

# Training's Role in Achieving High Performance



A New Strategy for Training and Development in Organizations



**Resource  
Development  
Systems** LLC

Managing the Human Side of Business <sup>SM</sup>

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If you would like to use this article or parts of this article in any form, then please contact us and we will be happy to work with you to accomplish your goal. We are also available for interviews regarding the Seven Elements of High Performance™ model.

We are happy to discuss the inclusion of the Seven Elements of High Performance™ as part of a training program. Please contact us using the information at the end of this article explaining how you would like to use the model in your training program and we will be happy to discuss with you about the authorization for use of the model.

Note: the US Navy's Center for Naval Leadership is already utilizing our model in their leadership development programs with our permission.

For a more in-depth look at the Seven Elements of High Performance™ model and how it can help drive performance in organizations we invite you to read our new book **Leadership Lessons From the Medicine Wheel: The Seven Elements of High Performance** (ISBN 978-1-59932-111-0).

# Training's Role in Achieving High Performance: A New Strategy for Training and Development in Organizations

*The research is rich with evidence that Training & Development programs provide value to the performance of the organization. But all training programs are not equal in helping the organization perform. There are key areas where Training & Development should place its efforts and resources, and key approaches for delivering those programs if Training & Development departments are going to contribute to organizational performance.*

By Gary Lear, President and CEO  
**Resource Development Systems LLC**

From 2002 to 2005, **Resource Development Systems LLC** conducted a research study that was designed to help us determine what makes a difference in the performance of organizations. Over the course of this timeframe we reviewed a tremendous amount of other research studies, most of them large-scale studies involving many organizations and large numbers of employees. Even after we completed our study and finalized our model, we continued to review research and articles as they are published to insure that the model that we discovered from our initial research is still valid. To date, we have reviewed over 1000 studies, articles and research-based books in our quest to determine what drives organizational performance.

As a result, we have been able to identify Seven Elements that must be present for an organization to become a high performing organization. These Seven Elements are the building blocks that end up driving the success of the High Performing Organizations that have been studied. But it is more than just having these elements present in the organization; it is the dynamics that are involved in these Seven Elements that create high performance. These dynamics are represented in the following model, which we call the **Seven Elements of High Performance™**. (Note: while this paper is not specifically about the Seven Elements of High Performance™, it is best if you have a basic understanding of the model to help in the understanding of the concepts that will be shared. It is therefore suggested that you might want to review our other whitepaper *The Dynamics of High Performance Organizations* before continuing.)



We believe that the Seven Elements model allows us to take a highly complex construct, the modern organization, and turn the complexity of what makes it not only work, but work extremely well, into a simple, yet very powerful tool for understanding the dynamics that are necessary for achieving that high performance. The model provides a wealth of understanding for a great number of people, but most specifically the executives and managers of an organization. This model gives them a roadmap for creating the kinds of systems that are needed in order to generate high performance in their organization. Of course, we have written on this in our other whitepapers, articles, and our just released book *Leadership Lessons From the Medicine Wheel: the Seven Elements of High Performance*. ([www.LeadershipLessonsFromTheMedicineWheel.com](http://www.LeadershipLessonsFromTheMedicineWheel.com))

But the executives and managers of the organization aren't the only ones who can benefit from a good understanding of the model and the research behind the model. We believe that some of the major systems in the organization, especially those concerned with Human Capital, can also benefit. We have already shared our thoughts on how the Seven Elements model impacts how the Human Resources Department needs to change its perspectives and its operations in our whitepaper *Getting a Seat at the Table: New Perspectives for HR*. In this paper we are taking a look at how the Training and Development (T&D) Department of an organization can leverage this information and help it become a major driving force for increasing organizational performance.

Of course, in many organizations T&D is located in HR, while in other organizations it might be located in operations, or it might even be its own separate department. It really doesn't matter where T&D is located as much as it matters what T&D is doing and where its focus is as it provides training, learning, and development opportunities for the organization's staff.

## The Seven Elements of High Performance™

- ◆ Put **People** at the **Center** of everything you do; employees, customers, and community
- ◆ Build **Trust** as a **Foundation**
- ◆ Allow **Personal Responsibility** through **Individual Decision Making**
- ◆ Share a **Vision** of an **Aligned Purpose, Values, and Goals**
- ◆ **Create Emotional Connections** through **Leadership**
- ◆ Focus on **Strengths** and **Accentuate the Positive**
- ◆ Encourage **Innovation**, because **Good Enough is Not Enough**

## Seven Elements Research Findings Review

As we look at the Seven Elements model we can easily see that the biggest single factor in creating high performance in organizations is how the organization interacts with its People. Almost all of the other Elements are, in essence, a description of things that an

organization must do in order to have good relationships with the Central Element, People. Study after study indicated that an organization's ability to emotionally connect and engage its employees with the organization's Purpose, Values and Goals is a key factor in being able to achieve high levels of performance.

Employee engagement is actually a function of several of the Seven Elements, and is the positive outcome that occurs when an organization does those elements well. It is the results of this interaction of the Elements that leads to employee engagement, and it is this employee engagement that leads to better relationships with customers, resulting in the customers' engagement, which, of course, leads to increased sales of products and services, which allow the organization to survive and thrive.

