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>> This is the Learning Circle. I'm Anthony Rotolo. My guest today is Dr. Marc Rosenberg. He's a management consultant, an educator, and the author of the best-selling books e-Learning: Strategies for Delivering Knowledge in the Digital Age and Beyond e-Learning: Approaches and Technologies to enhance organizational knowledge. You can also find his writings at the Learning Solutions magazines website in his blog titled, Marc My Words. Dr. Rosenberg, welcome to the Learning Circle.

>> Thank you. Happy to be here.

>> Thank you. We're glad to have you. Now one of the subjects you've been interested in is what it takes to create and sustain an organizational learning culture. And I'd like to ask you about that today. But let's begin at the beginning. What is a learning culture? How do you define it?

>> Well, there is lots of definitions for learning culture. Different people describe it differently. But the way I see a learning culture is an organization where people freely share what they know. And in sharing what they know, help others to grow and develop and perform better. There have been definitions of learning culture that have more to do with training. You know a learning culture being something that has, that's manifested by a successful training organization, per se. I don't find that to be the case. You could have lots of training and not have a very strong learning culture. A learning culture is characteristic of the organization, not of any function, not of any service, but really a hallmark of how the organization behaves. How it treats its people and how it values knowledge and that is far beyond any functionality like training, or e-Learning or anything like that. So it goes far beyond just having a product line of learning assets.

>> Oh, yes, yes. The organizations that have the largest course catalog don't necessarily have the best learning culture.

>> Excellent. Now how important is the role of leadership in all of this. Is this somewhat of a top-down responsibility.

>> Well, a consultant friend of mine once told me that change flows only one way, downhill. Now a lot of people including myself thing that there is some relevance to change that comes from the rank and file, that comes up. But in terms of setting a tone for a learning culture. I think it truly starts at the top. And it starts with the policies and environment that leaders create in organizations to allow their people to learn. And that, again, going back to my definition, that is not the same thing as allowing people to go to class. Allowing people to go to class is something you can tract on a timesheet. Allowing people to learn

and share what they do is much more of a social work-based kind of activity where people can take time out from work and learn something new. Or they can talk to people and share ideas and not be accused if you would of wasting time. In other words, it's encouraged. So the role of leadership is to encourage learning and sharing of knowledge. And you can do this in many ways by giving time to learn, by rewarding people who share what they know, by providing the tools and technologies that enhance learning by building support for learning into performance appraisals and into how people are evaluated, by celebrating things that people learn and not punishing people for something they might have done inappropriately as long as there's learning that comes out from that. These are all characteristics of leadership, not necessarily characteristics of a learning function. And some of the best leaders are also the biggest champions of learning. And so I think there's, the role of leadership is fundamental to building a learning culture.

>> So you need those signals that it's okay to learn.

>> You need more than those signals.

>> Yeah.

>> I can, I can stand up there as a leader and say, I love learning. Learning is great, right after motherhood and apple pie, who doesn't like learning. But then by my behavior, by my actions I do things to discourage people from learning. Let's give people the time. I cut any kind of budgets. I don't reward people or sharing what they know. So it's, it's not just talk, it's action and it starts at the top. And you have to set the culture and then you have to enforce the culture. You have to recognize those who are building a learning culture and make them your role models. So it's more than talk, because I don't think there's a person on the planet who doesn't think learning is a good idea. But as they say, talk is cheap.

>> Yeah. You know what comes out of learning is change and sometimes that can threaten the status quo. So I think that's a part of this, right.

>> Oh, yeah. There are obviously lots of ways culture can be demeaned, the learning culture can be ineffective. One we've already talked about, that is talking about it, but not doing anything. You can do other things that foster learning and change is, change management or understanding change management is one of them. This is not something, you can't just get up one day and say we're going to have a learning culture. People don't know what that means. And unfortunately, in many training departments they equate a learning culture with a training culture. And confusing learning with training is very dangerous. Learning is a much broader concept, so when you have a learning culture you're

really asking people to proactively seek out new information, to proactively ask questions, to proactively search for answers. And organizations where people have been in the habit for many, many years of sitting behind a table and be lectured or told everything they need to know are going to have trouble taking on this learning responsibility. They're going to need help. They're going to need assistance tools and recognition that this is important and that's all part of change management. So in building a learning culture you need good examples. You need prototype programs, you need role models, all of these things that help people understand not only that this is an interesting idea, but that this is valuable for them and they want to participate. And that, that becomes extremely important and it takes a lot of time.

