

## Is it Time for a New Training Diet?

As we ring in the New Year and consider all the resolutions we have made, there comes the question, “Which ones are we going to keep, and which ones are we going to cheat on a little here and there?” If *diet* was in your top three, and it was in mine, I must confess to cheating...already...and only a few weeks of the year have barely passed. Why diet? For many of us, we attempt to shed extra pounds that slow us down, to fit into the clothes we received as holiday gifts, and ultimately, to avoid adverse impacts to our health. Believe it or not, we have another diet to consider in the New Year – one for our businesses. If training is food we depend on for delivering knowledge and skills, are we eating the right meals? Is the nutritional value of our learning investments just satisfying the need to “*feel full*” or is it supplying the fuel for tangible business results?

Having the early life experience of growing up on a farm, mealtime was a major production. All three meals were massive, and rightly so, as there was much physical work to be done each day. The body needed appropriate feeding in order to perform. Follow that same “*feeding*” tradition while working in front of a computer every day: the only thing that gets massive is your body. *Solution?* Modify the diet to match the rigors of work. In our businesses, serving up training to feed knowledge and skills to our workforce also has a responsibility to match the rigors of work.

Work today is not like the work of ten years ago, or even five years or less in some industries. Remaining competitive is not just a function of working hard; it is a function of working hard on the right things. The velocity of work-demands have increased exponentially. Work is constant. Change is constant. The requirement for flawless performance in the work context is constant. *Why should the opportunity to learn be any less constant?*

Are we following a training diet that matches the rigors of work, or are we following out-dated traditions that satisfy the habit of “*feeling full*” after consuming a half-day of training, or devouring a two-hour eLearning course? The business rules of gaining and maintaining competitive advantage have changed; *urgency to perform flawlessly in the work context* directly links to consequences affecting our business outcomes. While a steady diet of knowledge and skills remain a basic staple in the traditional training diet, that venue lacks the agility to plate smaller portions of targeted, *just-in-time learning*. Are we continuing to sit our workforce down to full meals in the dining room when we should balance their diets by preparing nourishing snacks to consume “*on the go*”, at the *point of work*? (See *Figure 1*)

A leading learning researcher, Josh Bersin, of Bersin & Associates, was on a panel of experts with me in July of 2009 for a program titled “The Future of the Business of Learning”. The graph provided in *Figure 1* illustrates the findings he shared. We spend roughly 100 hours per work year in formal learning [a.k.a. Training] that translates to +/- 5% depending upon your industry and the number of compliance-related hoops you must jump through. By my math, that says 95% of the year we are NOT in training; instead, we are in our respective work contexts. Additionally, Josh revealed that, on the average, we spend up to 80% of our resources [human and dollars] on the 5% slice of the pie. Each of us, in our respective businesses and industry disciplines, may well have different percentages, but odds are we see a small slice and a big slice relationship as depicted in *Figure 1*.

To be more direct, it is not *what we consume*, as much as it is...

- How much should we consume to satisfy the moment of need?
- Where are we when we have the moment of need to consume it?
- What *urgency factors* are present when we attempt to consume it?
- What is *at risk* if we fail to perform our job/task flawlessly?

Answers to these questions, or worse, the inability to provide answers to these questions, point us toward a more critical question that has significant implications on modifying our learning diet – “Do we have a learning resource imbalance in our organization that we have not addressed?”