Again, it is suggested that you review our previous whitepaper on *The Dynamics of Organizational Performance* or the book *Leadership Lessons From the Medicine Wheel* to gain a greater understanding of the research and the Seven Elements. But before we go further it needs to be made very clear that employee engagement is not something that employees have to do, or something that is done to them, but rather it is the result of the kind of culture and environment that management creates for employees in the workplace, as well as the kind of relationship that management creates with those employees. It is not about creating a touchy-feely workplace, or a nice workplace, but rather a respectful workplace where employees are valued and allowed to take control of their own decisions about the work that they are doing. But it is also a highly focused workplace that accomplishes the tasks that are aligned with achieving the goals of the organization.

Another key factor that keeps coming up over and over in the research is the fact that the best organizations aren't just doing operational things differently or better than the average or mediocre organization, but rather, they are doing some entirely different things. This was especially true in their Human Capital operations, which included Training & Development efforts. Time and again, issues such as learning and development opportunities are statistically linked as a major factor contributing to employee engagement, and a variety of studies actually linked the presence of training as having a statistical impact on organizational performance.

Of course, these results are not surprising to most in T&D, but it doesn't actually tell us if all training contributes to an increase in performance, or if there are specific training programs or approaches that make a greater difference. Or maybe the research does tell us about this difference *if* we look at the findings across all the studies, especially some of the more key studies. Keep in mind that our research at **Resource Development Systems** LLC was not focused specifically on training research, but on research about organizational performance. It is the crossover where we begin to find some of those key connections and insights for the T&D profession.

There are numerous studies that are representative of the impact that training has on organizational performance. The following, however, is a closer look at three of what we consider to be the more interesting studies that we have come across that are specifically pertinent to Training & Development efforts in relation to how T&D drives organizational performance.

## ***Human Capital Index Studies***

Beginning in the 1990's, Watson Wyatt, a leading business consultancy, began looking at some of the Human Capital drivers of organizational performance, and the kinds of HR practices that could enhance that performance. They called these key practices the Human Capital Index. Their initial study looked at 400 major companies in the USA, and their ongoing research had similar numbers of organizations.

One of the items that they looked at was training initiatives. In their first two studies they obtained some interesting results. Those companies that provided any more than the basic of training opportunities (i.e., the basic technical skills to do their job) saw a decrease in returns for performance of the company. This was shocking, and was totally antithetical to the results that Watson Wyatt was finding in other parts of the world. It wasn't until their 2005 HCI Report that they saw a reversal in that negative return and saw organizations who provided developmental training programs achieve a positive impact on organizational performance.

What the 2005 study revealed was that in order for organizations to see a return on training investment beyond the basics to do the job that the employee needed to be actually retained as an employee. During much of the time for the previous studies the labor market remained quite fluid, with large numbers of employees changing jobs quite frequently. It wasn't until the time frame that was studied for the 2005 HCI Report that the labor market fluctuations had settled down and training and development efforts beyond the basics began to provide a return on investment.

## ***ASTD Data Reveals Stunning Details***

One of the most telling of these studies was a large undertaking by McBassi and Company ([www.mcbassi.com](http://www.mcbassi.com)), which was published in 2004 (*The Impact of U.S. Firms' Investments in Human Capital on Stock Prices*). The researchers set out to answer two specific questions. First, does training really have a direct impact on increasing organizational performance; and second, if training does have an impact, which kinds of training have impact? Their research used the raw data that ASTD ([www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)), the premier workplace training and development organization in the world, had collected from their State of the Industry surveys that they conduct on an annual basis. Data was from the years 1996 through 1998, and covered over 2500 organizations. The researchers then narrowed that pool down to just under 500 organizations that were publicly traded, and compared the ASTD data to the financial performance data of the organizations.

Of course, a strong correlation was discovered between the best performing organizations and the amount of training that was conducted, but when reverse analysis was conducted, the correlation did not stand, indicating that training actually did impact on performance, rather than high performing organizations were just spending more money on training because of previous years' performances. This answered the first question – training and development efforts actually do make a difference.

The second question now came into play; do certain kinds of training actually make more of a difference than others? For the purposes of their study and based on how ASTD acquired the data, training programs were divided into three categories:

1. Business skills training – programs include customer relations, sales/dealer training, quality/competition/business practices, managerial/supervisory skills, executive development, and new employee orientation.
2. Technical skills training – programs include firm-specific technical skills, general information technology skills, and professional skills.
3. Fundamental skills training – programs includes interpersonal communication, basic skills, and occupational safety/compliance.

When analyzed, the results were surprising. We would expect that technical skills would provide a significant contribution to the performance of an organization, and it did. In fact, technical skills training provided a highly significant impact on organizational performance, more than 3.5 times more than the overall impact of training in general on organizational performance. The surprise was in first and third place. Fundamental skills had the most impact on organizational performance; in fact, 75% more impact than technical skills training. But business skills had no significant impact on organizational performance one way or the other. Doing this sort of training doesn't actually increase organizational performance, nor does it impact negatively on organizational performance.

