

White Paper

The BoardWalk



“The desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world” – John Le Carré

Background

Far too much executive development has historically focused on MBAs, management development programmes, consultancy reports, case studies and other forms of formal ‘classroom’ training and learning. Unsurprisingly, these layouts only really allow for a repetition of facts with a very strong “I-tell-you-listen” format and no attempt to relate the information discussed to personal business circumstances, problems or activities (Meier, 2000). The focus on ANY learning should be for the attendees to acquire something, not just for the teacher to teach something (Smith & Doren, 2004). It is essential that there is a genuine transfer of knowledge from a learning experience back into the work place; otherwise, what is the point?

When it comes to growing a business or embedding a new corporate culture into an established brand, you simply cannot go into classroom or read the latest views of recognised thought leaders on the web. If organisations suffer from complacency in the good times, then recessions and times of crisis soon force them back into shape. It seems therefore that Darwinian forces are alive and well, with it not being the strongest of the species that survives, or the most intelligent but the one that is the most adaptable to change. It is the progressive and far sighted that are ready to press home their advantage, and they will simply not allow themselves to get caught by the ever chasing pack.

So, what does that mean exactly? Well, it seems we can only truly learn, develop and expand by being in the presence of those who have ‘been there, done that’ or by spending time in the proximity of companies that have not only survived their share of ‘ups and downs’ but thrived. This theory draws upon the notion of contextual learning, which states we learn best when the learning is in its true context, for example we learn to walk by walking, swim by swimming, manage by managing; the best way to absorb is to immerse ourselves within the right environment (Meier, 2000), after all if we were taught to swim by attending a lecture we would not last long when thrown into the pool! Learning that is isolated and hypothetical can be extremely hard to remember and quick to forget, which is something I think everyone can relate to. If you can only reiterate the concepts learnt in a lecture a few weeks later but not beyond that, it is fair to say the teaching has not been a success (Smith & Doren). Humans need to be in a real world environment to truly develop in the best way possible.

All of these methods ultimately form part of reality based and accelerated learning; visiting companies in their own environment to see, feel and touch what it is that makes them successful.

To expand, accelerated learning is one of the most advanced teaching methods that is in use today, with the aim of this practice being to increase the learning process and learning effectiveness of individuals by stimulating all of the human senses. It is based on the latest brain research in this arena and has proven to be a success time and time again (Meier, 2000).

This type of learning is so successful because essentially the brain is a parallel processor, meaning it can deal with complex information from all angles and senses at once; in fact it enjoys this challenge and flourishes when it has to process this level of data. It does not need to absorb things in a linear fashion only comprehending one thing at a time; great learning engages our brains on all levels simultaneously, using all sensors, receptors and pathways available (Meier, 2000). The brain is one of the most intelligent feats of engineering known to man; and we should take advantage of it being able to register this much information at once, stimulating it as much as possible.

Furthermore, accelerated learning emphasises that as social creatures we inevitably learn best when collaboration and socialising is at the base of education as opposed to classroom isolation. Traditional learning methods have a tendency to highlight a sense of rivalry between those individuals in the class, a subconscious competitive element arises which not only discourages communication and relationship building but also slows the learning process. However, cooperation and collaboration between peers has been shown to speed up learning and create a genuine learning community (Meier, 2000).

What is The BoardWalk?

The BoardWalk is an experience that uses the bones of accelerated learning as it allows us to unlock our business potential that has so often been left entirely untouched by conventional methods. It is not just a routine solution that is offered over a weekend workshop, but a tailor made programme, matched on as many variables as possible in order to get the best solution possible for your business dilemma.

The BoardWalk is far from a generic opportunity to learn, it is a unique experience where you are at the centre of every step, and involved in every aspect. Learning in the business environment with fellow like-minded people, it will get you excited and raring to get back to your own organisation, seeing exactly what others have achieved in similar circumstances and knowing exactly what you need to do to see that success in your company.

Therefore, our mantra is 'show not tell'.

Anybody wanting to take away any lessons from a learning environment must attend with the attitude that they are co-responsible for the information they depart with (Smith & Doren, 2004). Learning is not something that should be passive and wash over you, it is a participatory event and we learn most effectively when we are fully involved and taking full responsibility for what we learn (Meier, 2000). By focusing on understanding how other companies have solved problems and achieved success, new ideas can be cultivated that will fuel new opportunities to be exploited that had hitherto seemed closed.

After all, it always comes back to three simple questions - What have the winners done to get to where they are? How did they do it? And what lessons did they learn along the way?

The BoardWalk provides the unique opportunity to peek behind the curtains of some of the world's most prestigious, leading edge companies; speaking to and spending time with the C-suite executives that make the decisions and successfully drive their organisations forward.

No classrooms. No endless case studies. No lectures. Just an audience with global success stories; witnessing their CEOs and executives 'on their own turf' and in their own working environment. A full sensory experience.

From global icons such as Apple to The Ritz Carlton, to 'best of British' retailers, such as ASDA and technological revolutionaries such as Pace Plc, TSA Europe can take you into the inner-workings of world-class organisations. Therefore, taking the words of John Le Carré into mind, maybe now is the time to get out and explore.

The BoardWalk Process

To ensure that The BoardWalk experience is of maximum benefit to the leadership and corporate cultural development of an organisation, each element of The BoardWalk is carefully crafted to face the issues that are prevalent in an organisation NOW.

One size fits no-one, and the end result is a bespoke, fully-tailored BoardWalk to challenge, broaden and inspire the very top of the leadership cadre within a business.

The process will follow five distinct steps:

- 1) **Diagnostic:** a session to discuss, explore and unravel the key issues that are affecting your business; undergoing a process of informal discussions, interviews with key personnel and structured analysis to get a detailed understanding of both the explicit and implicit 'heartbeat' of the organisation.
- 2) **Identification:** We conduct extensive research and tap into our global network to discover the organisations and key contacts who have overcome, or pioneered new paths in the key challenges that lie ahead.
- 3) **Preparation:** the next stage is to organise the learning journey itself; setting up meetings with the host companies, co-ordinating logistics, arranging travel and preparing briefings. From the moment they arrive to the moment they leave, the trip will be seamless.
- 4) **Delivery:** TSA Europe and the team will facilitate The BoardWalk and provide 'colour commentary' throughout to link everything back to the diagnostic brief; capturing all the key learning points and actions in the process- both as a photo book and also on film in the series of short, impactful vignettes. A wrap-up session takes place to solidify what was taken from The BoardWalk and show how this can be implemented 'back at the ranch'.

- 5) Follow up: A further get-together can then be arranged to check progress after The BoardWalk; maintaining impetus and developing further areas that need to be explored.

The BoardWalk is relevant for all people across a business particularly the ExCo, senior teams, top rising talent and those who have authority to make changes in the business on their return.

References

Meier, D (2000). *The Accelerated Learning Handbook*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Smith, L.W & Van Doren, D.C. (2004). The Reality-Based Learning Method: A simple method for keeping teaching activities relevant and effective. *Journal of Marketing Education*. 26 (1), 66-74.

More Information

To know more about how The BoardWalk can help you and your organisation please contact author@tsaeurope.co.uk

About Us

TSA Europe is one of the world's longest running Human Performance Management Companies, focusing exclusively in the field of HPM. Since our foundations in 2000, our company has assisted more than 60,000 people from over 200 companies, with the knowledge, systems and tools to make immediate, sustained and measurable improvements to their performance.

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