



# talking about...

January 2012

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

## Completing the Path of Learning

*"That one is learned who has reduced his learning to practice."*

... from the "Hitopadesa" a collection of Sanskrit fables in prose and verse written in the 12 century A.D

The start of 2012 is strewn with news of possible recession and falling confidence. One of the early casualties of a downturn in the economy tends to be training budgets as organisations look for ways to tighten their belt. This does not mean that training is stopped rather it is generally reduced. One of the interesting aspects of such reductions lies in the efficacy of the training that remains. We would like to offer some context for how to get more bang for your training buck.

One of the key challenges for those of us in the field of learning lies in how learning is defined. The relevance of this often shows up quite markedly in more challenging economic times. To explore the definition of learning further, it is useful to consider learning in the context of what can be termed, "the path of learning". This path has four fundamental stages:

1. Unconscious Incompetence where the person has no knowledge of their incompetence in a specific domain. For example, they may not even know the domain exists. As a result, there is no thought of developing this competence;
2. Conscious Incompetence where the person recognises their incompetence in a specific domain. At this point, they can make a choice about whether to develop their level of competence or not;
3. Conscious Competence where the person develops the knowledge of what it means to be competent and practices what they know. At this point on the path, their level of competence is minimal and they have to focus on what they are doing to get it done. This is also a critical stage of learning as the person is in the question of their ability to develop the specific competence; and
4. Unconscious Competence where the new competence is embodied in the person's way of being. In other words, their level of competence is such that it is something they can do well without having to think about how to do it.

So now let's get back to the definition of learning. Many people define learning as the "acquisition of knowledge". In other words, once they know about something, they have learnt it. In our work, we term this "Discursive Knowledge". This leaves learners at stage 3, "Conscious Competence". When learning becomes embodied in the person's way of being as a skill, we term this, "Performative Knowledge". If the learner is stuck at Stage 3, it is rather like having read a book about driving a car, being able to talk about it, believing this means you can drive a car.

Yet many learning approaches stop at stage 3 such that a person goes to a one day training course, where new knowledge is imparted but nothing different shows up in their actions beyond that. Yet because they

have knowledge of the subject, they may erect a barrier to embodiment and completing the path. This contributes to what Geoffrey Pfeffer termed, "The Knowing-Doing Gap".

A further example of not completing the path is the use of various profiling tools in organisations. A person just doing a profile and getting a debriefing is unlikely to sustain a shift in the way they behave. Knowing is simply not enough.

To move beyond "Conscious Competence" into "Unconscious Competence" and the embodiment of learning requires ongoing practice. It involves the creation of a new habitual way of doing something or the breaking of an old pattern and the creating of new one. This takes time and is generally difficult for a person to achieve on their own as their habitual patterns are so ingrained they do not even see themselves using them.

Based on this understanding of learning, new ways of learning can be created. Firstly we invite you to identify how your organisation defines learning and address this if necessary. We also invite you to consider how to ensure participants do not simply acquire discursive knowledge but complete their path to learning and put new competence into practice. Finally, we invite you to consider how you assess the long term benefits of learning programs. You might be surprised by the results and get more bang for your training buck.

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*"Formal education, obsessed with information, has failed to prepare us for a good life."*

... Julio Olalla, "The Oracle of Coaching"

## Talking About LinkedIn

We now have over NINETY people participating in our LinkedIn conversations and you are invited to join in. Each month, we will be discussing our newsletters in more depth and also regularly invite you to consider other questions that we pose. You can find us at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3716581>

## A Rather Different Medical Dictionary...

*This made me chuckle. Thanks Greg...*

Artery	-	The study of paintings
Bacteria	-	Back door to cafeteria
Barium	-	What doctors do when patients die
Benign	-	What you be, after you be eight
Caesarean Section	-	A neighbourhood in Rome
Cat scan	-	Searching for Kitty
Cauterize	-	Made eye contact with her
Colic	-	A sheep dog
Coma	-	A punctuation mark
Dilate	-	To live long
Enema	-	Not a friend
Fester	-	Quicker than someone else
Fibula	-	A small lie
Impotent	-	Distinguished, well known
Labour Pain	-	Getting hurt at work
Medical Staff	-	A Doctor's cane
Morbid	-	A higher offer
Nitrates	-	Rates of pay for working at night, normally more money than days
Node	-	I knew it
Outpatient	-	A person who has fainted
Pelvis	-	Second cousin to Elvis
Post Operative	-	A letter carrier
Recovery Room	-	Place to do upholstery
Rectum	-	Nearly killed him
Secretion	-	Hiding something
Seizure	-	Roman Emperor
Tablet	-	A small table
Terminal Illness	-	Getting sick at the airport
Tumour	-	One plus one more
Urine	-	Opposite of you're out

*"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind."*

... Dr. Seuss (1904 - 1991) US author & illustrator

## Talking About Webinars

We have some great FREE webinars coming up, starting tomorrow, Wednesday 1st February, for Allied Health Practitioners. Following on from those two events will be webinars for Professional Service Practitioners and others interested in being happier, more resilient and a better communicator.

Allied Health Practitioners are invited to attend a 45 minute webinar entitled, "A New Way Of Communicat-ing, 4 Keys to Successful Conversa-tions!" on Wednesday 1st February at 10.00am (<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/335632102>) or Wednesday 8th Feb at 7.00pm (<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/519171534>)

If you are a Professional Service Prac-titioner, then you are invited to at-tend "A New Way Of Communicat-ing, 4 Keys to Successful Conversa-tions!" on Monday 5th March at 8.00pm and Thursday 8th March at 8.00pm.

Go to our "webinars" tab at [www.talkingabout.com.au](http://www.talkingabout.com.au) to register for any webinar or to find out about more upcoming events.

## Our Web Site

More articles and information about our work can be found at our web site, [www.talkingabout.com.au](http://www.talkingabout.com.au).

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