>> Yes.

>> It's more than a one-way conversation. And so you're starting a conversation that's ongoing in the organization. So we need champions. We need people who will spread these ideas around the organization, right. That's correct. You need people who will champion the idea of a learning culture. And when I say champion I mean people who will talk the right words and do the right things and by their actions promote a learning culture and then show it to other people, you know, look what we've done here. Look at the kinds of benefits that we've derived from this learning culture. So it's, it's very much, and there's a little sales to it. There's a little sales and marketing about this new way of thinking that, that you also have to be engaged in. And if you do that, you get to a point where you get critical mass. Enough people believe it, enough people have participated in it and then it's in a sense, self-sustaining and that's where it really takes off.

>> You make a distinction between learning and training, learning being a much broader concern, bigger than just certainly formal course offerings. Can you speak to this idea of a performance ecosystem and having the right technology, the right environment?

>> All right. Let's start at the bottom, training. Training is a technique. It is a process by which we transfer information and skill from the expert or the source to people who need it. It's very prescriptive. It has lessons and modules. It's, there's a whole science to it.

>> Uh-huh.

>> From psychology and communications, instructional design, it is one way that we can affect learning. But learning, the broader concept, can be done in many ways. Do I always need to attend class? Can't I go to my buddy down the hall and say, can you show me something? That's learning. Can I look up something on my own?

Can I do trial and error? Can I watch someone do something? None of this has any of the trappings of courseware, whether it's classroom courses or e-Learning courses, but I'm learning nonetheless. And there is a, a model that a lot of people are interested in called the 70/20/10 model. Maybe you've heard of it, which basically says 70% of what we learn we learn from doing, from interacting with our work environment. Twenty percent of what we learn we learn from other people in a coaching or mentoring environment or just asking questions. And only 10% of what we learn is from formal structure training. And so, if you believe that, and I do, it may not be 70. It may be 80. It may not be 10. It may be five, whatever. Then you have to look at what are the tools, technologies, approaches, strategies that we ought to be using to attack that 90% of learning that isn't structure training. And various people have tried to do this and we have a model that we've started to talk about called a learning and performance eco system. And let me preface it by saying if training is a technique, and learning is a broader concept from which we, from which there are many techniques to learn, performance is then the ultimate goal. It's even a bigger concept and you can get people to perform without necessarily having them learn. There are all kinds of ways to get people to do things. I mean if I want you to do something, I could pay you to do something. You may not learn how to do it, but you'll do it because there's an incentive for you. We started to think about that and we started to think about it's not just learning, but it's learning and performance that we want to get at. And so we created this ecosystem, this interrelationship of six components that we believe are all equally essential to learning. And the first one is structured learning, which is the training component, which is what we mostly deal with. Then there are four quote "informal" strategies that you want to bring in. One is collaboration. That comes from social media and social networking. Another one is access to experts, which is the mentoring, the coaching, the help center strategies that we would use. Another one is knowledge management, which is the organization of content so that it can be accessed quickly and reliably and used and updated, sort of the library metaphor for everything we need. And then there is performance support, which are the job based tools that help us do our jobs more effectively and more efficiently. So those are five of the six components. And the sixth component is talent management. It's how we integrate all of this learning and performance into career development, organizational productivity, those kinds of things that predominantly HR is concerned with, helping people advance in their careers and that's the ecosystem. And all of these things are interrelated and we have found that organizations that use an ecosystem approach, whether they call it that or not, tend to have a stronger learning culture because they tend to spread the learning strategy across a variety of techniques and approaches, so that people have more freedom to choose the ways they want to learn. That's been very helpful for us. It sounds

like a more precise description of what we've often heard as simply formal versus informal learning.

>> Exactly. A friend of mine in the field has a problem with informal learning, because how do you explain informal learning to a CEO? How do you put a budget around it? How do you set up informal learning projects? It's kind of difficult, so we've kind of put some more concreteness around that when we talk about access to experts or performance support and knowledge management. We look at, those are things that you can actually build projects around. But the formal versus informal learning paradigm is also eminently useful, informal learning first coined by Jay Cross. I think it revolutionized our thinking and in many respects got us off, sort of we were stuck at this idea of blended learning, where the whole idea of blended learning was classroom based with e-Learning added in. That was the blend and Jay and others said, well wait a minute, there's a lot more we can blend into this. And we first started to redefine the term blended learning and that was problematical. And so the idea of informal learning was born, and that really quite, quite successful. We're just trying to put some meat on those bones so that people in positions to support all of this can identify projects and tasks and strategies that they can employ.

