element of the effort says Phelan, was that it had significant stakeholder involvement. The central Learning staff took ownership of the process but let the stakeholders make all content decisions. Once stakeholders viewed the central group as a resource and not a controller, they fully embraced the process, she adds. Some curriculum design groups expanded their roles. For example, the manufacturing curriculum team redesigned actual manufacturing work processes across the enterprise to achieve greater synergy and a common manufacturing culture.

Candice Phelan / Director of Corporate Learning
Lockheed Martin

DEFINING GOALS

The development of goals was an important first step. An external consulting group was engaged to conduct benchmarking surveys. "We saw that the learning function could lend itself to some economies of scale," Phelan says. "And that became the overarching goal. What can we do to achieve more economies of scale and commonalities across the corporation? That was my charter."

Phelan notes that once the transformation of the learning function began, the expectations began to grow. "When we were forming the shared service function following the merger we found that we had 100,000 courses. We wondered how many courses does a company of 150,000 people really need?"

An examination of those courses found, for example, 73 different interviewing courses. "But no one department had the money to meet all of their high-level learning needs," Phelan says. "We saw this contradiction. No one had enough dollars, yet look at all the duplication caused by bringing together so many businesses.

"We decided to create a common curriculum, but the problem was if we had gone to the businesses and said 'Here's your common curriculum' they would have never accepted it. Each business was unique so we really had to involve the businesses."

Phelan and her team took a slow and steady approach. "What we did – and were criticized for a bit at first for moving out a bit slower – was to create a curriculum workshop for every one of the 100 courses that was going to make up the common curriculum," she explains. "We asked for a representative from each of the six business areas to attend. We would decide on what the common curriculum for a course – such as hand soldering – should be, or for any of the other 99 courses."

Phelan notes that, "we hired the best training staff from inside and outside the company, but we didn't let them make content decisions. We left that to the businesses. It had to be that way so they would accept it." Phelan says "The speed bump occurred when people looked at this process and said 'Gee, you are going pretty slowly. You have 100 courses to design and you are only doing eight a month.' "

But even at eight a month, the process was quite involved. "You can imagine the pre-work that had to take place – getting the right people involved, sending the right information to them in advance, making sure they brought the right information, and doing all of the analysis of the information and follow-up," she explains. "Then we had to develop the curriculum and find the right suppliers. It became a rolling schedule. We always had workshops going on in-house, but at the same time we were always preparing for, or closing out, another 16 or so courses."

SUCCESS FACTORS

One of the factors that made the reorganization work was the recognition that each business unit was different and had different ways of operating. Some units used significant amounts of internal instruction and others brought in outside training suppliers. Some used managers to teach and others relied on e-learning. "We knew we had to honor that, so we created the curriculum so it could be used in each way," says Phelan.

"We knew that the common courses would be about 1 percent of all of the courses we would teach. So we asked the businesses to go along with us on that 1 percent." For the common curriculum we were looking for generic courses and things that were frequently taught. I knew that would save $10 million, but I had no idea we would save three times that amount."

Another key to acceptance by the business units was the knowledge that whatever savings came about would remain in the business units, not the overall corporate coffers.

Although savings are no longer reported, the learning staff continue to collect and report on the metrics and customer service measures. The practice continues and is growing stronger. Phelan reports business units are requesting additional learning products and services.

Reduce Costs, Improve Quality

The original purpose of the new learning practice at Lockheed Martin was to help the newly merged organization achieve a common culture and to reduce the cost of learning while increasing its quantity and quality. The strategy included reducing duplication, increasing economies of scale, and leveraging expertise across the organization to provide accelerated learning anytime, anywhere. To achieve this, the organization added a services function and identified five primary areas of service:

Learning management system – transitioning from more than 40 systems to one

e-Learning – combining all separate e learning venues into one and providing technology-based learning anytime, anywhere