### ***Inscape Research on Training Topics***

In 2009 Inscape Publishing conducted a survey of 5,945 training participants and asked them about the types of training courses that they felt would help them perform better at work if they could take them right then. They were asked to rate their top three from the following list:

- Building emotional intelligence
- Communication skills
- Computer skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Dealing with conflict or difficult people
- Financial skills
- Innovative thinking skills
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Negotiation skills
- Project management
- Sales skills
- Stress management
- Technical knowledge related to my job
- Time management
- Working more effectively on a team

The following are the top 4 responses from the participants for the courses that they would like to take to help them do their jobs better:

1. Leadership Skills
2. Dealing with conflict or difficult people

3. Technical knowledge related to my job
4. Communication Skills

Once again, the results were both anticipated and surprising. Technical skills remain a major desire for most staff, both managers and employees. But the major emphasis on interpersonal skills that are represented by a desire for Leadership, Conflict, and Communication skills training programs is surprising when placed against some of the other “technical skills” such as negotiations, sales, finance, and time management or either of the thinking skills types of programs.

### ***Summary of Research Findings***

These three research studies provided typical results for the many other studies that are looking at training impact on organizational performance. First off, training does provide a major impact on the ability of employees to perform their jobs well, thus driving organizational performance. But this is only true if we can retain the employees that we have trained and are able to take advantage of the skills that we have provided them in that training. Economic times fluctuate, and employees leave for a variety of reasons, either on their own to find better opportunities, or at the hand of the organization as a result of cost cutting measures. Either way, good times or bad, many organizations are losing the benefit of the talent and skills that training provides. It is only when organizations have found ways to retain its trained and skilled employees that it reaps any benefit from that training.

A second discovery is understandable, but still surprising, nonetheless. Obviously, different kinds of training programs have more of an impact than others. What is probably the most surprising about this is that some of the training programs that we would have thought would have a tremendous impact on performance actually have none. These are the Business Skills training topics, and are some of the more prevalent programs in most organizations. After all, if sales are down, we send sales people off for more sales training. If our customer service numbers are down, we provide more customer service training. And if our employees are not happy, we provide more management training.

But what the research seems to be saying is that all of this training is a huge waste of time! But why? If we look at this from a more holistic point of view, we begin to see that there are probably other systems issues in play that are impacting the ability to drive sales, service customers, or please employees. In these cases, training just isn't going to have any impact on the outcome or performance. Even if there is any tiny bit of benefit, it is lost in the huge cost in delivering the training.

Another issue that was surprising is the fact that basic supervisory, management development, and leadership development had no real impact on organizational performance, especially with the impending leadership crisis that is looming for so many organizations. In the next decade we are set to see the largest exodus of leadership from organizations than in any other time in modern organizational history.

What wasn't surprising is that interpersonal skills and technical skills have a huge impact in driving organizational performance. What the research seems to say is that we should teach someone how to do their job; teach them how to get along with others, including

coworkers and customers; and then leave them alone to do their job. This mentality is highly compatible with all of the research on the drivers of employee engagement.

The third discovery isn't surprising at all. Despite all of the training that is conducted in organizations, most people aren't getting the kinds of training that will make a difference in their performance. Employees are asking for training on interpersonal skills and technical skills because they feel that they still haven't mastered them. Is this because we are too busy providing training in those areas that don't make a difference in organizational performance?

Granted, we provide a lot of training that is mandated by law or because it is a prudent practice to protect the organization from liability. But these courses aren't impacting on the performance of the organization one way or the other. While they aren't a drain on the organization's resources, they aren't driving performance, either. We must find a way to deliver this type of training in the least impactful way on the organization's resources, including employee time spent in training, as well as the overall management of that training. This would free up resources in order to spend more time and resources on the key programs that will make a difference in the organization.

## **CORE Training™**

So what are these key programs that will make a difference in the performance of an organization? As a result of our analysis of the research, we find that there are four key areas in which T&D should be placing its efforts and focusing its resource in order to help the organization increase performance. These four areas comprise what we call the organization's CORE Training™. These areas are as follows:

**C - Culture:** provide a foundation of understanding on the Purpose, Values, and Goals of the organization, in essence, "how we do things around here," along with how an employee's job matters and makes a difference.

**O - Operations:** provide the skills needed to do the job, along with the skills needed to continuously improve the processes and systems in the organization that employees are involved with on a day-to-day basis as they do their job.

**R - Relationships:** provide the interpersonal skills needed for all staff to manage, work in teams, and to sell to and service customers.

**E - Engagement:** provide the skills management needs in order to allow employees to take ownership of their jobs and to emotionally connect them to their jobs and the Vision of the organization.

Let's look at each of these areas in a bit more detail.

### **Culture**

Countless research studies revealed the importance of organizational culture for high levels of performance. One of the key issues is how well each employee fits with that culture, and how well they are connected emotionally with the organization and its Purpose, Values and Goals. This individual fit is crucial for creating employee engagement. Of course, recruitment and selection will have a major impact on insuring this cultural fit, but it

doesn't stop there. A comprehensive on-boarding process is critical to insure the alignment of the employee with the culture, as well as for keeping the employee engaged.

