

Education is Our Legacy for the Future

In a rapidly changing world with an increasingly uncertain future, education is probably the most important single thing any organization does, and that importance just keeps growing. There are three reasons for this, Rod Cameron, Executive Director AIPC and JMIC writes.

The first is that knowledge and the benefit of experience are probably the most valuable legacies we can pass on to those who will be following us into any discipline – and critical to delivering the kinds of specialized products and services that increasingly characterize a future workplace that may require skills not directly transferrable from other areas of employment. With a tight market for talent in many parts of the world today, employers often have to recruit from other specialties and then provide the additional required knowledge on-site. And while “on the job” experience will eventually provide a lot of what’s required, specialized training is a way to get new recruits up to speed more quickly.

But in times when almost everything about the product is changing so quickly, education is not just an investment in the future – it’s also about right now, and being able to put the very latest information, insights and strategies into immediate action. Even those with lots of experience in a particular business regularly find themselves facing new challenges, as everything from client needs and business methods to new technology and customer expectations change on what seems to be a daily basis. Invariably, the best ideas for how to address these come from others in the industry who are having similar challenges, and educational programs are an effective way of facilitating an exchange of such information and insights.

Finally, it’s about reputation – and an ability to create a comfort level amongst clients who need the confidence that things are being done properly and professionally. Education is primarily about building the kinds of competencies needed to demonstrate capability – and the more visible this capability is, the more likely it is to support being taken seriously by other disciplines. In a world where “second best” gains little respect, an investment in good education can not only produce better results, but more *visibly* better results – and that is perhaps the most valuable commodity in the market today.

What is changing is delivery. This is a product of technology and a matter of what is possible today that might not have been a few years ago – but it’s also about changing expectations around how information can and should be communicated by those on the receiving end. Online and remote learning, for example are very attractive in that they let students set their own pace and don’t require actual attendance in a central setting. At the same time, they enable participants to access speakers and resources that would be difficult if not impossible to bring together for a smaller group.

On the other hand, in a way, the method of delivery is in itself a part of the lesson, since it reflects on what we know about how to convey information most effectively and demonstrate the additional values – network

development, for example – that reinforce the value of face to face encounters in validating both content and relationships. In the end – as with remote meetings generally – the most effective approach will likely be a combination of both, depending on the kinds of materials to be covered and the need for direct interaction as a component of the learning process.

The bottom line: training and education are both critical and evolving quickly. The challenge for everyone is not just to keep pace with current norms but to also prepare new arrivals for dealing with what may be a range of possibilities in the future. That is a more creative exercise than simply passing on existing information – but the only realistic approach to a world that is evolving as quickly as ours is today.

AIPC represents a global network of over 185 leading centres in 59 countries with the active involvement of more than 900 management-level professionals worldwide.

marianne.de.raay@aipc.org \ www.aipc.org