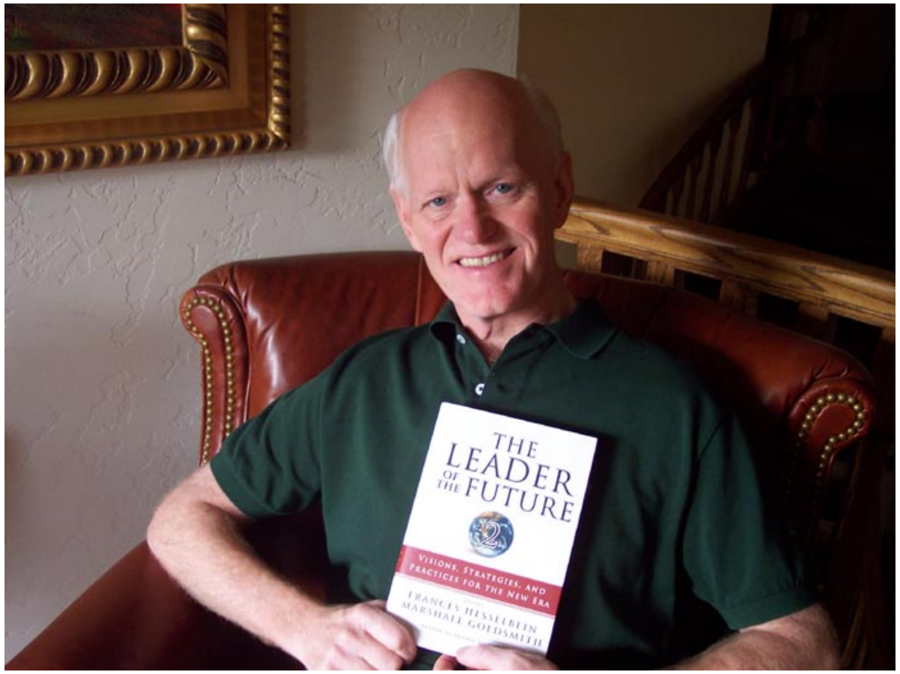
Common learning design – reducing duplication among 100,000 courses and creating a core curriculum

Supplier strategy – creating a cadre of long-term supplier partners

The new learning organization focused on areas that matched the strategy described above; it moved away from plans to also offer learning delivery.

Uncommon Sense:

Author and executive coach Marshall Goldsmith talks about what makes successful business leaders even more successful.



Marshall Goldsmith, author and executive coach

In January, author, coach and leadership guru Marshall Goldsmith will offer up more of his no-nonsense thoughts on what makes the best even better. His newest book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful* is full of advice that is both common and very uncommon. Goldsmith, who travels the globe in his role as an executive coach to the corporate elite, spoke to *Learning Executives Briefing* from an airport, where he admits he spends a lot of time. We chatted with the author on several topics that are on the minds of learning executives. Here is some of that conversation – and you don't have to pay six figures for the advice.

Learning Executives Briefing: Are organizations doing a good job preparing leaders for the next generation of their individual businesses?

Marshall Goldsmith: Some are – many are not.

LXB: Where do they fall short?

Goldsmith: Along with a lack of foresight in designing developmental experiences, many organizations do little if any follow-up to determine if their leadership development is actually making a difference in changing on-the-job behavior (see Resources section for a link to Goldsmith's article "Leadership Is a Contact Sport" and other articles related to the topic). Our research, involving over 86,000 respondents from major corporations, clearly shows that leaders who merely attend training programs – and don't follow-up with their co-workers – are seen as achieving only random improvements in effectiveness, while leaders who do consistent follow-up with co-workers are seen as achieving dramatically increased effectiveness.

Leaders must be able to effectively lead new-age professional knowledge workers – who know far more about what they are doing than their leaders.

LXB: How will leadership skill sets be different in organizations in the future?

Goldsmith: Leaders of the complex organizations of the future will more closely resemble successful leaders in professional services organizations, such as McKinsey and Accenture, rather than leaders in traditional hierarchical organizations – such as the old AT&T and Kodak. The most important employees will want leaders who encourage their passion, enhance their ability, value their time, support their dreams, and expand their contribution.

LXB: As the global business environment continues to evolve, what will be some of the specific factors that define a successful leader?

