Education and Accountability in the Workplace

Organizations coping with smaller staffs and fewer resources need greater personal accountability from their employees, but it’s often difficult to achieve. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) is offering tips on how to foster this valuable workplace skill in its 50th practical and easy-to-read leadership development guidebook – part of its long-running series of educational guidebooks and tools for the workplace.

The recently published “Accountability: Taking Ownership of Your Responsibility” is the newest in the Center’s series of Ideas Into Action Guidebooks, which offer practicing managers information on topics including coaching, active listening and managing conflict. CCL published its first Ideas Into Action guidebook in 1998, and the series has been distributed globally.

Henry Browning, a senior faculty member at CCL and the lead author, said the newest edition can help practicing managers “see how to turn the biggest obstacle to accountability — fear in the workplace — into trust.”

“Trust is built slowly, and when it is lost, it takes a long time to rebuild,” Browning said. “The best advice is to build it consistently over time. As we note in the guidebook, when there is fear, people tend to hide, hold back and do only what is expected.”

The accountability guidebook clearly and concisely explores why employees often don’t take ownership of their decisions, play the blame game or are crippled by fear of punishment. It offers ways for organizations to develop a culture of accountability — a willingness to face the consequences that come with success or failure — that begins with top management and spreads to all levels of managers and employees. The guidebook, based on five years of study with major companies around the world, also features an accountability scorecard that can help managers figure out the problems in their organizations.

Browning and his co-authors outline five major strategies for creating an environment that encourages accountability:

• Offer support to employees from senior leadership, direct supervisors and their work teams. Create an environment that tolerates mistakes and individual differences.
• Give employees freedom to accomplish a goal or task, promoting ownership in the process or results.
• Provide access to all information needed to make decisions.
• Offer some control over resources.
• Be clear about to whom an employee is accountable and for what outcomes.

Ultimately, according to the guidebook, “A culture of accountability is one that provides a free flow of information, works to secure viable resources, keeps fear to a minimum, rewards risk-taking and treats missteps as learning opportunities and not career-ending events.”

The Center for Creative Leadership is a global provider of executive education that accelerates the potential of individuals and organizations. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit educational institution focused exclusively on leadership education and research, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership — the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries — through an array of programs, products and other services. CCL is headquartered in Greensboro, N.C., with campuses in Colorado Springs, San Diego, Brussels, Moscow, Singapore, Pune, India and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its work is supported by 500 faculty members and staff.

Salaries of Executive MBA Graduates Rise by 16.8 Percent

The salary and bonus packages of recent Executive MBA (EMBA) program graduates who participated in the Executive MBA Council (EMBAC) Student Exit Benchmarking Survey last year increased by 16.8 percent from program start to program end.

The average salary and bonus package at program start for students in the survey was $135,548, up from $140,310 the previous year. By the end of the program, the average salary and bonus package rose to $181,965, up from $159,965.

EMBAC conducts the Student Exit Benchmarking Survey to track the perceptions and opinions of EMBA program graduates and to help measure the return on investment of the degree. The survey included 2,323 students from 79 EMBA programs.

In addition, the percentage of graduates who received new responsibilities increased slightly from 51 percent to 53 percent, as well as those who reported a promotion during their time in the program, from 38 percent to 41 percent.

“When I talk with EMBA graduates, they share their stories about how their time in the program helped them grow,” said Michael Dezuñas, EMBAC executive director. “They gain skills and enhance their leadership abilities in ways that help them add value to their organizations. The returns on investment statistics in the EMBAC survey also help show the impact of the degree.”

EMBA graduates also report high levels of satisfaction with their EMBA experience, ranking program quality (4.1 on a 5-point scale); their willingness to recommend their program to a colleague or friend (4.2) and the likelihood of supporting the program as alumni (4.1). When evaluating programs, survey participants said the six most important program attributes are overall length of the program (4.4 on a 5-point scale); compatibility of class schedule with work, class size, and reputation of business school (all 4.2); and quality of other students and quality of study teams/takeout groups (all 4.3). For more information about the EMBAC experience and to search for EMBA programs worldwide, visit www.executembac.org.

The Executive MBA Council (www.emba.org) provides a forum for programs to share best practices and gather industry data for member use. Percept Research, an independent market research firm and the council’s research partner, conducted the survey analysis.
A Look at Early College High Schools

As projected workforce needs continue to change, states are responding by implementing educational programs designed to help ensure students graduate high school with the skills and credentials necessary for future success. Although many existing programs provide students with the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school, some states have developed early college high schools, a model aimed at traditionally underserved students and specifically designed to allow students to complete both a high school diploma and an associate’s degree, technical certification or enough postsecondary credits to enter a four-year institution as a junior.

