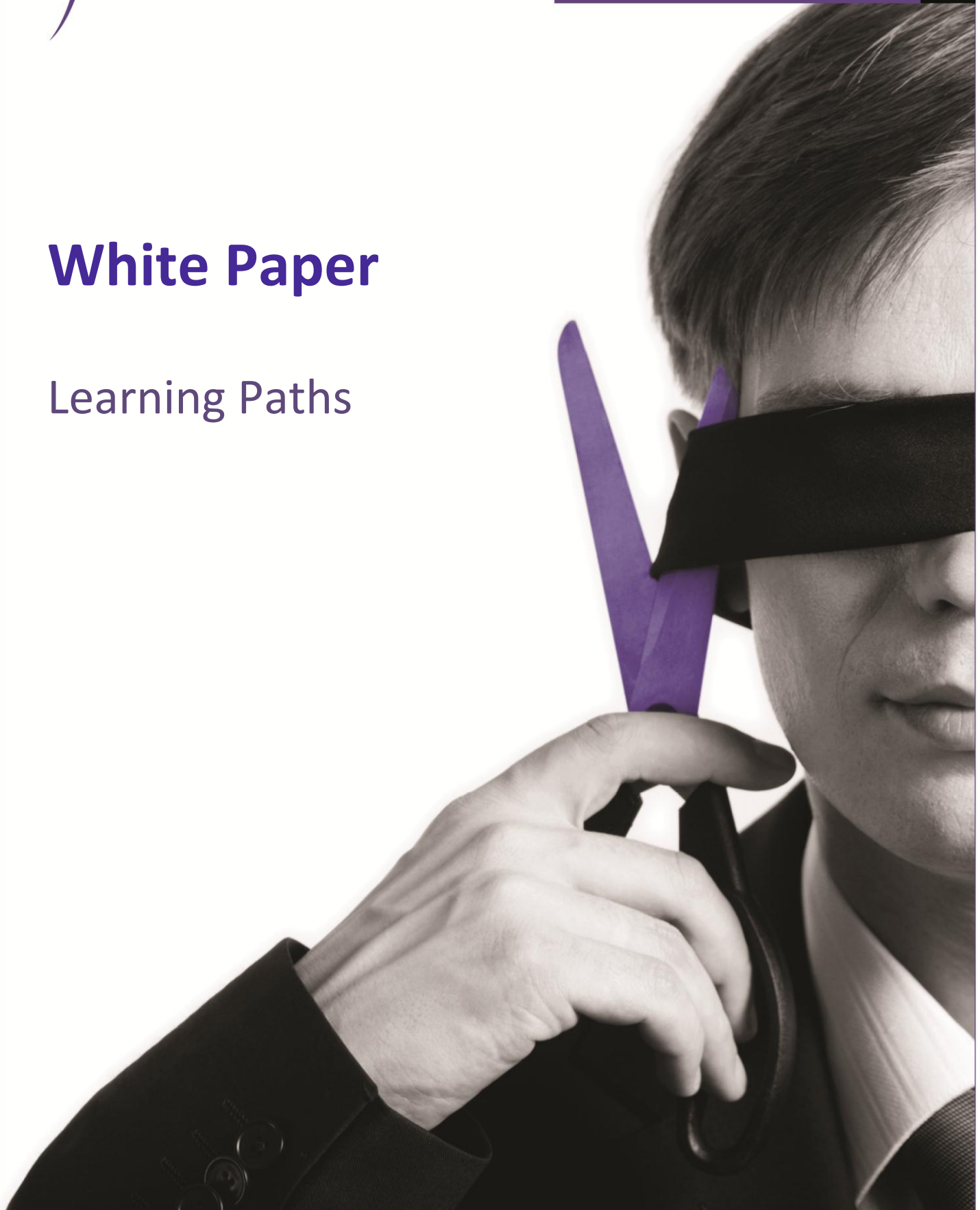


White Paper

Learning Paths



Learning Paths

(Increase Profits by Reducing the Time It Takes to Get Employees Up-to-Speed)

Overview

A unique and innovative methodology for learning is generating profits and winning praise from organisations who have adopted it as a way to reduce by 30% or more the time it takes to get new and new to role employees up to speed. Learning Path™ methodology, the creation of Steve Rosenbaum and Jim Williams, is delivering accelerated development of staff and making training and learning significantly more “business practical” at the same time.

Rosenbaum and Williams, authors of the best-selling business book, *LEARNING PATHS (Increase Profits by Reducing the Time It Takes to Get Employees Up-to-Speed)* are both lifelong corporate learning professionals and have worked for some of America's leading companies including Disney, DuPont, GE, Ceridian, IBM and Carlson Companies designing, developing and implementing high performance learning solutions.

Learning Paths represents a fundamental re-think of how training and learning should work and the results are measurable from Day 1 of the learning.

Most learning events commence with a needs assessment to determine learning criteria, then a series of business objectives are determined and a curriculum is drawn up to meet those objectives. The return on investment in the training itself is normally difficult to gauge and in some cases entirely speculative.