>> Does it become more measurable, these minute means of learning?

>> It becomes more measurable and that is also a hallmark of learning culture. If we existed only in a training culture, the measures we would care about would be, did they learn from the course? Sort of Kirkpatrick's level two. I don't think, and with all due respect to the Kirkpatrick model, which I think is very useful, I don't think there's a CEO or a vice president worth their salary who cares whether someone learns from a course. What they care about is performance in the field, productivity, efficiency or bottom line, those kinds of things. So from a Kirkpatrick level we have to look at level three and level four. And trainers have been notoriously not very good at that. So, one of the things in a learning culture is this partnership between those developing the learning solutions, whatever they may be and the clients and the people who are experiencing the problem. And so one of the best ways I think to build a learning culture is to first, on the very first day of a project ask the client, how would you define success? And ask that client to tell us what they would think would be success of this project. And that can tell us a lot about which components of the eco system to employ, what change management strategies we need to bring in, what leadership has to do, because we know what the goal is. Not the learning goal, but the actual business or performance goal that the client has specified. I want sales to go up. I want waste to go down. I want productivity to go up. I want us to win more in the market place. I want us to penetrate this market. I want

product development speeded up. These are the kinds of things they worry about. And the more we worry about what they worry about, the more they will come back to us and support our learning strategies.

>> So you're designing backwards from that outcome.

>> I am starting, I'm starting at the end and moving forward. I'm designing backwards. You know you look at the typical ADDIE model. You know everybody knows what the ADDIE model is. You know, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. I'm not sure why the evaluation is at the end. The linearness of ADDIE has always bothered a lot of people and it, it's more iterative. So I think you ask a value of questions all the way along. But up front in analysis by asking the right evaluation questions you set a moue for this project that I think is very, very, either can be very conducive or damaging to the culture or project and of the organization itself. No certainly people have to be ready to learn. So how do you assure that readiness in the culture? Readiness is a function of many things. At its base level, something that's pretty apparent is are we equipped to deliver the kinds of learning solutions do we have our technologies aligned? Do we have our facilities aligned? Are our resources in place? Is all of it "quote" working. That's one level of readiness. And I think there's been lots of ups and downs in that, but I think we pretty much get that, that you know, if the technology doesn't work we're going nowhere. If the facilities aren't there we can't do it. But another level of readiness is more of a cultural readiness. When people are asked to learn something new, a new corporate strategy comes down. A new way of doing things comes down. What is the reaction from those who, who, for whom this is targeted? Is it, this is nonsense, let's got back to the old way of doing things. Or who told you we had to do it this way? Or this sounds pretty neat. I would love to learn this if my boss would let me, but my boss won't let me. Flavor of the month, different blank, same day. You know all of these kinds of reactions that people have are very, are cynical and reflective of probably the behavior of the business in the past. That kind of readiness is much more challenging and much more problematical. It means you have to get over people's cynicism, their fears. We have to help managers allocate time when they're under pressure to produce more widgets or whatever they're doing. You have to change the budget priorities. You have to do a lot of different things to do this and then you have to, at the end of it, you have to reward people for, for participating in it. You have to learn from, learn from how you learn. So that's a second readiness. A third readiness is this whole idea of learning how to learn. Let me tell a brief story here. You know when we're in college, many of us have been in college or even those who don't, what happens is in the first year or two in college, you sit in big lecture calls and you get talked to. But by the time you're a senior in college, your