As we shared in our whitepaper *Getting a Seat at the Table*, if we have done a good job of selection and hiring then our primary purpose for our on-boarding process should be in creating that alignment and insuring that we retain the employee. Too often on-boarding processes are focused on providing legal foundations for getting rid of the employee later on down the road. They are filled with rules and regulations, the filling out of forms, and then dumping the employee into the workplace, all taking about a half of a day or maybe a day at most. It is no wonder that orientation programs were found to be lacking in providing value in adding to organizational performance.

We need to keep in mind that the primary goal of training should be to insure that employees have the right knowledge and skills to do their jobs in a highly engaged fashion. Part of that means that we want to retain these potentially high-performing new employees for a long time and insure that their engagement levels remain high. A well designed on-boarding process will help the organization accomplish this. It needs to be much more than the typical orientation program, probably beginning immediately after the new employee has been offered the job. The employee could visit the organization's website to learn more about its history and culture, possibly by watching video tours and a welcome from the CEO. They could also be introduced to their benefits package so that they could have plenty of time to make decisions on these matters.

A first day would include a welcome by their manager, insuring that they were properly introduced to the worksite. In larger organizations, where several people might start work on the same day, on-site group tours could be planned, or the manager could take the employee on an individual tour of the workplace. Later, the employee should be introduced to their workstation, their teammates, and their daily routine. The bottom line is that the employee must be made to feel welcome, and the manager must begin building a relationship with the employee from the very beginning. The employee must be made to feel welcomed and appreciated, not that they are an afterthought, as so often happens.

To fully integrate the employee into the culture and to learn to live the values of the organization and focus on its goals will not happen overnight. Team meetings and discussions about the values of the organization and how the team is contributing to the organization's goals should be an ongoing occurrence, but special attention should be taken with new employees. While T&D departments might have little direct interaction at this stage, it is imperative that T&D help in the design of the on-boarding process and the development of manager interaction guides, check-lists, and other support tools to insure a proper assimilation of the new employee into the culture. After all, this is the most crucial stage in an employee's career in the organization, and you only get one chance to do it right.

## **Operations**

Part of orientating a new employee into the organization is to insure that they know what their job roles, responsibilities and results are, and how to technically do their job. This is probably the one area where most T&D departments are already focusing most of their efforts. Many jobs require employees to use complex tools, machinery, computers, or other

items that require specialized training. Most organizations also spend time providing training on safety procedures. Yet, according to the Inscape study mentioned above, many employees, including managers, still feel that they could use more training in the technical areas of their jobs.

The best organizations don't leave this training to chance. They have carefully identified all of the skills and processes required of a job, and insure that their employees fully understand where in the process they are located, what they need to do to do their job well, what latitude they have in making decisions about their jobs, and the results that is expected of them. This clarity allows the employee to make good decisions and to insure quality or high levels of service when taking care of their customers.

Unfortunately, the mediocre organizations hire employees based on skills already possessed and expect them to transfer those skills over to their new employer and new job with little or no support. This leads to poor quality of products and services for customers, which negatively impacts customer retention and the financial performance of the organization.

Insuring the training of employees on their technical skills doesn't always have to occur in the classroom. Using an on-the-job training approach is a good way to deliver a lot of technical skills to employees. The best T&D departments will insure that there is a well laid out plan for the delivery of these skills, as well as insuring that the right training and job aids are available for those who are providing the training.

Another set of skills that should be addressed are those needed to optimize processes. Training in areas such as TQM, Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, or other statistical process control approaches is necessary for the organization to innovate and improve and maintain its competitiveness in the marketplace. It also allows employees to take more control of their jobs and make better decisions because they now have the information and tools to make those decisions.

Keep in mind that operational skills will have to continually be updated as jobs continually change as technology and customer's needs continually change. This means that you can't just provide operational skills training to new employees or when an employee changes positions. It means that T&D must be involved in the organizational change process so that it can discover the new skills that will be needed, and design and develop the training approaches to insure the acquisition of those skills by all employees, including managers.

The training conducted in this area is some of the most important training that an organization can provide. After all, this is where most of the work gets done. The better job that the T&D department does in formalizing this training, the better the employee will perform, and the better the organization will perform.

## ***Relationships***

Perhaps the biggest differentiator between mediocre organizations and the best organizations is in how they deal with their people, both employees and customers. The best really do place their employees and customers at the center of everything they do. People are what every organization is really about. People create products or services that are then delivered to other people. Even if those products or services are technically

bought by another organization, it really is the people inside that organization that will make the decision on purchasing and using those products or services.

So the kind of relationships that people have with each other is the key to driving success in any organization. A positive relationship between employees helps employees work better together to accomplish their tasks. A positive relationship between employees and managers helps to keep employees focused on the Purpose, Values, and Goals of the organization in order to meet the organization's customers' needs. And a positive relationship between employees and customers will provide the customer with the emotional connection to want to respond positively to the organization, whether it is for-profit, non-profit, or a governmental agency.

