INFORMAL LEARNING

Informal learning is the unofficial, unscheduled, impromptu way people learn to do their jobs. Learning is adaptation. Taking advantage of the double meaning of the word network, to learn is to optimize the quality of one's networks. We learn from one another.

COST

SPENDING/ OUTCOMES PARADOX

People learn how to do their jobs informally – talking, observing others, trial-and-error, and simply working with people in the know. Training and workshops account for only 10% to 20% of what people learn at work. Most corporations over-invest in formal training while neglecting more natural, simple processes.

INFORMAL   FORMAL

LEARNING

INFORMAL   FORMAL

PAYBACK

Executives don't want learning; they want execution. They want performance. Companies are using informal learning to increase sales, improve productivity, boost innovation, reduce stress, cut costs, and reinvent themselves.

FASTER, FASTER

Time itself has succumbed to Moore's Law. The 21st century will contain 20,000 current years of progress! The future is unpredictable. Work is improv. Traditional ways of training employees are obsolete.

THE END OF HIERARCHY

Networks subvert hierarchy. As networks engage our lives, centralized power crumbles, and people gain more control over their destinies.

EMERGENT LEARNING

Informal learning emerges in complex environments called learnscapes. Learnscaping involves removing obstacles, seeding communities, increasing bandwidth, encouraging conversation, and growing networks.

ENVISIONING

Humans are sight-mammals. Images plus words communicate twice as much as words alone. Pictures translate across cultures, education levels, and age groups.

NOVICE LEARNER

Formal learning is like riding a bus: the driver decides where the bus is going; the passengers are along for the ride. People new to the territory often ride the bus before hopping on the bike.

SENIOR LEARNER

Informal learning is like riding a bicycle: the rider chooses the destination, the speed, and the route. The rider can take a detour at a moment's notice, to admire the scenery or to help a fellow rider.

COMMUNITIES

Unless you are a hermit, you are a member of several communities of practice, although you may not have thought of it that way. Plumbers, programmers, and pastry chefs gather together to create and pass on the rules of thumb of their trade.

CONVERSATIONS

Conversations are the stem cells of learning, for they both create and transmit knowledge. Frequent and open conversations increase innovation. People love to talk. Bringing them together brings excitement.

META-LEARNING VIEWPOINT

Traditional training departments concentrate their energy on managing bus routes. That's like providing kindergarten classes to college students. Mature learners, typically a company's top performers, simply skip it entirely.

UNCONFERENCES

New approaches are creating business meetings that people enjoy. Successful gatherings are those where everyone participates. No better-than-thou. No podium. No positions carved in stone.

THE FLAT EARTH

Location is no longer an advantage. The world's workers compete on a level playing field. Organizations are becoming horizontal nodes in a global business network.
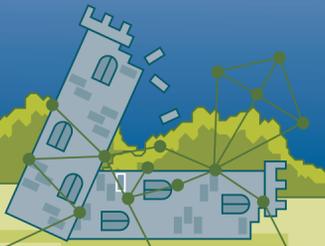
ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

The informal organization does most of the work, but managers overlook it because they can't see it. Mapping the social network brings the shadow organization into the light.
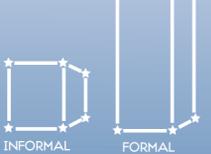
INTERNET INSIDE

Imagine having an in-house learning and information environment as rich as the internet. You'd have blogs and search and syndication and podcasts and more. You'd also have a platform everyone already knows how to use.

THE WEB

The internet did change everything. Ten years ago, there were 16 million internet users; today they number more than a billion. Google is the world's largest learning provider, answering thousands of inquires every second. The web's informal, spontaneous, vernacular knowledge sharing can now be brought behind the firewall.

OLD	NEW
PUSH	**PULL**
Training	Learning
Rigid	Flexible
Program	Platform
Mandated	Self-service
Formal	Informal

PULL PUSH

PUSH/PULL LEARNING

Training is something that's pushed on you; informal learning is something you're pulled into. Many a knowledge worker will tell you, "I love to learn but I hate to be trained." Knowledge workers thrive when given the freedom to decide how they will do what they're asked to do.

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