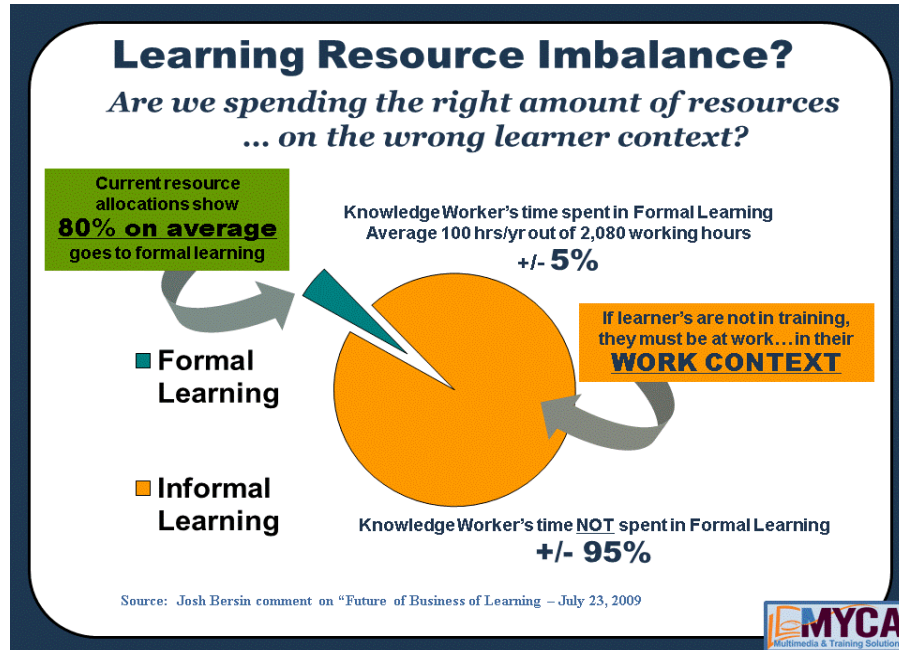


Figure 1

This graphic contains an underlying significance that we must consider – **what happens in the work context?** For starters, it is where we work. More importantly, it is where our workforce generates tangible business outcomes. No one closes sales in the 5% slice of the pie. No managers make actionable decisions to avoid the creation of material waste while sitting in a classroom event. No customer service representatives resolve critical customer issues while consuming an on-line course. These things happen *downstream*, in the post-training, work context. *Figure 1* is even more convicting when we see Josh Bersin's findings showing us that up to 80% of the time we are serving training meals in the 5% slice when we should be engaging in “healthy snacks” during the remaining 95%.

The increasing velocity of business is driving another phenomenon that further conflicts with the traditional “7-course training meal” methodology. A single word sums up this phenomenon – **convergence**.

Effective performance in the work context is rapidly *converging* with **moments of learning need**. (See *Figure 2*)

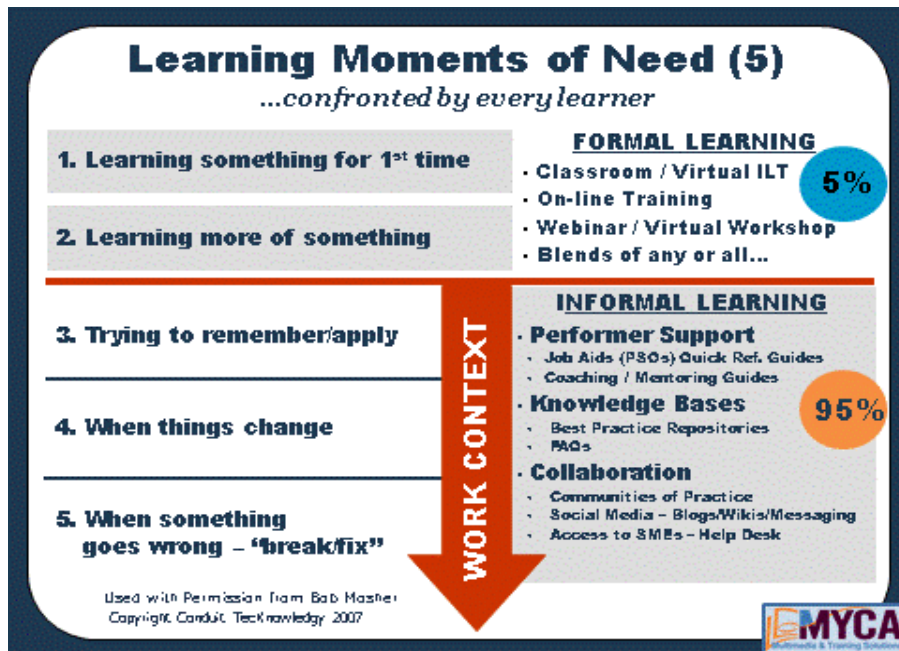


Figure 2

All of us confront learning moments when and where we do not have the requisite knowledge in our heads, *or at our fingertips*, that is necessary to execute a task. Dr. Conrad Gottfredson of BYU and Bob Mosher of LearningGuide came up with the five moments you see in *Figure 2*. They not only make sense, they have highlighted the need for changing the way we support our workforce with learning across a broader spectrum – across a learning environment we should treat as an “**ecosystem**”.

Here are some of the reasons why we need the broader context. The first two moments represent what we do traditionally in the 5% slice of the ecosystem pie, serving up “7-course training meals”, feeding our workforce in class and on-line. Moments three, four, and five represent the 95% slice of the ecosystem – the **work context**. The generation of tangible business value...or not...or partially...or barely...manifest in the *work context* when one or more of the last three moments of need confront a worker. Urgency to perform flawlessly and the potential for business risk and/or liability are constant companions of these three moments. And in those moments, a full-course classroom or two-hour eLearning event are the wrong meal choices off the wrong menu.

To drive sustained capability in the work context, we need “high energy snacks” designed for quick consumption on the go – inside the workflow – in the work context. This is a paradigm shift for many. This shift represents a new training diet. MYCA Multimedia (DiversityUniversity.com) has responded with a new meal plan called **REALITY BYTES™**, representing “learning snacks” targeted to accomplish several things:

- Reinforce knowledge in the post-training work context
- Provide targeted performance support for specific tasks or workflow processes
- Communicate critical changes or alerts without causing major work disruptions

- Provide real-time feedback loops between knowledge workers and content owners/subject matter experts (SMEs)

Why is reinforcement so important? Quite simply, we cannot remember everything. More importantly, we cannot remember the right things for very long; in particular, those things we received in training during the 5% slice of the pie. (See Figure 3)