In order to build these positive relationships the best organizations build a foundation of Trust with both their employees and their customers. Building Trust is a key factor in driving high-levels of performance. Trust Building relies on some specific behaviors, and the key to those specific behaviors is good communication skills. The better we can communicate with our employees, co-workers, and customers, the better results that we will get in the end. So communication skills will be high on the priority list for a Training & Development focus.

### ***The Four Behaviors that Build Trust™***

1. **Straightforwardness** – expectations are clear, disagreements are discussed and resolved, individual performance is discussed and agreed upon, and credit is given where credit is due.
  - Directness – We are clear about what we mean
  - Honesty – We are always truthful and honest
2. **Openness** – employees exchange information, discuss feelings and opinions and do not keep secrets
  - Responsiveness – We are open to feedback and new ideas
  - Disclosure – We share our own ideas and opinions
3. **Acceptance** – employees are respected for their contribution, differences are valued and leadership is shared
  - Receptiveness – We value the individual differences in others
  - Respect – We value the abilities and contributions of others
4. **Reliability** – employees can count on each other for support, keep their commitments and strive for excellence in what they do
  - Keeps Commitments – We do what we say
  - Seeks Excellence – We do our best in everything we do

As we saw above, interpersonal skills training provides some of the greatest value for the T&D investment. Yet, as we also saw, most employees feel that they still have not mastered these skills. Many organizations spend a lot of time on team building, sales, and customer service training, yet these programs are not getting the kind of results that simple interpersonal skills training provides. The reason, of course, is that most of these training

programs are focused on the steps to get to the sale or to placate the customer, rather than on the need to build a relationship founded on trust with the customer. Instead of dealing with the day to day issues on the team that are destroying trust, we send teams out to play on ropes courses in an artificial setting that doesn't translate well back to the work environment.

The key to providing good interpersonal skills is to find a good, simple, easy to use, yet powerful model of interpersonal behavior. The model should be robust enough that it can help to build teams, help managers to engage employees, and help employees to engage customers. The model should focus on explaining behaviors and needs of others while at the same time not placing value on one type of person over another. And it should allow people to better understand their own strengths, as well as the strengths of their coworkers.

Again, the model should be powerful and flexible, but it should also be simple enough that members at all levels of the organization can use it to create better relationships with others. Try to avoid using a lot of competing models; two competing models is one too many. Stick to one primary model and allow it to permeate throughout the entire organization. Allow and encourage the model to end up becoming integrated into the "language" of the organization's culture. All other models should support your primary model.

### ***Training on Emotional Intelligence and Other "Hot" Topics***

Emotional Intelligence (EI or more commonly referred to as EQ) is a hot topic these days. An understanding of EQ is important, but we have to keep in mind that EQ is just a definition of the relationship between how well one understands themselves and their impact on others and how well they use that understanding and their skills to work with others to achieve goals. EQ itself is not a skill and is not the goal. Achieving Trust by learning and applying Trust Building skills is the real goal. After all, Trust is the foundation for manager, employee, and customer engagement. Focus on providing the solid interpersonal and communication skills and allow EQ to increase on its own. There is no need to actually provide individual or separate training programs on this topic.

The same is true for topics such as Diversity and Sexual Harassment. There is little need to provide a separate program on Diversity. To be sure, having a diverse workforce is imperative to the long-term success of any organization. But what is important is not the understanding or appreciation of diversity, but the ability to build positive relationships with others who are different from us. Without this focus on relationship and trust building, then your diversity training program is just wasting your organization's resources.

The need for training on Sexual Harassment is similar. If everyone in the organization is taught how to build relationships and trust, then people will also be learning about behaviors that are antithetical to those that allow for sexual harassment to occur.

Keep in mind that the focus of your training programs should be on building relationships through building trust. While you might create different forms of the training for sales staff, customer service reps, teams, or managers, the ultimate goal is the same for everyone. Everyone should be learning how to build better relationships based on the situation and their position. It just can't get much more simpler than that.

## **Engagement**

The term "engagement" has been used, and perhaps overused, to mean a variety of things. It has also been confused with terms such as motivation, satisfaction, and a variety of others that don't quite encompass the whole of what engagement is. As was shared in "Leadership Lessons From the Medicine Wheel," satisfaction tells us about what happened in the past, where engagement will tell us about the future. An engaged employee will go out of their way to take care of a customer and do their best to insure that the customer has a great experience. An engaged customer will most likely return for more products or services. In both instances we will probably retain both the engaged employee and the engaged customer. And the research is clear – engaged employees lead to engaged customers.

### **Employee Engagement Defined**

The positive emotional connection that an employee has to the organization and its Vision (Aligned Purpose, Values, and Goals) that drives positive behaviors by the employee, which results in the success of the organization.

### **Customer Engagement Defined**

The positive emotional connection that a customer has to the organization and its products or services that drives positive behaviors by the customer, which results in the success of the organization.

