

A white paper report

The keys as to why on-line learning is becoming more the norm

“Adults need new ways to learn”

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Small Business Big Ideas

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In Britain a recent study at the Centre for Economic Policy Research suggests that companies and businesses that train their staff tend to be more productive.

Author of the report Bo Hansson writes, *“There is a vast empirical literature on the effects of training on wages that are taken as an indirect measure of productivity.”*

In fact Hansson adds in his study that there is quite a remarkable effect to the bottom line when companies train and teach their employees.

He goes on to write, *“It is misleading to ignore the pay-off firms take in higher profits from training. The effects are economically large. For example, raising the proportion of workers trained in an industry by 5 percentage points (say from the average of 10% to 15%) is associated with a 4 per cent increase in value added per worker and a 1.6 per cent increase in wages.”*

In a working paper published by Statistics Canada in 1995 on the effects of training in the work place the results again spoke of increases in the bottom line. The Statistics Canada report says,

“However, the single most important factor associated with profitability is how much is invested in training (intensity), suggesting that the economic benefits of training outweigh the costs of staff turnover.”

The Statistics Canada study also goes on to suggest that there is strong evidence for the hypothesis that human capital development facilitated by training is complementary to innovation and technological change. Training incidence is found to be closely related to the importance that a firm gives to its research and development, the use of new technologies and numerous other strategies that are related to innovation. Training is also greater where a firm emphasizes quality and a comprehensive human resource strategy. The results point to the inherent complementarities of technology and human resources policy.

Education is key to long-term success and short-term gains in the business world today. However, like all things that cost money in today's marketplace, one must carefully consider the Returns on investment and assess the costs versus the benefit in their analysis.



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Even education is coming under review in a more competitive economy. But what if education can adapt?

What if it can be done in different ways that doesn't cost so much and yet can that can still be effective as far as meeting the learning needs of adults are concerned?

Well welcome to the 21st Century as far as adult learning goes. Technology is bringing people from all over the world together in an "on-line" classroom.

The use of webinars, telephone classes, or online self-study modules is making it easier to learn. Making better use of one's time and scheduling challenges and making it more cost effective as well.

"Clearly, for entrepreneurship education to embrace the 21st century, professors must become more competent in the use of academic technology and also expand their pedagogies to include new and innovative approaches to the teaching of entrepreneurship. For example, the use of video conferencing and streaming of video case studies show promise as viable uses of educational technology. The ability to bring new 'live' perspectives from different geographic locations and schools will add to the richness of the educational experience. Cyberspace has virtually erased time and distance transforming the theory of education into the practice of implementation." 1.

1. Quoted from a University of Indiana Study on entrepreneurial learning programs (Solomon, Duffy, Tarabishy, 2002, pp. 82-83).

Not only is making use of different technology central to enhancing adult education as far as businesses go, but it's being demanded. Entrepreneurship is about change and doing things in exciting new ways. Entrepreneurship is about creativity, and a bringing forth the development of new ideas, products, services and technology.

So, the learning and training that's being done in today's business world must match the values and skills that the business community is bringing to the table.



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The university study goes on to say, "Wealth in the new regime flows directly from innovation, not optimization; that is, wealth is not gained by perfecting the known, but by imperfectly seizing the unknown." Entrepreneurship educators must have the same innovative drive that is expected from entrepreneurship students."

Entrepreneurship learning and business training must recognize and apply technologies in the educational setting. In many respects entrepreneurship education may actually transform the educational setting.

The study concludes, *"that those universities who offer entrepreneurship education courses need to adapt to the changing life-styles and demands in the market place for new learning opportunities. The bottom line is Entrepreneurship learning cannot be a field that succumbs to stagnation."*

Online learning is also bridging gaps in the market place.

It's been known to reach students in rural communities who don't live near the big city schools.

It's been known to reach workers in remote settings and helping them grow from being just labour workers to trained professionals with whole new skill sets.

It's changing the landscape of how adults can learn around the globe in emerging markets.

Take for example Whitney International, an online learning company who is expanding into Latin America, India and Asia.

"We want to move people away from sweatshop jobs," says Randy Best, the company's founder and chief executive. Achieving that goal, as well as succeeding commercially, he says, hinges on bringing higher education to the marginalized populations that are largely shut out of traditional universities."

Long distance education is not only making education available to more people, but it's also way more cost effective...at Memorial University in Newfoundland; they've begun to make it possible to get your B.A. in physical education and policing on line.



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One would think that you need the practicality and hands on experience of a classroom to master these two programs...but not so at Memorial.

"MUN is offering the first online Master of Physical Education program in all of Canada. It is only through distance education that current phys. ed. teachers who are living outside of St. John's, have small children, or already have full-time jobs, can study and achieve their degrees from the comfort of their own homes.

Let's face it, it's not cheap to be a student, and sometimes you need to work full-time just to be able to take classes. But, what's the point of working all the time to afford classes if working keeps you from actually making it to class?"

The provincial government in Newfoundland has just invested over \$1.5 million towards online and distance learning. This means that 72 new distant learning programs will be offered over the next 3 years.

Rhonda Bodfield from the Arizona Daily Star, writes about virtual online learning offered now at high schools.

It solves a lot of learning challenges...

"The two are big boosters of the brave new world of virtual education, touted as a way to fix some long-standing education bugaboos and allow students to design their own educational experiences. Not a morning glory? Log on later. Want to take a class not offered in your district? No problem. Bored with the pace set in a traditional class? Work at your own speed. Don't like the food processor that can be the high school social scene?"

Time, travel, costs, convenience, comfort all key factors into the success of distance learning programs.



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For today's fast paced business owner or time challenged employee, if you can still get the learning and training you need to help you succeed and at the same time address issues like time and costs, you might be onto something.

Stuart Baker principal of Tucson Arizona's online learning program concludes; *"I don't think online will ever replace traditional school, but the fact is, you get out of high school what you put into it," he said. "And that's true whether you're working in a virtual environment or not." "Virtual education is the wave of the future . . . I don't know what form it will take ultimately, but it's not going away."*

This is true in a business setting too. You still need in-class training and hands on instruction...but distance learning can accomplish a fair bit as well. It's always best to model some existing programs and establish best practices that work if you're going to implement distance or online learning into your organization.

Suffice to say though that if you offer distance learning as an alternative to your people they just might bite.

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If you want to motivate your people, or add more value to your client's bottom line then let's talk about how our telephone classes can work for you personally or for your team then call us at 416-630-3527.



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