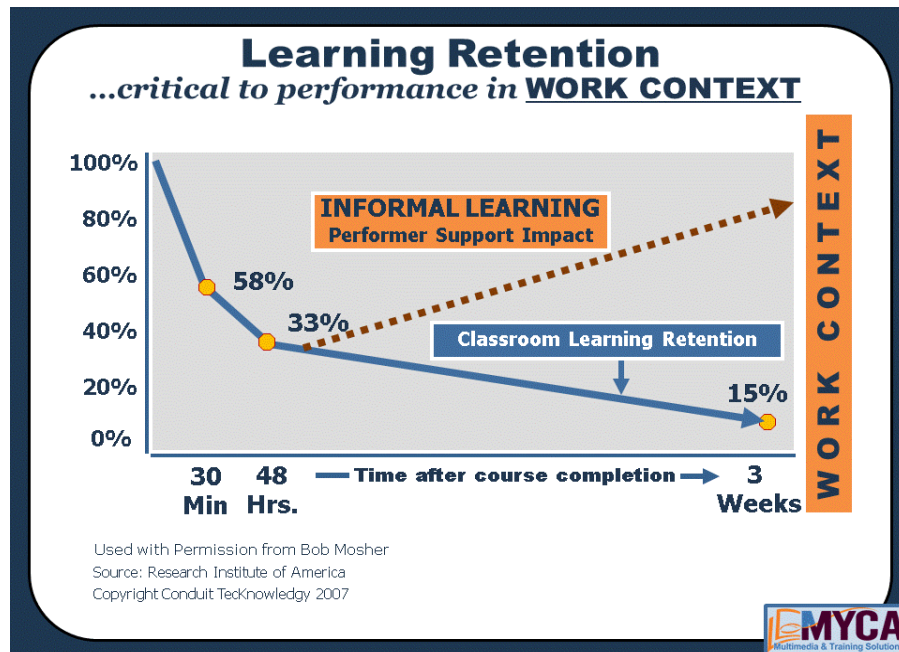


Figure 3

When we see the precipitous drop-off in knowledge retention after only a couple of days, it is no wonder that formal training in the 5% slice of the pie cannot be counted on to move, much less sustain, the performance needle in the context of our business results. The rules of engagement have changed, and a new diet of learning opportunities needs serious consideration. Does this eliminate the need for classroom learning and/or on-line eLearning? Absolutely not; but it DOES suggest balancing our diet, and expanding our scope to support those “learning moments of need” snacks.

Where do REALITY BYTES come from? The best answer is another question, “Where do snacks come from?” Seriously, a “snack” is nothing more than a smaller portion of a larger meal. Certainly, we package it differently and render it in a serving size more convenient to eat while on the run, but at the end of the day; it is still food. The same is true for REALITY BYTES – they are still learning content. MYCA and DiversityU work with a variety of ingredients to build the appropriate Bytes including:

- Existing learning assets; job aids and reference materials
- Current policies and procedure documentation;
- Templates for inserting newly created content; and
- Custom development to meet unique business learning requirements

Delivery of REALITY BYTES uses email to targeted work groups or bulk delivery to large distributions lists. Recently, MYCA has established a relationship with a mobile learning company to support delivery of REALITY BYTES to Apple, Android and Blackberry mobile platforms to satisfy the needs of the untethered, mobile workforce.

Creating a new *training diet* plan for your business requires a serious look at how important learning's role is to the success of your business, and how integral it is to sustaining capability. Moving to a new "*meal plan*" requires the use of a new cookbook and integration of some new recipes. We cannot overlook one key ingredient to success – *reaching a state of readiness to adopt a new learning paradigm and supporting an ecosystem*. Assessing your state of readiness and building a road map to a healthy diet of learning sustainability is what MYCA Multimedia & Training Solutions does best. If this article has whetted your appetite for changing your training diet, you have a couple of options to consider related to engaging with us:

1. Engage us for a **readiness assessment** and development of an **Innovation Road Map** so you can build your own "*learning snacks*" initiative.
2. Accept our assessment and engage us to implement the Innovation Road Map within your business as a partner or as a coach. Choose this option, and we will apply your readiness assessment discovery investment to development costs incurred to render your customized REALITY BYTES solution.

In either option, the Innovation Road Map serves as a recipe for serving up an enticing new learning paradigm. Are you hungry enough to make a change? Is it time to shed a few training pounds and make your workforce more agile and capable of flawless performance at the point of work? Is it time to fit into the demands of a high velocity business environment? Is it time to improve your business' competitive health with sustained capability in the work context? Do you need a positive, sustainable change in training results?

If so, contact us at [info@diversityuniversity.com](mailto:info@diversityuniversity.com) or [realitybytes@mycagroup.com](mailto:realitybytes@mycagroup.com) to schedule a caffeine-free, fat-free, no-carb, sugar-free, no added preservatives, no MSG, low calorie conversation about the potential for a new training diet for your business. Bon appetit!

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