A new Policy Analysis from Education Commission of the States, “Early College High Schools: Model Policy Components,” defines early college high schools, clarifies how they differ from traditional dual enrollment programs, provides an overview of the structure and impact of early college high schools and, most importantly, outlines key model policy components to enhance high school and postsecondary outcomes for traditionally underserved students.

“Early college high schools are a potential game-changer in terms of increasing college-going among traditionally underserved students,” said Jennifer Zinth, director of High Schools at Education Commission of the States. “The key policy components outlined in this report can help to increase the scalability of these programs across an individual state and allow states to support successful outcomes for their students, while also focusing on their workforce development goals.”

Some key takeaways from this report:
- From 2008 to 2013, the percentage of low-income students enrolling in college directly after high school dropped more than 10 percent, compared to much smaller declines among middle- and high-income students.
- Policies addressing access and support, program quality, finance and facilities, and credit transfer may increase the scalability of early colleges statewide while ensuring quality and fidelity to the early college mission.

early college high schools are a potential game-changer in terms of increasing college-going among traditionally underserved students, but relatively few states have policies in place to provide appropriate supports for these programs.”

Does Executive Education Provide Return on Investment for Employers? 

By SARAH CLARK

Measuring the return on investment for big-ticket purchases has been and always will be important to efficient organizations, but in the wake of the recession, hunkered-down companies have become that much more insistent that dollars be wisely spent. While skills-based training benefits can be tracked and measured, quantifying the return on big-ticket, strategic learning is as challenging as ever. Executive education is about learning new tools, frameworks, ways to think about the business and the global economy. That’s not something you can test at the end of a chapter.

Even if one suspects that a program may have helped ready a senior executive for the next big task, it’s nearly impossible to trace a direct line. When looking CEOs look at ROI of executive education, it is probably best to use the analogy of the strategic radar screen. Every CEO has a list of big, strategic issues and challenges he or she would like to tackle in the next three, six or eighteen months. When the CEO sends someone for training, he or she is looking for the school to help ready that person to address a particular issue on the radar screen. So the question is, three months later, six months later, is it clear that the employee was prepared to deal with that issue or not?

Increasingly, companies that send executives to open-enrollment programs are sending them with very specific goals, challenges they are expected to solve while they’re away. In the past it was: “Broaden their perspectives, give them new knowledge, best practices, tools to use in the field.” Now it’s much more: “Do all that, but also get something done while you’re here that’s going to impact our P&L or our bottom line this fiscal year.”

Executives arrive at education programs with several significant business challenges their companies need to address. When they leave, they are expected to bring back keen insights, new thought leadership and, most importantly, solutions to those problems. For open enrollment, the more focused the company’s objectives for the executive, the easier it is to measure results. In custom corporate programs, metrics for evaluating return can be embedded upfront.

One area in which companies have had a relatively easy time justifying education spend is in succession planning, whether it’s preparing a candidate for the CEO office or readying a middle manager for a C-suite role. Regardless of what industry a company is in, however, when an employee returns to an organization after being sent to learn a set of skills, the company benefits from that employee’s enhanced knowledge as well as the morale boost and gratitude an employee has after participating in such an experience.

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EDUCATION

Why Do Students Like Online Learning?

Why do students flock to the online learning environment? With over 4 million students enrolled in online schools and universities (and that number is growing 30% per year), there are many compelling arguments for attending a cyber classroom.

1. Students can “attend” a course at anytime, from anywhere. This means that parents can attend to their children, then sit down to class; working students can attend classes no matter what their work schedule might be, folks that travel for business or pleasure can attend class from anywhere in the world that has internet access.

2. Online learning enables student-centered teaching approaches. Every student has their own way of learning that works best for them. Some learn visually others do better when they “learn by doing.”

3. Course material is accessible 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Students have the ability to read and re-read lectures, discussions, explanations and comments. Often spoken material in the classroom passes students by due to a number of distractions, missed classes, tiredness or boredom.

4. In an online environment, attendance to class is only evident if the student actually participates in classroom discussion. This increases student interaction and the diversity of opinion, because everyone gets a say, not just the most talkative.

5. Online instructors come with practical knowledge and may be from any location across the globe. This allows students to be exposed to knowledge that can’t be learned in books and how class concepts are applied in real business situations.

6. Using the internet to attend class, research information and communication with other students teaches skills in using technologies that will be critical to workers in the 21st century business community that works with colleagues globally and across time zones.