As shared earlier, employee engagement is a huge driver of organizational success. In order to get employees engaged, five of the Seven Elements of High Performance™ must be in place. The organization and its management must put an emphasis on putting People at the Center. There must be a culture that mandates the building of Trust and Personal Responsibility. There must be a compelling Vision of an aligned Purpose, Values and Goals, and these must be well communicated with all employees. And there must be managers who are placing an emphasis in their Leadership role by creating emotional connections between their employees and the Vision of the organization.

This last element is the key to the success of the organization, and is part of the focus of the final CORE Training™ component. Leadership is vital to every organization. But unlike a lot of approaches that try to differentiate between management and leadership, our research reveals that leadership is something that every manager must do in order to increase employee engagement and drive organizational performance. In other words, it is one of the many roles that managers have, but perhaps it is their most important role, and all other

roles are subordinate to it and should support it. This is an entirely different focus than what most management and training programs have.

## **The Problem with Current Management and Leadership Development**

In most management and leadership development programs the emphasis is placed on a vast amount of things that managers must do in order to be leaders, rather than on what they need to be in order to be successful. The focus is totally on the manager, rather than on the people that they manage and lead and the results that they should be delivering in order for the organization to be successful. And rather than focus on the development of the team and the organization, the focus is on the development of the individual.

Most programs also start in the wrong place by training line supervisors and mid-level managers instead of taking a top down approach. In order to drive high levels of organizational performance, there has to be new mindsets at all levels of the organization. That means that the top levels of management must be prepared first, and then move down through the organization. This provides a support structure for the new skills that managers are learning so that they may be successfully implemented.

But most management and leadership development programs start at the bottom and play around with working up. Too often participants ask “so are you going to teach this to my manager next?” Unfortunately, in most cases the real answer is “we’d like to, but probably not.” But if programs start at the top and work down, then the support structure is already in place, and participants will be more likely to apply what they are learning.

Yes, there is a huge lack of training for most line managers, and line managers probably have the most impact on employee engagement. This certainly needs to be addressed and we do need to insure that every manager receives training on how to engage employees. But the research reveals that the actions of top level managers also have a huge impact on employee engagement as well. And without the strong support system that these managers can provide, line managers will not be able to make the most use of their training and put their new skills into action as effectively, if at all.

Another issue that most management and leadership development programs face is that they are entirely too scattered. Instead of coming in and insuring that all of the managers of a particular unit are trained so that the entire unit benefits immediately from the training, managers from a variety of units will be sent to the training. It isn’t uncommon for a large, national organization to put 20 managers at a time through a program with no hopes at all of ever having all the managers in a unit ever being trained at the same time. This means that little of what is being learned in these programs is ever actually passed on to the day-to-day activities of the manager.

Finally, most programs provide a major dump of information on the participants in a short period of time, usually two or three days, but sometimes up to a week at one single time. Participants are so overloaded with the information learned that they forget a large portion of what they experienced by the time they get back to their workplace, and put even less into action because the programs have nothing set up to insure application of skills after the training session.

With all of these issues running rampant through most management and leadership development programs, there is no wonder that the research found that these kinds of programs are not providing value back to the organization. The isolated pockets of success just can't overcome the lack of impact for the vast majority of participants. It does no good to provide training when there is too much information, no support system, and no method to insure training application.

If we are going to increase employee engagement then we first have to realize that it happens not because of what employees do or fail to do, but the kind of workplace environment that management creates for their employees to operate in. The primary training vehicle would be an ongoing program of management development that allows managers to learn about their new role of leadership and about creating emotional connections that leads to employee engagement. Managers need to learn about creating the kinds of work environments that create employee engagement and then apply that learning through activities that would actually engage their employees.

The level where the manager is located in the organization will have an impact on where their learning focus is placed. But whatever we are doing we have to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of any management or leadership development program is to actually increase employee engagement and drive organizational performance. Perhaps the best measure of the success of any management development program would be the increase in engagement levels of the team that a given manager is leading. Remember, however, that while we may measure and manage employee engagement by the organization, division, department, or even team, we actually create employee engagement one employee at a time.

## **Delivering CORE Training™**

Discussions and arguments abound about the effectiveness of instructor led, e-learning, blended learning, and other training delivery formats. Recently entered into the discussion are the topics of formal and informal learning. In regard to the delivery of training, research seems to indicate that if a topic is deliverable via a variety of approaches, then it doesn't really matter what approach is used as long as good design standards are met. But that is assuming that any of the formats are applicable to the material. When it comes to the CORE Training™ topics, it seems that this might not entirely be the case, especially in the area of Relationships and its focus on interpersonal communications.

However, there are two things that seem to be evident from the Seven Elements research. First, we must get training as close as possible to the actual performance on the job. This means that we need to have learning environments that mimic the workplace or even get

the training right out into the workplace. The second thing is that we must insure that what is learned is actually applied to the job. Too frequently training and development efforts are undertaken and then employees go back to their job to never use their new skills. The training design must go beyond the initial training program and include application activities as follow-up to the initial training. Support systems must be developed that encourages the employee to actually use what they have learned.