classes are smaller and they're more conversational. During this time, you're in college you spend a lot more time, especially as the years go on in the library doing research or working with other students on projects than you do sitting in class. When you get to graduate school, it's even more so. Classroom time is much less important than the time you spend on your research or whatever you're going to be doing. So at the end of a college experience, most people learn how to learn on their own. They learn how to use the library. They learn how to ask questions. They learn how to find their own answers. Then we bring them to the corporate world and we sit them in big rooms, with rows of tables, with big binders, and go through hundreds of PowerPoints. And over time we send a message to these people that you don't need to learn anything on your own. We're going to tell you everything you need to know. And that destroys their zest for learning and their feeling that they're free to learn. And we need to reverse that. We need to empower employees and workers to ask questions again, to learn on their own, to be responsible for finding out information and not wait for someone to tell them. And there is a balance between what we have to do and what they have to do. It's not all on them, but we have to give them back this freedom and desire to learn on their own. We have to teach them to learn how to learn again, that they, that kind of was pushed aside. So that's another example of readiness. And when you look at the workforce the millennials and others that are coming into the workforce, they're very independent learners for the most part. And then you, of course, have your aging baby boomers and others who are, tend to more independent learners. And so everybody asks you, well what do you do because you have all this diversity of learning styles and learning interests in the organization. And the best answer I can give is you do the best you can. We've always had that problem. It doesn't mean you don't push forward with your new people and adapt new ways of doing things. So those are the three levels of readiness that I think are important, the physical tactical readiness, the cultural readiness, and then the individual do I know how to learn on my own type of readiness. It makes me think what you're describing of how, the advent of the internet, we've all become resourceful. It's not just about you know who has the knowledge, who has the power then memorization, because we can access information. You know we do this naturally. We're at a conference now and I'm sure you might have had to hit Google to figure something out. And we just naturally and big things, small things, we're resourceful. And that's a contrast to this highly prescriptive thing you're describing where you're in a new job and you're told what to do. And that message is not to be resourceful, but you have to watch out. Because as powerful as the web is and how revolutionary, and it is in my view one of the most revolutionary things that have happened in the last hundred years. As powerful as it is, the internet is, and I'm going to use a technical term here. The internet is full of crap.

>> Okay.

>> There's a lot of, there's a lot of inaccurate stuff and sad stuff, wrong stuff, not to mention bias stuff of all kinds. We don't have to get into that, but the internet is full of fallacies. So, learning how to learn means learning how to separate the good stuff from the bad on the internet. I'm not sure everybody can do that, and I think that's an important skill not just for people in a working situation, but extremely important for our kids to learn. If they're going to learn to use the internet they have to learn to use it critically. And for us in a corporation we need to have to build internet based solutions in the workplace that are reliable, that are easy to use. And I talk to a lot of people. I ask them this simple question, how easy is your corporate intranet to use? How easy is it for you to find answers in your own organization and I get all kinds of stories that are some are hysterical and some are just plain sad about the inability of people to find information in their own organization. So you're dealing with the inability to find stuff and then when you do find it the concern that it may not be correct. This is all very important so be careful what you wish for in giving people access to so much stuff. It requires what I think is a big deal in our business right now, a lot of content curation. That's, we don't need more information we need better information and content curation is all about that. The right information for the right time, to the right purpose, to the right people, from trusted sources. You want to destroy a learning culture, start giving people stuff that's wrong. Start telling people the wrong, giving people the wrong information. The will never trust that information source again. And eventually they'll say, I'm not going to look at any of this because I can't trust it. So I'm going to wait until someone tells me what to do. And when you do that, the learning culture is gone.

>> That's an important distinction and a caveat. How can we assure long-term buy-in to our learning programs?

>> There's only one way to assure long-term buy-in and that is show value. How are the learning programs helping the organization? Now it can be helping the organization from a culture perspective, from a profit perspective, from a employee retention perspective. There's many ways you can define this. But in many cases training organizations have not really stepped up to this as well as they should. There are cases, for example, that I am very familiar with of training organizations being shut down by the business because it was costing too much or they didn't see value. And the training director on the last day would get up and say, people will demand our stuff. You can't do this. People want to be here. Look at our full classrooms. People want to be here and they're shut down and nobody complains. Because being there, going to class was considered, you know, that's fun,

that's nice. Maybe it's useful, but if the corporation isn't going to give it to me, if they're going to shut it down, then I'm going to go find another way to figure this all out. And I'm not going to be the first one to stand up and say, I want my training center back. So I think it is incredible imperative that we show value. And getting back to the point I made earlier, the only way we can show value is to ask our clients what they think is valuable in what we're doing, rather than us defining it. And so when we stand up and say, oh, our students got 90% on the post test, what the heck does that mean? Does that mean they can perform in the field? Does that mean they can beat the competition? I don't know. Well, we got to get past that. What is success really look like? What does success look like? What does it mean? How can you demonstrate? How can you showcase it? How can you show a value for the investment in learning?