7. Participating online is much less intimidating than “in the classroom.” Anonymity provides students a level playing field undisturbed by bias caused by seating arrangement, gender, race and age. Students can also think longer about what they want to say and add their comments when ready. In a traditional class room, the conversation could have gone way past the point where the student wants to comment.

8. Because online institutions offer “chat rooms” for informal conversation between students, where student bias and non-class discussions can take place, there appears to be a increased bonding and camaraderie over traditional class environments.

9. The online environment makes instructors more approachable. Students can talk openly with their teachers through online chats, email and in newsgroup discussions, without waiting for office hours that may not be convenient. This option for communication provides enhanced contact between instructors and students.

10. Online course development allows for a broad spectrum of content. Students can access the school’s library from their PCs for research articles, ebook content and other material without worries that the material is already “checked out.”

11. Students often feel that they can actually listen to the comments made by other students. Because everyone gets a chance to contribute, students are less irritated with those that “over contribute” and can ask for clarification of any comments that are unclear.

12. Over 75% of colleges and universities in the U.S. offer online degree programs, with online degrees as respected as “on the ground” degrees. (Lewis)

13. Online classrooms also facilitate team learning by providing chatrooms and newsgroups for meetings and joint work. This eliminates the problems of mismatched schedules, finding a meeting location and distributing work for review between meetings.

14. Students often comment that online learning lets them attend class when fully awake and attend in increments of convenient time blocks, rather than rigid 2 or 4 hour stretches once or twice a week.

15. Because there are no geographic barriers to online learning, students can find a diversity of course material that may not be available to them where they live or work. This is especially true for professional training such as medical billing training or purchasing training and for students in remote rural areas that cannot support college or vocational training centers.

While “brick and mortar” institutions will never be eliminated, it’s easy to see why a growing number of people are attending class in the cyber world. They may be reasons of accessibility, flexibility, quality, all compelling and contributing to the attractiveness of this mode of learning.

Information Provided by WorldWideLearn.
Respect and Professional Learning Must Come Hand in Hand

By GEORGE ROCKWELL

Too many adult education instructors or management trainers treat adult learners as if they are “high school” level students. It is essential to always treat professional learners as the adults they are.

Good management trainers or adult education specialists should apply knowledge of the following fundamentals of adult learners:

• Adults are people with years of experience and a wealth of information. Focus on the strengths learners bring to the classroom, not just gaps in their knowledge. Provide opportunities for dialogue within the group. Tap their experience as a major source of enrichment to the class. Remember that you, the teacher, do not need to have all the answers, as long as you know where to go or who to call to get the answers. Students can be resources to you and to each other.

• Adults have established values, beliefs and opinions. Demonstrate respect for differing beliefs, religions, value systems and lifestyles. Let your learners know that they are entitled to their values, beliefs and opinions, but that every one in the room may not share their beliefs. Allow debate and challenge of ideas.

• Adults are people whose style and pace of learning has probably changed. Use a variety of teaching strategies such as small group problem solving and discussion. Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods. Reaction time and speed of learning may be slow, but the ability to learn is not impaired by age. Most adults prefer teaching methods other than lecture.

• Adults relate new knowledge and information to previously learned information and experiences. Assess the specific learning needs of your audience before your class or at the beginning of the class. Present single concepts and focus on application of concepts to relevant practical situations. Summarize frequently to increase retention and recall. Material outside of the context of participants’ experiences and knowledge becomes meaningless.

• Adults are people with bodies influenced by gravity. Plan frequent breaks, even if they are 2-minute “stretch” breaks. During a lecture, a short break every 45-60 minutes is sufficient. In more interactive teaching situations, breaks can be spaced 60-90 minutes apart.

• Adults have pride. Support the students as individuals. Self-esteem and ego are at risk in a classroom environment that is not perceived as safe or supportive. People will not ask questions or participate in learning if they are afraid of being put down or ridiculed. Allow people to admit confusion, ignorance, fear, bias and different opinions. Acknowledge or thank students for their responses and questions. Treat all questions and comments with respect. Avoid saying “I just covered that” when someone asks a repetitive question. Remember, the only foolish question is the unasked question.

• Adults have a deep need to be self-directing. Engage the students in a process of mutual inquiry. Avoid merely transmitting knowledge or expecting total agreement. Don’t “spoon-feed” the participants.

• Individual differences among people increase with age. Take into account differences in style, time, types and pace of learning. Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods.

• Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning. Emphasize how learning can be applied in a practical setting. Use case studies, problem solving groups, and participatory activities to enhance learning. Adults generally want to immediately apply new information or skills to current problems or situations.

Note: New information and skills must be relevant and meaningful to the concerns and desires of the students. Know what the needs are of individuals in your class. Students do not wish to learn what they will never use. The learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable.

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