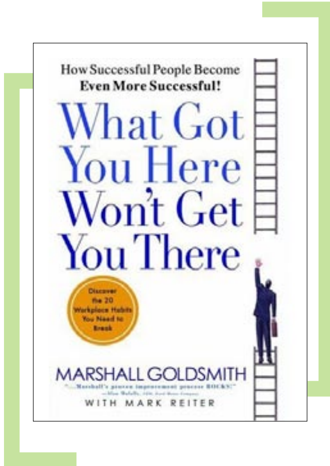
Goldsmith: In our research with high-potential leaders, five factors differentiated the leader of the future from the leader of the past. First, there is global thinking – being able to successfully lead in an increasingly global economy. Second is appreciating cross-cultural diversity – going well beyond domestic differences and coordinating the work of people from around the world. Also vital is developing technological savvy – not becoming a technical expert, but being able to understand the impact of new technology on the core business – and work effectively with technology. Building partnerships and alliances – being able to achieve synergy both inside and outside the organization will be important. And, lastly, so will sharing leadership. As Peter Drucker has said, "The leader of the past knew how to *tell*, the leader of the future will know how to *ask*." Leaders must be able to effectively lead new-age professional knowledge workers – who know far more about what they are doing than their leaders.

LXB: What traits or attributes of a good leader have and will always remain the same?

Goldsmith: When we asked this question to high-potential future leaders around the world, several factors were seen as consistently important. They were: Demonstrating integrity, communicating the vision, developing people, delivering quality, ensuring customer satisfaction, and maintaining a competitive advantage.

LXB: Unforeseen challenges are just that. How can organizations plan for them through leadership development?

Goldsmith: Any of tomorrow's challenges are not really that unforeseen. Organizations can just ask specially selected high-potentials, customers, and suppliers to imagine the future – and they will get a reasonably good guess at what is coming.



LXB editor Rex Davenport interviewed Marshall Goldsmith. Goldsmith's book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful*, will be released on January 9 by Hyperion.

Learning Outsourcing: Dead or Alive?

Numbers say it's sputtering, but experts claim we're counting the wrong things

If outsourcing the learning function was to be the overarching trend in workplace learning for the 21st century, it hasn't exactly come to pass. Research conducted by ASTD shows the percentage of dollars spent by learning organizations on outsourcing has bounced up and down for the past six years, reaching as high as 40.5 percent in 2001 and as low as 24.8 percent in 2005 (see chart).

But experts point to a variety of explanations for the wide difference in the numbers, not the least among them being old-fashioned underreporting and a lack of definitions for outsourcing. But the importance – if not the implementation of outsourcing – is still a point of contention.

"The topic of training outsourcing continues to be hotly debated for several reasons," explains Jeff Lucas, director of communications for Raytheon Professional Services. "The market is taking longer to mature beyond its current infancy than many had predicted. Some fairly high-growth expectations were set a few years ago, and based on our own experience and on our discussions with other training providers, we're not seeing or hearing of a level of activity that matches the expectations."

Lucas adds, "Second, it's argued that training is sufficiently different from HR, finance, and information technology – it's too strategic – that it shouldn't be outsourced. And finally, there's an ongoing debate whether training outsourcing will continue to emerge as its own market or whether it will be subsumed as an element within the HR outsourcing market."

"From a business perspective, a lot of corporate people don't understand what a business outsourcing engagement for learning looks like," explains Jim Hanlin, chief operating officer of Training Industry Inc., which includes the portal TrainingOutsourcing.com. "It's easy for people to understand transaction-based outsourcing. But when you outsource a learning or training process it is much more complicated, and it involves a lot more steps. In most cases it also involves technology."

Photo: iStock

"There is reluctance among many businesses to outsource something that is seen as strategic, but not always an area of competency in most corporations," Hanlin adds. "That hasn't changed in the last five years. But, it's improving. There are more companies that understand how it's done and why it's done and have an appreciation for the challenges involved. But there is still a level of uncertainty."

