



Roy V. H. Pollock
Chief Learning Officer
Fort Hill Company

In preparing the interactive version of *Getting Your Money's Worth*, I have been doing a lot of reading lately. In this LearningAlert I want to introduce you to two recent books that I think have profound implications for helping people improve their performance.

Both identify the central role that deliberate (also known as "deep") practice plays in great performance. The challenge for corporate learning professionals, it seems to me, is how to encourage and support deep practice in the fastpaced, messy world of business.

How do we teach people to use their dayto day activities as learning opportunities? How do we teach them that they need to focus on method as much as results? And how do we encourage them that they need to stop and reflect on their performance if they want to improve?

We are beginning to crack these questions and see quantum leaps in performance improvement. I think we have just begun what promises to be the most exciting period yet in training and development.

Dr. Roy Pollock is the Chief Learning Officer of the Fort Hill Company. He received his DVM and PhD degrees from Cornell University and studied medical education at the University of Illinois.

Roy has a lifelong passion for education and leadership. He is a Fellow of the Kellogg National Leadership program and a popular speaker and instructor. He enjoys building stone walls and traveling to remote destinations.

He can be reached at:
Pollock@FortHillCompany.com

Talent Vs Training

Two books with seemingly contradictory titles are being widely read and discussed by development specialists this year: [Talent Is Overrated](#) by Geoff Colvin and [The Talent Code](#) by Daniel Coyle.

The difference lies in the way that the two authors define talent. Colvin sets out to demolish the myth that "talent" is some sort of natural gift – an inborn trait – that allows some individuals to far exceed the performance of the rest of us mere mortals. Building on the work of Anders Ericsson and others, he shows in example after example that talent – when defined as innate ability – either doesn't exist, or at least is vastly overrated as the key to success. Instead, what really matters is the amount of deliberate practice.

Deliberate practice:

- is specifically intended to improve performance
- can be repeated frequently
- demands a high level of concentration and effort
- includes continuous feedback on performance

Colvin shows that in every field of human endeavor studied, outstanding performance is always preceded by extraordinary amounts of deliberate practice. He shows that even such seeming prodigies as Tiger Woods or Mozart practiced far more than their contemporaries and received far more coaching.

Coyle, on the other hand, defines talent "in its strictest sense: the possession of repeatable skills that don't depend on physical size." Looking at "talent" (performance) this way, he examined "talent hotspots" – places that turn out a disproportionate number of outstanding athletes, musicians, scientists, and so forth.

He comes to virtually the same conclusions as Colvin. Outstanding performance, he concludes, requires three elements:

- Ignition (Motivation)
- Deep Practice
- Master Coaching

The talent hotspots he examined often lacked great physical facilities – some were downright poor – but they always had these three elements, and, in particular, great coaching. Coyle examines Master Coaching in some detail. What did John Wooden do, exactly, to coach his team to ten national championships? What are the essential elements of a master coach?

Implications for Workplace Learning Professionals

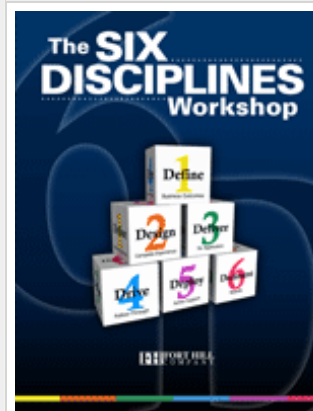
First, training has an important role, especially in skills where there are fundamentals that must be mastered before advanced application and improvisation can be tackled.

Second, that training, in and of itself, is never sufficient. Unless what has been taught is deliberately practiced, performance will not improve. The reasons for this are deeply rooted in neurobiology; when skills are used repeatedly, the nervous system forms new neural connections and wraps the wiring in additional insulation (myelin), speeding up the circuitry.

Upcoming Events

April 2010

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



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February 18th, 2010 at 11:00 AM

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New Learner and Manager Engagement Solutions

Now, more than ever, training and development has to produce real performance improvement. The research is clear: manager engagement can make or break the impact of any learning event.

It is this research that led us to publish our highly acclaimed book, "[Getting Your Money's Worth from Training and Development](#)". We are now proud to announce our new interactive Manager and Learner Engagement Solutions produced with the award winning e-learning design firm--Option Six. These engaging, no-nonsense programs support any learning initiative, boost manager/participant engagement, enhance learning transfer and increase the return on learning investment.

To view a sneak peak of our brief two-minute video introduction to these exciting new Learner and Manager Engagement Solutions, [click here](#).

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That's why we defined the fourth discipline of breakthrough learning as "Drive FollowThrough" and developed the Friday5s ; system to help ensure that people practiced their learning long enough to achieve improved performance. It explains why adding followthrough management to a program increases its impact, even if nothing else changes.

Finally, both Talent Is Overrated and The Talent Code underscore the importance of feedback and coaching. While some training programs are able to afford dedicated coaches, in most cases, the job of "coach" falls to the manager. Given the importance of this role, it should not be left to chance, which is why we wrote the manager's guide to Getting Your Money's Worth from Training and Development and are in the process of developing an interactive online version.

Bottom line: Great performance in any field is learned, not born. As learning professionals, we can accelerate performance improvement by understanding the implications of performance research and delivering a complete learning experience.

Ideas Into Action:

Read Talent Is Overrated and The Talent Code and think about the implications for training and development especially for postcourse followthrough. Reread The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning especially the chapter on the complete learning experience and how it aligns with the research on human performance. Help your managers become "master coaches" by making Getting Your Money's Worth from Training and Development or other practical coaching guidelines available to them. References: Colvin, G. (2008). Talent Is Overrated: What Really Separates WorldClass Performers from Everybody Else. New York: Penguin. Coyle, D. (2009). The Talent Code: Greatness Isn't Born. It's Grown. Here's How. New York: Bantam Dell. Jefferson, A., Pollock, R. & Wick, C. (2009) Getting Your Money's Worth from Training and Development. San Francisco: Pfeiffer. Wick, C., Pollock, R., Jefferson, A. & Flanagan, R. (2006) The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning: How to Turn Training and Development into Business Results. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.


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