



Don't Just Teach a Skill – Teach The Business

by Mathew Georghiou

Imagine an organization where every employee shares a common vision and makes decisions like an experienced business person.

Training is not about merely delivering and participating in courses. Training is about improving performance. And what better way to improve performance than to enable every employee to understand all aspects of the business. Sound impossible?

This past decade, a development very relevant to the future of business training has emerged – multimedia and Internet technologies. This evolution has enabled computer-based training designers to develop and deliver advanced simulations for ordinary employees – once prohibitively priced systems available primarily to pilots and the military.

Advanced simulations combine entertainment elements of leading edge gaming and artificial intelligence algorithms that mimic real life, while embodying advanced learning design principles. Similar to how a pilot uses a flight simulator to view, interact, and take flight with a virtual airplane, advanced simulations can be used to impart business and life skills, by enabling learners to run virtual businesses, including interacting with their customers and employees, making real-time decisions, and truly visualizing and realizing the consequences to virtually the same extent that they would if these experiences were real.

Instead of reading about business or attending a seminar, the learner, solely through his computer, becomes a CEO running a virtual business, or a stockbroker trading on a virtual exchange, or a manufacturer managing a virtual production line, or a sales manager interacting with virtual customers. Nearly any employee task, departmental procedure, organizational process, or business skill can be simulated. Organizational best practices and behaviors of top-performing employees can be modeled and integrated throughout an organization. Simulations can provide front line workers and senior management the ability to explore and understand the critical elements and success factors of a business – enabling everyone to share a mental model of the entire organization.

Imagine a business simulation modeled after your own organization, enabling every employee to take on the role of his or her manager, or the CEO. The result is a learning experience that provides employees with instant knowledge, wisdom, and empathy.

What can this mean to the organization? The realization of benefits more far-reaching than may be evident on the surface. Such a learning experience has the potential to create dramatic change by enabling employees to:

- Recognize how their job role fits within the overall organization.
- Experience the operation of the entire business, from the front lines to each department and division.

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*“...providing
the best
training
available is a
key strategic
investment.”*

- Understand how a company makes money, profit, and remains competitive.
- Appreciate how the performance of their job can impact the entire organization – for better or worse.
- Build and maintain loyalty, as they now understand the difficult balances and compromises that often have to be made in business.

What would an instant 1% performance improvement per employee yield in a business with hundreds or thousands of employees? What about 5 or 10%? How would a 5 or 10% reduction in turnover impact the bottom line and long-term competitiveness? How do better decision-making and fewer mistakes affect a company's success?

In the midst of globalization and technological revolution, many strategists believe that perhaps the only competitive differentiator these days is the speed at which people and organizations learn. With this in mind, providing the best training available is no longer just a necessary expense, but rather a key strategic investment. And organizations will increasingly adopt advanced simulation in their business planning to realize this competitive advantage.

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