"At Raytheon Professional Services," says Lucas, "we typically see three approaches to training outsourcing. In the first approach, a client outsources training processes in an arrangement completely separate from HR processes. In the second, a client incorporates training into a larger HRO deal, and the client seeks one provider to deliver an 'integrated' solution that involves training, compensation, benefits, recruiting, and other services. And in the third approach, like the second, a client includes training in HRO but seeks several 'best of breed' providers to deliver the various elements of the HRO engagement. We're experiencing and hearing about opportunities primarily in the training stand-alone and integrated HRO approaches."

IS THE DEFINITION OF OUTSOURCING FUZZY?

There seems to be more than a little confusion when the term "outsourcing" is applied to the learning function. Lucas explains: "We've found that analysts, journalists, learning executives, and training providers impute different meanings to the term 'training outsourcing.' When we speak about training outsourcing, we mean the transfer of management of one or more training processes from the client organization to the training provider."

Lucas says that in these engagements, which are usually several years in length, "the client tends to retain no resources associated with the process they've out-sourced, so the engagement results in the re-assignment of personnel to the provider. When a client organization outsources most or all of their training processes, we call it a 'comprehensive' or 'total' engagement. When only one process is outsourced, we refer to it as a 'selective' engagement."

U.K. Military Training Goes Outsourced

Raytheon Professional Services will lead the re – design and development of the training curriculum and manage training administration processes for a 25-year, $20 billion initiative called Defence Training Rationalisation, which will provide almost all specialist (post-boot camp) military training in the United Kingdom. "The consortium's name is Metrix, and the key partners are Qinetiq and Land Securities Trillium. Its tremendous scale and length have the potential of dramatically altering how people view training outsourcing" explains Raytheon Professional Services' Jeff Lucas. "Arguments will be made that the military is different from commercial organizations, but the objectives for pursuing the outsourcing engagement are the same – reduced cost, improved quality of the training experience, and ability to focus on strategic activities."

Confusion arises when short-term, project-based engagements, which are often referred to as "out-tasking," are thrown in with comprehensive or selective projects. "Out-tasking doesn't bring about the long-term transfer of process management and resources," Lucas says. "It provides access to additional capacity, capability or domain expertise, which temporarily complements – but doesn't permanently replace – an organization's training resources. Until recently, out-tasking has been the primary form of 'training outsourcing.' The emergence of large-scale, long-term outsourcing engagements focused on training processes has altered the meaning of 'training outsourcing' for some, but not yet for everybody. As the training outsourcing market continues to mature, we expect to see increased consistency in the use of these different terms."

The changing nature of business around the world also churns the water around outsourcing. "There has been a lot of activity in the past few years involving business process outsourcing," explains Hanlin. "And the big driver is globalization. Companies that have global footprints are developing and delivering training and learning on a global basis. And that is where it gets very complicated." For those companies which aren't particularly adept in their learning function, it becomes even more complex. "For companies where learning is not a core competency in a geographic area, it becomes even less of a competency when they try to implement it globally."

And that spells opportunity for the providers of outsourcing services. "You see the supply side developing and enhancing its capabilities to serve global enterprises," adds Hanlin. "And you see more global companies looking to those supplier companies to help them with the challenges they have in learning."

Avoid Being Sidelined

As learning is outsourced, how does the learning executive continue to play a key role? "Organizations opting to outsource, particularly in large engagements, should assign a very strong program manager to oversee the engagement from the client's perspective," explains Raytheon Professional Service's Jeff Lucas. "The manager serves as the channel of communication, monitors the provider's performance, and determines whether and when to escalate issues." In the most comprehensive training outsourcing efforts, a significant number of companies still control the learning strategy activity, so the learning executive continues to play a critical, strategic role in his or her organization's performance and development. "Having a strong program manager in place enables the learning executive to remain strategic," Lucas notes. Spending by learning organizations on outside services – outsourcing – has gone up and down in the past few years, which has made it difficult to determine whether it's a trend, a fad, a movement, or a corpse.

OUTSOURCING: UP OR DOWN?

