

PerformanceXpress

International Society of Performance Improvement Newsletter
September 2004

Trendspotters: Future Watch, Featuring Marc Rosenberg *by Carol Haig, CPT and Roger Addison, EdD, CPT*

Marc Rosenberg, PhD, CPT, and a past president of ISPI, shares his views of the future with us this month. Marc, who may be reached at marc@marcroseberg.com, is an independent consultant specializing in performance improvement, e-learning solutions, and knowledge management. In our conversation, Marc focused on the economy and the needs of the workplace.

Top Three Predictions

First, Marc foresees an *increase in work-based learning* in the next two to three years. Organizational decision makers want learning to take place in the context of the job to maintain the work focus and save time. This will challenge learning professionals to design and perhaps deliver differently.

Second, stakeholders will exhibit a *renewed interest in evaluation and certification* in their organizations to show evidence of the effectiveness of performance improvement interventions, to justify the investment in them, and to demonstrate improved performance through business results. Performance consultants will have to respond with increased skills and abilities in these areas.

Third, there will be a significant *shift from formal learning experiences to information provided at point of need*. Workers will be able to access information when they need it through updated databases. Training will become experiential and providers will have to make the distinction between information and training. In addition, we will need increased skills in information design and writing for readability.

Reasons for Predictions

Workers must focus on productivity and keep up their skills to continually improve their performance. How do we address this? What we do is *integrate the learning into the work*, rather than pulling workers off the job to learn. Effectively, this will raise the operating level for many performance improvement practitioners from an emphasis on people to an emphasis on the processes that engage them—the work.

The recent Internet boom encouraged huge expenditures in all parts of the performance improvement business. After the crash back to reality, executives re-thought their strategies and tightened their purse strings. Most of us have first-hand experience with the difficulties associated with getting funding for performance improvement these days. The good news is that computer technology really works. The challenge, not necessarily the bad news, for performance consultants is to establish and prove the business case to *use technology to deliver better learning and information*.

We are living in the midst of an information explosion. This means we must learn to select and separate what is important and useful, especially if we wish to remain sane. What will help everyone is *reliable access to good information on the job*. Today, we have the tools to assess how workers access and use information. We have the ability to connect the people who are using the

same information in identified *communities of practice*, effectively enhancing the quality of both the data selected and the experience of locating it. *(For more information on professional communities, read Don Tosti's "From the Board" article in this issue.)*

How Organizations Will be Different

We in HPT have unique strengths in diagnostics (front-end work) and evaluation (on the back-end). Marc sees these skills becoming increasingly important as stakeholders focus on the results of performance improvement interventions targeted to solve business problems.

While there is much play in the media about the outsourcing of business, Marc reminds us that all organizations are not equally suited or equipped to competently perform all business tasks. For many, particularly the growing small business sector, it makes good sense to outsource HR or training, for example, to qualified providers. This means we, in performance improvement, will be managing a wider array of resources from outside suppliers and carefully selected partners. We will need to become more skilled at selecting and managing these partnerships. (Partnering ties directly into ISPI's fourth [Standard of Performance Technology](#).)

We will use more project management and leadership skills, and our creativity will be called into play more frequently. We will also develop increased diligence and selectivity about purchased products and services.

Implications for Marc Rosenberg & Associates

Marc expects to see senior management clients demonstrate an increased interest in strategy and the bigger picture of where their organizations need to go. These folks see that they need a broader context for performance improvement. Today, it is becoming more common for a senior manager to say, "We want to improve performance," rather than offering solutions to be implemented. The performance improvement conversation continues to get easier.

Economically, changes in resource allocation are opening doors to new ways to improve performance. Many organizations no longer support huge arrays of trainers. However, with skill, luck, and being in the right place at the right time, Marc is finding more open ears among stakeholders at client organizations. It will continue to become easier to sell results rather than activities, and executives will continue to become more discerning about their investments in learning.