>> Now, this brings me to my next question. You talk a lot about measuring success. How should we be thinking about measuring the success of our learning so that it redounds to the culture? In each learning situation, in each, in each effort you make your client will define success. Yes, you have to do Kirkpatrick level one through four if you can. And I think levels three and four are close to what I'm talking about. But it can't be measures that you decide. It has to be measures that your client decides. And so you have to, when you ask the client, what constitutes success, goes through a scenario with them about, they tell you what constitutes success and then you help to figure out the measures that will reflect that. Not only will you have a better evidence that what you're doing works, but you'll have an ally on your side. Particularly important, I think, in one area of training that really concerns me if I may and that's the whole area of compliance training, where the government or regulatory agency or an industry says everybody must take this course and that course and this course. And compliance means you showed up.

>> I know a little bit about that. I've got a couple that I have to get down.

>> Yeah.

>> So, right now.

>> It means that you've show up. Maybe you take the quiz at the end or something like that. But it doesn't necessarily mean you can do it. It doesn't necessarily mean that you learned. And I think a lot of compliance training, while it fills classrooms, is very counter to a learning culture because it's basically going through the motions. And yet, we are compelled to do it because of regulations and laws and things like that. And I think if you want to build a learning culture, you need to, I think one of the areas you should attack is this whole concept of compliance training that really isn't supported by an accurate or realistic

or meaningful measurement strategy of performance in the field. That's I know I'm editorializing a little bit. And I know some of the listeners here who work for the government will nod their heads and say yeah, yeah, yeah. And some of the others will say, well, you know this is reality. This what we have to do. But I think this is one of the areas that hurts learning culture.

>> You know, that's very helpful. Do you have any other points of advice?

>> Aside from not giving up, I would say that building a learning culture means not thinking of yourself so much as the training organization. It means partnering more. It means getting out there. It means being a problem solver. It means not being so solution focused. You know, I have, here's my course catalog. Now what's your problem. How can we fit that catalog to your problem? It means thinking about learning more broadly. If, if someone can learn how to do something, merely by reading a document, or looking at a job aid, or asking a buddy. There is no need to be build courseware. In fact, I would argue that the least expensive solution, the most efficient solution is often the best. So when you're learn, when you're facing a learning problem ask yourself what can we do to eliminate the learning problem in the most expedient way possible and work backwards. Whatever is left you might have to do training. Remember, training is about changing the behavior, the skills, the attitudes of people. That's risky, it's unpredictable, and it's expensive. If I can change a process and increase performance or I can change some documentation to make it easier to be understood maybe I should do that rather than train people to work in a bad process or read a bad document. So again, this working backwards, start as close to the problem as you can, try and solve the problem with work base placed solutions. And whatever is left you might have to train. Now let me say that nothing that I have said denigrates training. It's still going to be important. It's always going to be important. There are things that people have to be trained to do because of their critical nature, their risk involved, the immediacy of reaction, etc. They're going to have to be, internalize it. You can also take a lot of what we call Bloom's taxonomy lower level training, you know, knowledge comprehension stuff. When that stuff is moved to some other resource, your precious and expensive training resources can be elevated to more higher level types of activities such as project planning, doing some creative work, problem solving. So your classrooms become less lecture halls and more laboratories where people come in and apply what they've learned through other means and work in teams. And that I think is where the evolution of the classroom is going. It's not going away and any organization that thinks we can get rid of all of our classrooms, put everything on line I think is dreaming. What they need to do is reconsider the role of training, vis a vie all these other solutions and create a proper balance. And when you do that you're going to solve problems

faster, quicker, cheaper and people are going to appreciate it and out of that will grow a learning culture.

>> Excellent. That ties back to what you said earlier that the definition of blended learning wasn't sufficient. There's a lot of ingredients that go into that.

>> Right. Right. Blended learning is something that training organizations do. They have classroom training, they have online training, they have maybe virtual training. They have web-based training, whatever you want to call it. But what about the learning that's going on in the field, where the supervisor is showing his or her people how to do something. What about the learning that's going on in a customer care environment, where they, where the rep is learning from information that's coming in on the screen? What about learning that's going on over lunch, where people are discussing a project. All of that stuff has nothing to do with what the training organization is doing, it's extremely powerful. And we need the training organizations to recognize it and embrace it and we need senior management to recognize as a legitimate activity and embrace it and find a place to come together. And when you do that I think you're going to be, as they say, off to the races.

>> Outstanding. Dr. Rosenberg, thank you very much for joining us today.

>> My pleasure.

>> Can we have you back again sometime?

>> Anytime.

>> Thank you so much.

>> All right. Take care.

>> Take care.

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