Percent of expenditure on external services

2006 (projected)	30.9%
2005	24.8
2004	30
2003	38.3
2002	26.4
2001	40.5
2000	33.1
1999	32

Source: 2006 ASTD *State of the Industry*

Growing their Own

Up-skilling, then retaining its scientific and engineering workforce is a constant challenge for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Hiring, retaining, and developing a workforce that includes a high proportion of high-performing engineers, scientists, and computer scientists was a critical challenge for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. And it addressed the challenge through a unique distance learning program that was established in the 1970s.

Located in Livermore, Calif., the LLNL is part of the National Nuclear Security Administration within the U.S. Department of Energy. It has been managed since its inception in 1952 by the University of California. The laboratory's mission is to meet America's national security needs through advances in science and technology. LLNL has more than 8,000 employees and the education demographics of the scientists and engineers at LLNL differ significantly from the national norms. According to a National Science Foundation study in 1999, approximately 41 percent of the scientific/engineering workforce holds advanced degrees. At LLNL, that percentage is 75 percent.

ASSESSING ITS SKILLS GAP

From the beginning, the Laboratory had to compete with cash-rich private employers for workers with advanced skills, but even more significant was the need for constant skill growth and development. In scientific and engineering communities, where the bar can be raised overnight, the opportunity for ongoing opportunities to learn ceases to be a "nice-to-have" perk and becomes a necessary-to-survive strategy. "We talk a lot about technical agility here, and what that means is you have to move fast just to stay where you are," said Anne Khoury, division leader, Employee and Organization Development.

Starting in the 1970s, LLNL forged relationships with the University of California at Davis and Stanford University to use a microwave link to offer master's and doctoral courses on-site to engineers and computer scientists employed at the Laboratory. The goal was to provide employees with an opportunity to advance their education while doing study and research relevant to their work at the Lab. The availability of the courses also became an important recruitment tool. The type of people who qualified for employment at LLNL were drawn by the opportunity to earn advanced degrees.

The Laboratory benefited in two additional ways: first, by being able to grow the skills that were needed rather than going through expensive recruiting initiatives; and second, by avoiding the long acclimation process associated with bringing workers into a highly specialized environment.

Since the instructional television program with the University of California Davis was launched in 1971, 125 engineers and scientists have earned degrees. Stanford has awarded master's degrees to nearly 20 LLNL employees through the Stanford Instructional Television Network.

Photo: iStock

Photo: iStock

The impact of earning advanced degrees is twofold. According to Jeff Williams, senior staff engineer, obtaining advanced degrees at LLNL serves two purposes. For employees, it provides a competitive advantage, given that 25 percent of the scientists and engineers have master's degrees and 50 percent have doctorates. These statistics differ significantly from U.S. norms, characterized by 56 percent of the employed scientists and engineers having undergraduate degrees, 27 percent having graduate degrees, and only 14 percent having doctorate degrees.

For LLNL, advanced degrees increase the technical contribution of employees. The advanced degrees are not valued by themselves, according to Williams, but they lead to more sophisticated technical contributions, a requirement in a premier research and development organization such as LLNL. Additionally, approximately 85 percent of the degree recipient alumni pool have been promoted or had other major career advancement.

Degree completion, according to education programs leader, Kathy Zobel, has proven to be a critical tool for employee retention. In the most recent look at the program's impact, employees were tracked for seven years. The attrition rate for all degreed employees after seven years averaged 3.7 percent per year, ranging from a high of 4.2 percent at the undergraduate level to 2.8 percent at the Ph.D. level. By comparison, attrition among employees who began and completed degrees at U.C. Davis and Stanford during the seven years averaged just 0.2 percent; with the high of 0.3 percent at the graduate level and 0.1 percent at the Ph.D. level.

As evidence of the value of the courses for LLNL's recruiting, Zobel cited the example of an employee who received offers from every firm where he was interviewed, including IBM, Intel, Lockheed Martin, and others. After choosing to work at LLNL because of his interest in pursuing an advanced degree, he received his master's there and is now studying for his doctorate.