Assessments of the quality of training tends to focus on the program itself through feedback from employees and managers on content and delivery rather than on testing how effectively skills have been learned or whether the right skills were taught, in the right way and in the most effective manner to begin with.

Learning Paths guarantee that the right things are taught in the right order, in the most effective way and in the shortest period of time by instituting a complete re-engineering of the training process from start to finish organisations see the returns from this six sigma like approach in increased profits, employee motivation and reduced churn of staff.

Time to Proficiency

The primary measure of the Learning Path is ‘Time to Proficiency’, which is a measurement of how quickly an employee achieves performance at an acceptable business level (Steve Rosenbaum identifies this acceptable level as the moment the employee becomes independently productive). In most training events a curriculum is drawn up that involves filling the classroom days with STUFF – and lots of it. In comparison, a Learning Path covers the entire learning procedure both in the classroom and beyond to the workplace. The critical success factor with Learning Paths is the focus it provides on the ‘mystery period’ between the end of formal learning and the achievement of proficiency.

“This is the critical period”, says Steve, “where most gains and quick wins can be achieved.” Usually there’s a lot of wandering around with people getting lost and demotivated. Real Learning happens when someone who has more experience in the role has time to show you the actions that you have to do to perform highly in the new role. Many things happen after training that ought to be either included in the training or written down for people to self-study. When people get out of training they start to ask questions as they struggle and they are usually the same questions. Why wait for people to ask the question? Let’s put the questions back into the training.”

Approach

The first part of the methodology is to map your existing Learning Path for a particular role and then review the existing training program and understand what learning happens after that.

The process is then applied to quantitatively establish the performance level and define how many days it takes for an employee to reach an acceptable proficient performance level. This, in essence, is the proficiency model and its recorded standards that are managed and owned by the business unit.

Here are two examples of different key proficiency requirements that relate specifically to the Call Centre industry:

The first is from an airline reservation agent. An effective employee for this company would be expected to handle 20 calls per hour, process 3 reservations, make \$1500 in revenue, and have a cancellation rate of 3%.

In the second example, a sales representative from an outbound Call Centre would be expected to handle 30 calls per day, make £10,000 in sales per week, make? 5% return rates and bring in 5 new customers per month.

From these critical measures, it is relatively simple to determine how much learning costs and how much each day of less-than-average performance costs the organisation.

Clearly, there are substantial benefits to be had in terms of efficiency, saving money and increased profitability if employees can be brought up to the required level of proficiency 30% more quickly. Learning quickly, too, makes employees are more motivated as they can deliver results sooner and can benefit from the accolades that come with achieving higher levels of performance.

The Learning Path method achieves these results by accelerating the learning process and removing unnecessary elements (**“they taught you to do that in that way!!! let me show you how we do it out here in the real world”**). Learning Paths involve simulation and real time learning, replacing theory with practice, on-the-job coaching, self-study assignments, and passing learners through a series of gateways where their performance and learning gains can be measured in real time in real life situations?. The learning structure is designed around how people learn and is not constrained by standard curriculum based learning events. Steve and Jim call this part of the process “Quick Hits” and have solid evidence that time and cost savings of 30% are easily achievable.

Finally, the process invests in and engages leaders and managers in a direct role as coach and mentor. Once again, a quality approach and defined structure ensures that there is nothing ambiguous about this coaching role and the desired outcomes. Coaching events are clearly documented and are linked directly to the achievement of proficiency.

Employee Attrition

A recent study discovered that the majority of employee turnover takes place in the first 90 days of employment.

Many things can be done to address that early turnover by putting learning and job examples into the hiring process, moving from competency to behavioural interviewing and by communicating the real requirements of the role. For example, a major UK national hires staff for their call centre's and during the process of two interviews, tests, background checks and induction, the first time the new employee answers or makes a call to the customer is in week 12 of their induction. Therefore, if it takes 84 days to get an employee to say they do not like the role, the company has lost a lot of money and time training that employee. The simple solution is to show the employee up front what the job is, what the conditions are, how they are going to be trained, measured and rewarded.

We are often asked how Learning Paths differ from a competency model. We describe it in this way, "constructing a competency model can help you get to where you want to go by determining skills, knowledge and attitude." This approach breaks the role down into smaller portions and can create a series of disconnects between skill, knowledge and behaviour. However, when one or more of these competencies needs to be integrated to achieve the overall end result, then these become proficiencies.

As an example, let's look at the Call Centre again. You need to be competent on the computer, you have to have good communications skills to talk with customers and you have to know and be able to explain the products and services you offer, but you need to do all of this at the same time. That is what proficiency is, the linkages between the skills and groups of skills that are done together when doing the job.

Learning Path successes have been achieved with organisations in North America, Europe, India and China, proof that the method crosses both international and cultural boundaries. Small and medium companies too, have also gained significant financial and occupational benefit from this methodology.

Conclusion

So what is the best part of Learning Paths? They work and they achieve results through involvement and buy-in from all stakeholders involved in the organisational development process, executives, HR, Managers, trainers, and most importantly supervisors and employees.

More Information

To know more about how learning paths can help you and your organisation increase profitability please contact author@tsaeurope.co.uk

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