



“Information That Works!”

The Power of Intellectual Capital

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In the global landscape of the 21st Century lifelong learning field, intellectual capital – the collective knowledge of the individuals in your lifelong learning program - is your biggest asset.

Intellectual capital, which is a capital asset, refers to your people – and your investment is growing their knowledge and skill sets. It is your program’s brains, and how you use their knowledge to increase participation, revenue, and net. However, intellectual capital is not just your organizational knowledge, such as how to get a job done, but it’s also industry knowledge – trends, best practices, benchmarks, and so on.

The issue today is that employee attrition – whether through layoffs, retirements or resignations – may also result in a loss of intellectual capital. Thus a winning lifelong learning program must be prepared to invest in customer capital, human capital, intellectual capital, and structural capital.

Ways to maintain and grow your intellectual capital

Greg Marsello, LERN’s Vice President for Organizational Development, estimates most lifelong learning professionals lack 50% of the skills needed to be successful. Therefore, he recommends that 5 percent of your budget should be spent on staff training – whether internal or external training.

Marsello reports winning lifelong learning programs have a leader who spends 25% of his/her time increasing their own intellectual capital, and thus their staff’s intellectual capital. A simple example used by lifelong learning leaders is having each person on staff learn one new piece of knowledge or skill, thus increasing the overall lifelong learning program intellectual capital.

A 2014 Monster.com survey of employed job seekers found only 45 percent received formal training at their current job – and only 9 percent of those trained were extremely satisfied. In addition, less than 1 percent of respondents said they were not willing to learn new skills.

Formal training is just one way to increase your organization's intellectual capital. This may include eLearning opportunities such as webinars or online courses – as well as face-to-face training either by bringing in someone to work with your staff or sending your staff to an off-site event such as a conference or a seminar.

It is often the case that employees with tremendous knowledge about their job, the business processes, the data that supports those processes, and insight into what does and does not work, do not have an incentive to share that knowledge. Instead, they may see sharing their knowledge with other employees as a threat to their own job security.

In a workplace where time and budget restrictions impede access to traditional face-to-face training and mentoring opportunities, lifelong learning programs can look to the Internet to address both the growth of intellectual capital as well as the sharing of cumulative knowledge among your employees.

The strategy of eLearning

The new frontier in eLearning is BYOD (Bring Your Own Device). That means mobile learning – eLearning from a mobile device like an iPhone or a tablet – is on the rise. This makes sense considering analysts at Morgan Stanley say in 2015 more people will access the Internet from a mobile device than from a traditional desktop or laptop computer.

Giving your employees access to eLearning opportunities is a strategic initiative because it keeps your employees up to date, it aids in succession planning because it helps workers acquire new skills, and it allows continuing education executives to keep control of in-house training.

However, that does not mean you should eliminate face-to-face training for your employees. In *Advanced Teaching Online*, William A. Draves writes online learning and face-to-face learning should not be an either/or choice. He says online and offline learning should both be treated as equal options.

The socialization of knowledge

The concept of social networking online began as something you did in your personal time – not at work. However, as platforms have grown and internal online opportunities such as Intranets began to surface, the virtual arena has given employees an option to share information.

Knowledge is cumulative. Thoughts can build on each other. By using vehicles like collaboration software, otherwise known as groupware, employees are able to work in a single virtual workspace, share information with each other, and also access information.

Social collaboration software increases transparency, which in turn creates accountability and increases trust. It can also build awareness throughout the organization effectively and efficiently.

In terms of your program's intellectual capital, collaboration software will allow you to centralize all the important templates and procedures, which also aids in the onboarding of new employees.

Increasing intellectual capital will become more important this decade with retirements, a greater push for financial success, and the need to improve course programming, marketing, contract sales, and operations performance. Consider doing a knowledge/skill matrix identifying the knowledge/skills needed, where your program is covered, and where you need to increase knowledge and/or skill sets. At the same time identify structural issues, such as technology needs, if addressed, support increased intellectual capital.

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