"He might have made a lot more working somewhere else, but the educational opportunity here has become a real enticement—not just for that one employee, but for others as well," Zobel said.

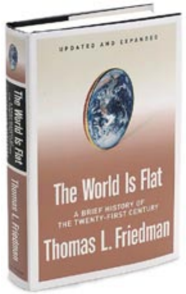
"We talk a lot about technical agility here, and what that means is you have to move fast just to stay where you are."

Anne Khoury
Division Leader
Employee and Organization Development
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories

Photo: iStock

Working on that holiday list?

Give that special person (spouse, boss, direct report) a good old-fashioned book that just might expand his or her mind. Here are some of our current faves.

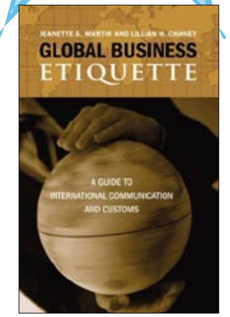


The World Is Flat [Updated and Expanded]:

A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century (Hardcover)

Thomas L. Friedman
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $30

It might seem like hubris or just a ploy to sell more books, but Thomas Friedman has updated his best-seller (and a hardcover version at that) while the original still sits on bestseller lists. The 2.0 version adds about 100 pages of expanded material on topics that were there for the taking originally (podcasting and open-source software, for example). The new version also hones in on the need for increased technical training that the new middle class will require to survive. "He wants to tell you how exciting this new world is, but he also wants you to know you're going to be trampled if you don't keep up with it," a reviewer on Amazon.com writes. If you had been waiting to buy the book, now you have a better reason.

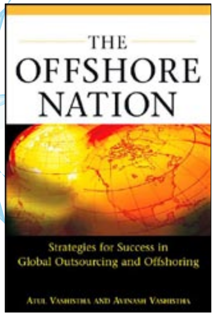


Global Business Etiquette:

A Guide to International Communication and Customs

Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney
Greenwood Publishing Group, $34.95

If you or a co-worker are about to head overseas on a work assignment, this book may be useful. According to reviews, it is more than just a few tips on language differences and what constitutes a rude gesture in Australia. The book's chapters are a collection of advice on manners and communications – written and spoken, as well as on clothing, dining and even customs regarding tipping. The chapters are divided by specific topics, which makes it easy to browse. And it can function as a guidebook as well, as it includes phone numbers of embassies, and websites for tourist bureaus for many nations. "Global Business Etiquette is intended as a resource for behavior, dress, cross-cultural communication, appropriate gift-giving, overcoming stereotypes, interpreting signals and symbols and a thousand other elements where you could screw up and ruin the deal!" writes The (Memphis, Tenn.) *Commercial Appeal*.

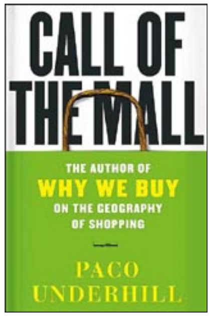


The Offshore Nation:

Strategies for Success in Global Outsourcing and Offshoring

Atul Vashistha and Avinash Vashistha
McGraw-Hill, $39.95

Sudip Banerjee, president of enterprise solutions, Wipro Technologies, wrote in an online review that in this book the Vashisthas "offer a very insightful ring-side view of the macro-economic trend towards globalization of services and how organizations and business leaders can effectively leverage this in a global economy for competitive advantage." Even if your organization does not outsource any of its functions, he adds that "it is a must read ... for sooner or later, you will be a part of this global economy where work moves to where it gets done best." According to the publisher: "Drawing upon their vast experience as consultants, the authors help you determine what role offshore services should play in your company, how to integrate the strategy into your overall corporate identity, and successfully manage the initiative on an enterprise-wide level."



