

## BUILDING LEADERS

# RECOGNIZING, REGROUPING AND RESPONDING TO CHANGE



It is not uncommon to try to make sense of change by drawing parallels between the shifts occurring around you and natural disasters. For instance, we know a lot about hurricanes and earthquakes these days (why they happen and, often, where and when they will hit). Unfortunately, we have no idea how to stop them!

### AT ITS CORE, TRAINING IS CHANGE.

It is much the same with organizational change. We know it is coming, but we struggle to identify when it will arrive or how disruptive it will be. That notwithstanding, when change does hit, your experience as a training professional can be leveraged almost immediately to help your organization recognize, regroup and respond.

#### RECOGNIZE

Simply stated, there are layers to change. Everyone within the epicenter of an earthquake can feel the vibrations, but the true impact of those tremors on structural integrity, quality of life and the potential for aftershocks is not immediately apparent. Similarly, when change hits, most of us grasp that things are about to become very different, but the particulars associated with those changes are the primary drivers of fear and uncertainty. The quicker an organization can accurately assess the impact of disruption, the more responsive it can be. The process associated with that assessment mirrors

what effective training departments have been doing during discovery since their inception.

#### REGROUP

At its core, training is change (and always has been). People attend training to learn something new and accelerate their effectiveness. Under the umbrella of all that is disruptive change, targeted training is a visible mechanism of reformation. On a webinar approximately two weeks into the pandemic, Elliott Masie, an educational technology expert, reported the most common comment he heard as people across industries came to grips with a drastically different reality was, “Will somebody please just tell me how to do my job?”

The higher the “earthquake registers on the Richter scale,” the more receptive learners become to learning. Perhaps, the most practical way to view the role training plays in this context is to say that, when change occurs, the readiness of employees to perform shifts. People who generally knew what they were doing, and enjoyed doing it, are thrust into circumstances where their accumulated base of experiences and skills may no longer be relevant.

In many respects, the people who develop and deliver targeted training take on the role of first responders. They provide structure, reinforcement and hope. In so doing, training tells people what they should be doing and how they will not only survive but prosper.

#### RESPOND

The training department has long been the epicenter of feedback. Employees’ ability to provide and receive constructive feedback can be a contributing factor in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage. This reality is accentuated amid disruptive change.

Managing change is an iterative process. You think you know what you are doing after you regroup, so you take action. Then, you find yourself confronting an obstacle that you did not account for that throws you off track. If this sounds familiar, it is probably because it is the precise challenge training professionals have been facing since the beginning of time (or so it seems).

How do you take “what you know” and translate it into “what to do” in a manner that advances your purpose and organization? The short answer here is feedback – understanding the short-term impact of your actions – coupled with feedforward – understanding how future actions need to be calibrated in service of alignment and progress.

We add, in conclusion, that none of this is easy, but – with increasing regularity – it is becoming undeniably necessary. 🔄

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