



# Strategically Aligning Learning and Performance Efforts

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A critical ingredient of success as a human resource development (HRD) practitioner is the development of business skills and knowledge — rather than just HRD skills and knowledge. The latter is certainly important as you climb the HRD functional ladder and move toward a CLO-type role. But HRD competence alone is not enough to take you to the top.

Although there are many inherent challenges in being a top-tier CLO, one of the most significant that I've experienced and witnessed is the CLO's ability to manage and transform the HRD function's work effort, as well as aligning it with the organization's strategic priorities and performance requirements.

During times of organizational transformation, it is critical the CLO not only understand the strategic change requirements but also realign where and how the organization invests in learning and performance initiatives that help support the transformation.

There are three key horizons where CLOs need to focus their attention and leadership. Clearly, there are many different variables to consider when determining the optimal distribution of resource allocation in each of the horizons. The description of each horizon offers some general guidelines to consider.

## Horizon 1: Leverage Current Learning and Performance Investments

When operating in this horizon, the challenge is to prioritize the existing learning and performance initiatives to ensure that, going forward, they are truly aligned with the core capabilities needed to support the organization's strategic transformation. One challenge I've seen occur within this horizon is an unwillingness to create the necessary revisions to some curricula, interventions and initiatives that have been successful in the past. In this case, it pays to remember the performance management adage, "If you continue to do as you've done, you'll get what you got before." Making appropriate refinements to ensure you're leveraging the initiatives that continue forward is crucial. Although there is no "right" formula to

apply here, from my experience, the HRD function should be allocating only about 40 percent to 50 percent of its resources/staff toward this particular horizon in an effort to continue to build core competencies.

## Horizon 2: Selectively Sunset Non-Strategically Aligned Efforts

Based on the prioritization that occurred in Horizon 1, it is imperative you actually retire initiatives that are not aligned strategically with the organization's transformation, regardless of how successful and well-received they have been. You will experience little to no ROI on these learning and performance initiatives. In today's lean operating environment, it is vital that the HRD function not continue to support and deploy any initiatives that don't add value. In reaching toward this particular horizon, the HRD function might expect to allocate about 10 percent to 15 percent of its resources to "closing out" selected efforts.

## Horizon 3: Create Learning and Performance Technologies for the Future

In this horizon, the focus is on investing in "new" learning and performance technologies designed to enable future performance results that are aligned with strategic priorities. Whether you employ a "make" or a "buy" strategy, it is critical that these investments be properly identified and that the appropriate resources be allocated. Often, because of some of the unknown factors, this horizon is inadequately addressed in terms of research, dedication of effort and organizational support. Where possible, allocate approximately 35 percent to 50 percent of the HRD function's resources to the development of new learning and performance products/services. This is a critically important investment in the organization's success.

Clearly, taking the lead to ensure you are appropriately aligning the organization's learning and performance investments with the organization's strategic transformation plans will help strengthen your leadership position within the organization. ■

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