Both of these delivery issues indicate that the employee's manager must be more involved in the training process – before, during, and after. This also means that the T&D department will probably have to provide training to the manager on how they can and why they should support the training program. By getting a manager involved in the employee's training and development you help the manager begin to make the emotional connections that they need to make in order to increase employee engagement.

Another issue is that T&D will have to stop looking at training and development efforts as single or individual programs, but rather begin to start looking at these efforts as long-term, comprehensive processes. Instead of a program being a single half-day or one-day program, we now look at a series of half-day programs and connect them together, along with pre- and post-work that follows the employee back into their work environment. Blended learning now becomes more than just a combination of online and classroom work, but also self-study and On-the-Job-Training, as well.

A final issue that this approach solves is that of formal versus informal learning approaches. It has been postulated that the amount of informal learning occurring in an organization is staggering compared to formal learning. The goal of any T&D department should be the reduction of informal learning in the organization. After all, if people have to learn informally then they are not learning what they are supposed to be learning in the formal training and development efforts provided by the organization.

One of the key issues from the Seven Elements research is that of Intent. The best organizations set out with intention to be the best. They control what is feasible and practical for them to control and create their own destiny. T&D departments can have no less of an Intent as they go about their duties. We have to keep in mind that formal training does not mean that there is an instructor or a computer class that the employee takes, but rather that we have formally identified a necessary skill and set out a proscribed method for insuring the mastery of that skill. That can occur from reading a well design job-aid, or from OJT instruction by an experienced fellow employee and be just as formal as an employee sitting in a classroom in a program led by an instructor.

It is the informality that we have to be fearful of, because by its very definition there is no set way for the learning to occur and there is no way to insure that the employee actually learns the right way to do things. In essence, informal learning is accidental learning, and it will be by pure accident if the employee actually learns the right way to perform. Simply put, the best organizations just don't leave these type of things to accident.

Also keep in mind that what has been shared in this whitepaper has not addressed research on specific methods of training delivery. The comments shared here are focused on the strategy of delivering training programs and not on the specific instructional design of those training programs.

## **What People Want**

Training and Development doesn't have to create a whole lot of different versions of training programs in order to reach all of the different kinds of employees. The research is pretty clear that there aren't as many differences between people as we would like to believe. And the top drivers for people are pretty consistent across genders, ages, and races.

People want to know that what they do makes a difference; that others know that they are making a difference; and that it actually matters to someone that they are making a difference. They want to be trusted and to be able to trust the others who are in their work environment, including their managers, coworkers, and customers. They want the ability to make decisions about how they do their jobs. They want feedback and coaching from their managers as to how well they are performing and to have help in finding better ways of doing their job. And finally, they want an opportunity to learn and grow with their job and the organization.

Training & Development Departments can have a tremendous impact on helping the organization achieve all of these, and in doing so T&D will also have a tremendous impact on the performance of the organization, not just for the immediate future, but for well into the distant future.

## **A Training & Development Strategy for Performance**

Despite the recent levels of unemployment increasing, resulting in a larger pool of job applicants, the potential employees with the best talent and the capability of becoming fully engaged, giving their best to provide quality products and services to the organization's customers, are still scarce. There may be a lot of bodies out there that could fill that empty position, but there still are few that can fully fit the needs of the organization. And once the organization has identified and brought those new employees on board, there needs to be a training strategy in place to insure that they will remain engaged, remain retained, and that will leverage their talents and drive.

Training & Development departments can play a huge role in helping to insure that everyone at all levels in the organization have the skills that they need to insure organizational performance results. In order to help drive organizational performance, T&D needs to focus on the following:

1. Link training strategy and results back to the organization's goals and metrics. Employee engagement metrics are a key measure for most human capital endeavors, including Training & Development. Use measures to show impact on organizational performance, not just finances.
2. Utilize the CORE Training™ approach to focus resources on the kinds of training that will actually impact organizational performance. Not every training program is going to provide value, so focus on those that research indicates will make a difference and tailor them to fit your organization.

3. Develop a comprehensive strategy of learning for the entire organization. This means linking programs so that there is ongoing learning that builds on previous learning. Accomplish this by insuring continuity of programs, and provide shorter sessions, but spread across longer time frames. Make a concerted effort to formalize more of the learning activities and not leave learning to “chance” through inefficient informal learning.
4. Get training as close to the actual job as possible and insure the transfer of training to actual application on the job. This means creating application exercises that participants complete between sessions that insure that skills are put into practice. It means leveraging Just in Time and On the Job training approaches, and getting managers involved in their employee’s training.

There are a couple of additional thoughts that need to be shared. First, notice how T&D activities in the Culture learning area bleed over into the Operations learning area. If our Culture T&D activities are actually going to take 6 to 9 months, then we will have to provide training and learning activities in Operational skills simultaneously. We will also probably be providing Relationships training and learning activities at the same time, as well. And if the new hire is a manager, then we will probably be providing Engagement training and learning activities also at the same time. The key isn’t to approach each area of CORE Training™ as a separate step, but rather as a related component of a comprehensive, integrated Training and Development strategy.

