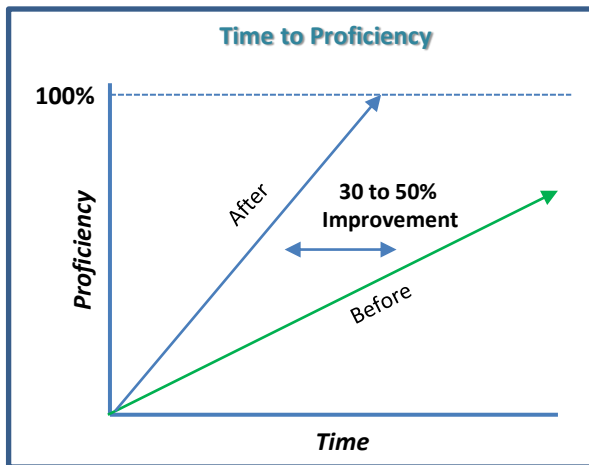# Learning Paths....
The Evolution of Training

## *A Whitepaper*

Learning Paths Methodology

Focus on Speed and Proficiency

Every minute employees are less than fully proficient has a significant impact on productivity, sales, quality, error rates, safety, customer satisfaction and more. Ensuring that employees reach full proficiency while reducing time to proficiency is at the core of the Learning Paths approach. For salespeople this means reaching sales goals weeks or months earlier. In manufacturing, this means reducing accidents by making workers safer sooner while improving the quality of their work. For health care workers it means providing a higher level of care without the need for constant supervision.

Time to Proficiency

100%

Proficiency

After

30 to 50% Improvement

Before

Time

Definition of Proficiency

The Learning Paths approach starts by building a concise, complete and measurable definition of proficiency. We define proficiency as the measurable outcomes and observable behaviors of doing a job or task correctly at the desired level of performance. Once we have a definition of proficiency, we can determine current time to proficiency and set a goal of reducing time to proficiency by at least 30%. In addition, the proficiency definition becomes a valuable assessment tool.

Definition of a Learning Path

100%

Proficiency

Learning Path

Total learning process from day 1 to Proficiency

Time
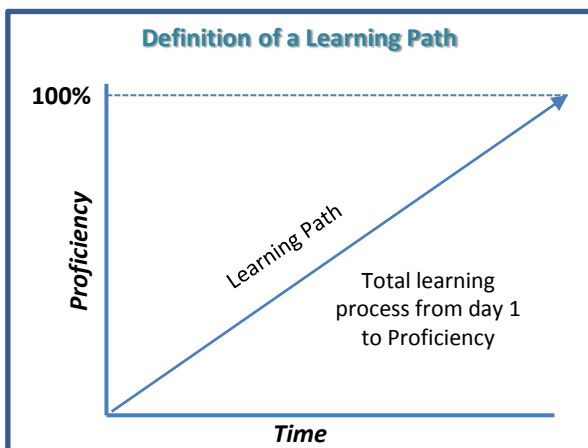
Learning Paths have been successfully implemented with more than 400 functions and 40,000 employees

"At CertainTeed, we wanted a Human Resources initiative that could positively impact productivity and knowledge transfer. "

David Bomzer, Senior Vice President Human Resources, CertainTeed Corporation

"We used a Learning Path approach to help consolidate operations from the field into a centralized customer service center. We were able to accomplish the training portion of this initiative in less than six weeks."

Edward J. Robbins Director of Human Resources GE Capital Resources

Learning as a Process

Next, we look at learning as a process rather than a single event or a series of courses. In fact, we look at the entire learning process from day one all the way to proficiency. We call this a Learning Path. What we find is that most learning is happening on the job and is usually informal, highly unstructured and highly variable. By viewing learning as a process, we are then able to apply process improvement tools to improve learning by taking out time, waste and variability. It also gives us tools to restructure and resequence the process in a way that improves retention and transfer to the job.

Learning Paths Projects

Individual Learning Paths projects start by targeting a critical job, function or task. Usually these involve front line employees and first line supervisors. We start with these functions because they have the greatest and most immediate impact on the organization. Then in as little as 6 to 8 weeks we create a new definition of proficiency and a reengineered Learning Path that will dramatically improve proficiency while reducing time to proficiency. Ideally, Learning Paths are created for every function within an organization to establish a common approach to learning as well as promote sharing of best practices.

A Learning Path project mirrors the process used for successful quality improvement initiatives. These projects use the following four steps:

1. Define

The first step is to define and measure proficiency and time to proficiency. This serves as the project goal and provides an ongoing assessment tool.

2. Map

The second step involves mapping the current learning process from day one to proficiency. This is the current Learning Path.

3. Upgrade

The third step is a dynamic process of looking for quick hits, restructuring, upgrading and improving the current Learning Path to create a new Learning Path.

4. Launch

The fourth step involves implementing and sustaining the new Learning Path. This includes installing a process for continuous improvement.

"As part of a major state of Minnesota/ University of Minnesota training grant for a local daily newspaper, the Learning Paths (LP) process was indispensable. "

Kathleen A. Hansen, Professor Director, Minnesota Journalism Center School of Journalism and Mass Communication University of Minnesota

"We validated the result of our initial Learning Paths using Six Sigma and then rolled it out to more than 400 functions achieve a reduction in time to proficiency by more than 30%. "

Jim Williams, Chief Learning Officer, GE Capital International Services

Learning Paths Book

The Learning Paths methodology is based on the research captured in the book *Learning Paths: Increase profits by reducing the time it takes to get employees up-to-speed* (Pfeiffer and ASTD Press 2004.)

About the Author

Steve Rosenbaum is a consultant who has worked with America's leading companies including Disney, Dupont, Ceridian, GE Capital, CarlsonWagonlit Travel, and Allina Health Systems to help them design, develop, and implement creative training solutions.

Learning Paths International

Learning Paths International (LPI) is a training and development consulting firm that focuses on improving results while cutting the time and cost of training. Our work is based on the Learning Path methodology which reduces time to proficiency by applying the best of quality improvement, accelerated learning and change management.

Since 2004, thousands of people have read the Learning Paths book and hundreds of companies have applied Learning Paths concepts and principles within their organizations. In 2011, the Learning Paths process was upgraded and reengineered to include everything that has been learned in the last eight years. Click here to learn more about the Learning Paths approach.

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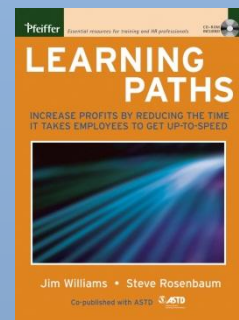
Reviews

"While Learning Paths is a strong tool for process improvement in large organizations, it has unlimited uses in management."
Training Media Review 2004

"The concept of a Learning Path represents much more than a relabelling of old terms. Put simply it is a complete rethink of how training ought to work."
Training Magazine 2008

"Learning Paths is a double-edged solution because it can be customized for any organization, no matter the type or size, and it guarantees measurable bottom line results."
HR Strategies Advisor 2007

"Learning Paths hits the bull's eye with the mission to become more accountable in the companies we work in."
ASTD OD/Leadership Network News 2006