Call of the Mall

Paco Underhill
Simon & Schuster, $18.95

This book already can be found on the discount tables in your bookstore, but we suggest you pick it up anyway. Just in time for your holiday shopping you can discover how most retailers have you right where they want you when you enter their stores. *Publishers Weekly* writes that "Underhill talks readers through every aspect of malls, from the first glance at their ugly exteriors along the side of the road to the struggle to remember where the car's parked. Although he offers glimpses of shopping centers around the world, the bulk of this excursion takes place in a mall a few miles outside Manhattan." Underhill and his merry band of 'retail anthropologists' uncover the good and bad of our American malls. *Publishers Weekly* adds: "Some might ask how much detail shoppers really want about how stores entice them to buy, but any nagging doubts will be swept away by the engaging manner in which Underhill passes along the keen insights he's gained through years of retail consulting." It's a breezy read and a sure stress reliever in this most stressful season.

The Savvy Traveler

THE 3-1-1 ON GETTING THROUGH SECURITY

Air travel these days involves lightweight packing but a heavyduty mental checklist.

With TSA's new 3-1-1 plan, the rules are easy to remember. All containers of gels/liquids/aerosols must be *three* ounces or less and packed in one *one-quart*, clear, plastic zip-top bag with a maximum of one zip-top bag per passenger placed separately in the bin at the security checkpoint. It's better to err on the side of caution and buy travel-size items (check the labels for size) rather than risk confiscation by bringing your own containers. One of the biggest mistakes travelers make is bringing a large container with only three ounces or less of gel or liquid in it. Furthermore, rolling up a large tube of toothpaste to make it smaller is also not allowed.

Items such as baby formula, liquid prescription medicine matching the passenger's name, non-prescription liquid medicines (i.e., saline solution, eye drops), and life support liquids (i.e., bone marrow, transplant organs) are permitted. If any of these materials is in excess of 3 ounces or in a larger container, it must be declared separately at the security checkpoint and presented for additional inspection.

All gels/liquids/aerosols in larger containers, as well as sharp items, are allowed in checked luggage, except for explosives, flammable materials, or dangerous chemicals.

For a complete list of specific items and their allowances, visit (1). Finally, you'll have to leave behind that bottled water or coffee you brought and buy one at the airport once you've successfully made it through security.

GETTING UP TO SPEED ON FLIGHT DELAYS

Traveling can be stressful enough without having to worry about flight delays, so it's good to know where to find up-to-the-minute information.

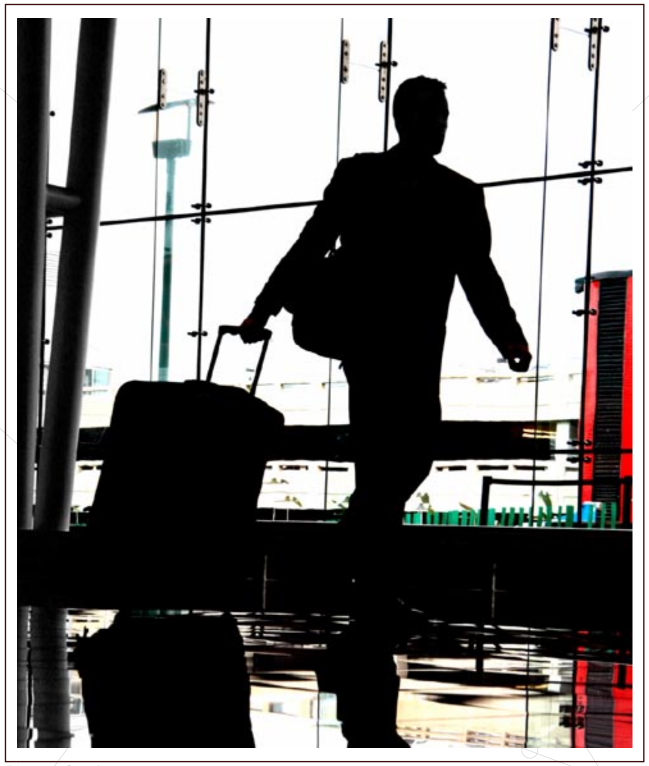


Photo: iStock

A quick general resource is the Federal Aviation Administration's website (2) on flight delays across the country. The easy-to-use rollover U.S. map has a legend indicating the different levels of delays, ranging from 15 minutes or less to airport closings. The map refreshes itself every minute, and you can also search by region, airport location, or major airport name to get more specific information.