A good example is when we provide training about the Culture of the organization the Values of the organization will be discussed. Managers and employees will talk about the behaviors that exemplify the living of those Values and about the behaviors that don’t support those Values. Part of that discussion will also be about the behaviors that build Trust. Living the Values and being a Trust Builder are also components of building relationships, and so we have also provided training about Relationships, as well. And while these kinds of discussions are crucial in the first few weeks of an employee’s career with the organization, these should be an ongoing and regular activity for all team members.

### **Be – Do – Achieve**

- ◆ To **Achieve** what you have never had, you must **Do** what you have never done.
- ◆ If you do what everyone else is doing, you will get what everyone else is getting.
- ◆ Most get *mediocrity*, at best.
- ◆ To **Achieve** what you have never had, you must **Do** what you have never done.
- ◆ To **Do** what you have never done, you must Be what you have never been.

Know what you need to Be first.

Then you will know what to Do to Achieve your Goals!

*Leadership Lessons From the Medicine Wheel*

Second, we must keep in mind that the best organizations do things differently in order to achieve their difference in performance. We must also approach our Training & Development activities in a different manner if we are going to help our organizations achieve higher levels of performance. We must focus our limited resources in those areas that actually make a difference in organizational performance and let go of some of those

other activities that we “have always done.” To be sure, we still have a lot of legal compliance training that needs to be addressed, but given what we now know about the research and what drives performance, we can’t afford to provide stand-alone programs in these areas. Instead, we must provide training in these areas by taking a new approach and insuring that the outcome of the training, a positive workplace, is still achieved.

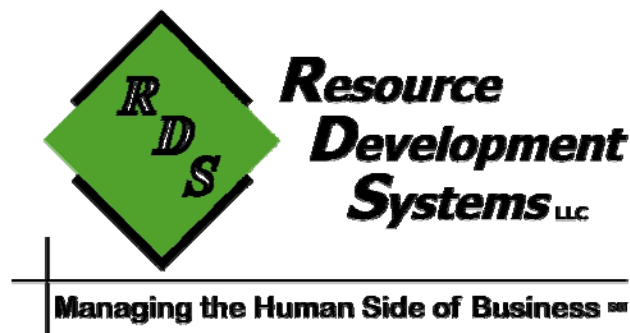
By leveraging the *Seven Elements of High Performance*™ and the research behind them, any Training & Development department can craft a strategy of learning and performance that is unique to their organization and works for them. The CORE Training™ approach provides the best set of guidelines for developing this strategy, but keep in mind that it will be up to each organization to craft the training programs and delivery approaches that it will implement, and that will have the greatest impact on its performance. By focusing on those CORE Training™ programs as a learning strategy, Training & Development can have a huge role to play in helping to drive organizational performance.

## The Seven Elements of High Performance™

- ◆ Put **People** at the **Center** of everything you do; employees, customers, and community
- ◆ Build **Trust** as a **Foundation**
- ◆ Allow **Personal Responsibility** through **Individual Decision Making**
- ◆ Share a **Vision** of an **Aligned Purpose, Values, and Goals**
- ◆ **Create Emotional Connections** through **Leadership**
- ◆ Focus on **Strengths** and **Accentuate the Positive**
- ◆ Encourage **Innovation**, because **Good Enough is Not Enough**

For more on the Seven Elements of High Performance™ check out our book

### Leadership Lessons from the Medicine Wheel: the Seven Elements of High Performance



## About Gary Lear, President and CEO

Dynamic thought leader in the areas of organizational performance, strategy and leadership, Gary Lear combines the teachings from his American Indian heritage with the most modern business research to help organizations achieve results by more effectively *managing the human side of business*<sup>SM</sup>. His approach is to help leaders learn how to create the high performance cultures and make the connections that unlock the hidden potential of the people they employ. With over 20 years of experience working with culture change and leadership development, Gary has worked with thousands of managers in all kinds of industries. Challenging, yet practical, Gary takes a different approach to help his clients get the results they want because he understands that the best organizations don't just do things differently; they do different things.

## About *Resource Development Systems* LLC

Founded in 1997, *Resource Development Systems* LLC is an organizational performance consulting firm dedicated to helping its clients increase performance by being more successful at *Managing the Human Side of Business*<sup>SM</sup>.

At **RDS** we excel in developing the new critical competencies organizations need to prevail in the global business environment - skills like trust building, collaboration, and innovation. These skills can never be outsourced, replaced, or made obsolete, and they are absolutely key to competing successfully in the world today.

Our development programs are always designed to align people's skills and behavior with organizational strategies to create high performing organizations. That means you have the ability to shape your workforce in alignment with your organization's Vision and its strategies, because our solutions give you a complete system for creating the results you want.

We know change begins with insight, takes shape through action, is intensified by focus, and is fueled by ongoing success.

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*If you would like to learn more about how you can apply the **Seven Elements of High Performance**<sup>TM</sup> in your organization and help it create a high-performance workplace where people want to come to work and excel; where the organization not only achieves its goals, but also achieves significance; then please give us a call. We will be happy to talk with you about your needs.*

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