



FACILITATING CHANGE

- CHARLES JENNINGS

Training has been a basic human activity since the dawn of time. In prehistoric cultures, adults prepared children for survival and work by training and coaching to develop skills.

But, as the demands of work and skills became more complex, teaching and learning became more systematized. Instructional practices became refined and the curriculum evolved. We have the 18th century Prussians to thank for both the modern classroom (which the Pietists instituted in the 1770s) and for the curriculum.

The philosopher Johan Gottlieb Fichte, who was instrumental in developing the structured Prussian education system, said, "if you want to influence the student, you must do more than merely talk to him; you must fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than what you wish him to will."

The Pietists and Fichte saw structured training as a way to instill loyalty and prepare young men for the military and the bureaucracy. Although life has moved on since those times, many aspects of training have not. Many of today's classroom-based activities can still be identified as first generation children of the

"monitorial education" model that emerged from the Pietists' work.

But, change is certainly starting to happen. Training is no longer seen as the only panacea for skills development and performance improvement. In today's world of rapid change and increasing complexity, the pressure to learn, unlearn and relearn in a continuous way throughout our working lives is becoming more intense. Traditional training models simply can't accommodate this need.

FROM COURSES TO RESOURCES

The only answer to this dilemma is to think of learning and development not as a series of training events, but as a process that is part of every worker's daily activities. In order to facilitate this change, we need to think resources rather than courses.

The rising awareness of the power of experiential and social learning, and the adoption of various flexible, context-driven learning approaches, reflect this change. Of course, this is not to say we should discard training entirely. Training has an important role to play. However, we need to be clear

where structured training can add value and where it can't.

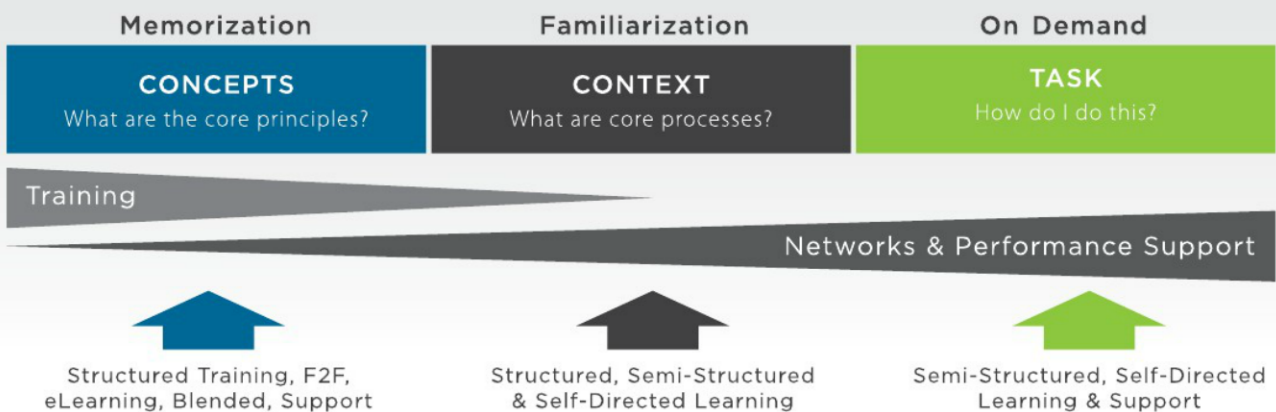
Over the years, I have found the model in Figure 1 useful to determine when training is appropriate and when other support is better.

Structured development and training activities work well where there is a need for high-level concept development – such as when a person starts a new job and needs to understand the associated core principles and expectations. Onboarding programs should be designed around the left-side of this model. However, the content of many training initiatives lies on the right of this diagram.

The challenge is that we learn task-based work best in the context of the workflow and not in away-from-work training. Using experiential and social learning approaches and providing performance support in the workflow are far more efficient and effective ways to develop high performance at task level. [🔗](#)

Charles Jennings is a director of the 702010 Forum, Duntroon Associates and the Internet Time Alliance. Email Charles.

FIGURE 1



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