The best way to check on a flight, however, is to speak directly with your airline, or check their website. The FAA website also has a links page to all the major airline websites. Additionally, the site provides information on average wait times at security checkpoints at each airport based on day and time of travel.

HOW TO FORECAST YOUR OWN WEATHER

Traveling cross-country? Not sure what to pack? Check out the National Weather Service's website (3). This comprehensive resource provides radar and satellite maps, air quality ratings, a warnings and forecasts guide, with a search engine by city, state, or zipcode. The Weather Channel's website (4) also gives local forecasts. Both sites also have routinely updated highlights about the circulation of major weather systems such as winter storms.

LINKS:

1. http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm
2. http://www.fly.faa.gov/flyfaa/usmap.jsp
3. http://www.nws.noaa.gov/
4. http://www.weather.com

Reported by Aparna Nancherla. anancherla@astd.org

View on Leadership

FREE FOR THE LOOKING

Author, leadership guru, and coach to uber-executives, Marshall Goldsmith has a website chock full of advice, views, suggestions, and ideas on the topic of leadership – and it's all free. (See our interview with Goldsmith on the LX View tab.) Two of our favorites are *Leadership is a Contact Sport* and *The Global Leader of the Future*. Or, browse on your own at MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com. "The resources in this library are free, and we mean to keep them that way," Goldsmith says on the website. "So please share these resources with your staff, team members, colleagues, or with anyone else in your company you think would benefit."

BUILD THE CASE FOR CHANGE

"It is difficult to get the results you want from major changes. In fact, only about one-third of all organizational changes are worth the effort." Those are the opening words on the website of Maurer & Associates (BeyondResistance.com). Candice Phelan of Lockheed Martin Corp. says her company's work with Maurer & Associates helped convince doubting stakeholders – especially in technical departments – of the need to make changes in the learning function. (See our feature on the massive changes in learning function at Lockheed Martin Corp. on the feature tab.) The website says it is filled with "tools, assessments, articles, and tips that you can use to build support for change – and avoid most of the headaches."

OUTSOURCED TRAINING BEGINS TO FIND ITS MARKET NICHE

"Organizations are increasingly relying on expertise from training outsourcing suppliers to fill many of their learning needs. But they won't discover outsourcing's full potential to create value until they begin outsourcing their learning processes, not just projects." So says the opening passages in a 2004 article on training outsourcing in ASTD's *Learning Circuits* e-magazine. (See our snapshot of current thinking on outsourcing on the Hot Topic tab.) The article asks: "What organization hasn't called upon an outside specialist to help train members of its workforce, devise a curriculum, or perform some other learning-related job?" Read the full article here. *Learning Circuits* also featured a short case study of a training outsourcing engagement at Texas Instruments.

THOUGHTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUITE ON OUTSOURCING

ASTD benchmarks indicate that the percentage of learning budgets spent on external services has averaged between 25 and 35 percent in the period 2000 to 2003. However, most external training services have involved discrete short-term projects (out-tasking) rather than long-term arrangements where the provider takes responsibility for large and critical elements of the learning function. ASTD, in a study with IBM in 2005, set out to determine the extent to which corporate learning executives have embraced the concept of outsourcing and or have changed the way they engage external service providers. The survey was designed to identify learning executives' current and future perceptions and intentions. Read the results of the survey here.

SKILLS GAP WHITE PAPER EXAMINES CAUSES, PROPOSES ACTION

ASTD has just released a landmark white paper on assessing and solving the skills gap in the American workforce. *Bridging the Skills Gap* addresses critical topics, such as: When was the last time you assessed the skills of your organization's workforce? From basic skills to more technical, professional, management, and leadership skills, does your workforce possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to move your business to the next stage of success? In this vital contribution to workplace learning and performance, ASTD in collaboration with its Public Policy Council, prepared this white paper which not only examines the causes of the skills gap but also proposes actions for bridging it in your organization. The paper presents a vision of the future and an action plan that will help organizations grow and achieve success.

LX *Briefing*

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