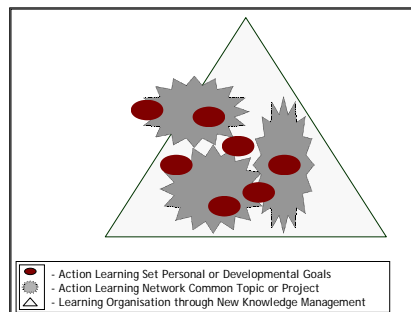


Action Learning

Learning Applied to Real life

- Action Learning Sets
- Action Learning Networks
- Learning Organisation through New Knowledge Management



At Pentacle we invented a number of concepts which are now widely used throughout the Education community.

Continuous learning (1993) - Beyond the one-off 'sheep-dip' to

Local Learning(1994) - Learning should be anchored in the participants space - and should continue at their workplace through application

Blended Learning (1993) Use of cyberspace (computers, audio conferences) plus touchspace (classroom, eventspace)

Published in FT hand book of Management 1996

Published in Gower Handbook of Training and Development 1995

We recommend that the project uses our web based learning platform CyberFranck™ which acts both as a collaborative tool for people involved in the action learning sets but in acting as a document repository and with its in-built Learning and Application logs (LandALog™) it will automatically provide the knowledge management system for the Learning Organisation. Screen Shots from CyberFranck™ are provided at the end of each section



Action Learning Sets



An Action Learning Set (ALS) is a group of approximately 5 people who work collaboratively in order to support each other in applying **learning**

The topics for application are usually focused around **personal and career development**

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The Pentacle Approach

At Pentacle we use a 'blended' approach to support the process mixing face to face meetings with e-collaboration using cyberFranck™

Pentacle Educators are skilled and equipped in being able to select the right type of intervention in order to ensure that the Set gets the most out of working together

Our Interventions are:

Educational Approach	Description	Application
Presenting	It's about what the Educator knows	When there is a lot of factual material to be transmitted
Teaching	It's about what the Educator knows and what the Participants learn	When new behaviours and factual material have to be absorbed and put into practice
Facilitation	It's about what the Participants know and what the Participants learn from each other	When sharing and building on knowledge, experience and commitment is enough to resolve the issues
Expert Facilitation	It's about what the Educator & the Participants know and what the Participants learn from each other and from the Educator	When the participants have themselves created the problem the Participants find themselves in and can't see the wood for the trees
Coaching	It's about what the Participants don't know the Participants know and the Educator helping the Participants to learn it	When the ownership of the activities has to remain with the participants and when the participants have a greater knowledge or skill level than the educator

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Pentacle Process

Month	Participant Vote-in		
0	Participant Vote-in		Participants decide who should be in which learning set. Diversity is recommended
	Focus Area selection	Facilitated	Participants will be provided with a Learning and application Log LandALog™ to help them select the area to focus on - They will also be encouraged to involve their line management and mentors in the selection of an appropriate topic
	e-Registration on CyberFranck™		
1	Orientation meeting	Facilitated	To help overcome initial team issues / storming
	Trouble shooter Audio conference	Facilitated	Participants will be taught Pentacle's Virtual Working techniques e.g. round-robin audio calls etc.
2	Calibration meeting	Facilitated	To ensure learning set is performing
3	Energiser Audio conference	Facilitated	
	ALS meeting		As frequently as ALS require
	ALS Audio conferences		As frequently as ALS require
6	CyberFranck™ set for KM Knowledge retrieval and sharing only		Key learnings are consolidated and de-personalised for sharing with the rest of the organisation



Action Learning Networks



An Action Learning Network (ALN) is a group of approximately 15 people who work collaboratively in order to support each other in applying learning

The network can be made up of people with overlapping action learning sets although it is recommended that it is a more mixed and diverse group.

The topics for application are usually focused around shared **organisational challenges or projects**. Often they concern issues which have been evident across the organisation but have required a cross-departmental effort to resolve

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The Pentacle Approach

At Pentacle we use a 'blended' approach to support the process mixing face to face meetings with e-collaboration using cyberFranck™

Pentacle Educators are skilled and equipped in being able to select the right type of intervention in order to ensure that the network gets the most out of working together

Our Interventions are:

Educational Approach	Description	Application
Presenting	It's about what the Educator knows	When there is a lot of factual material to be transmitted
Teaching	It's about what the Educator knows and what the Participants learn	When new behaviours and factual material have to be absorbed and put into practice
Facilitation	It's about what the Participants know and what the Participants learn from each other	When sharing and building on knowledge, experience and commitment is enough to resolve the issues
Expert Facilitation	It's about what the Educator & the Participants know and what the Participants learn from each other and from the Educator	When the participants have themselves created the problem the Participants find themselves in and can't see the wood for the trees
Coaching	It's about what the Participants don't know the Participants know and the Educator helping the Participants to learn it	When the ownership of the activities has to remain with the participants and when the participants have a greater knowledge or skill level than the educator

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Pentacle Process

Month	Participant Vote-in		
0	Participant Vote-in		Participants decide who should be in which learning network. Diversity is recommended
	Issue/ Problem Area selection	Facilitated	Participants will be asked to pitch issues to each other to sell the need for the project. Proposals from Senior managers will also be pitched
	e-Registration on CyberFranck™		
1	Orientation meeting	Facilitated	To help overcome initial team issues / storming
	Trouble shooter Audio conference	Facilitated	Participants will be taught Pentacle's Virtual Working techniques e.g. round-robin audio calls etc.
2	Calibration meeting	Facilitated	To ensure learning Network is performing
3	Energiser Audio conference	Facilitated	
	ALN meeting		As frequently as ALN require
	ALN Audio conferences		As frequently as ALN require
6	CyberFranck™ set for KM Knowledge retrieval and sharing only		Key learnings are consolidated and de-personalised for sharing with the rest of the organisation



Learning Organisation through New Knowledge Management



A learning organisation is one which is able to freely share best ideas and insights

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- Best practice doesn't travel well
- Making best practice work

Best practice doesn't travel far!

Best-practice transfer is tough.

Unpublished studies at Pentacle suggest that organisations only succeed in transferring best practice in about 10 - 20 % of cases. Furthermore, in about half of the successful cases, the practice transferred did not produce the anticipated outcomes largely because the world had moved on and the situation which made the practice so successful had changed.

So why is it so difficult to achieve what seems logically a simple and straightforward process of taking best practice and sharing and disseminating it?

We have identified several barriers to success. The key ones are:

Human

- *The Human condition* - Human beings find it difficult to accept any form of imposed change - even beneficial change.
- *People are unconsciously incompetent* - They don't know how badly they are doing things and so do not seek better practices. This also makes them hostile to attempts to 'impose' best practices on them
- *Embarrassment/ inadequacy* it is common for people to feel embarrassed/ inadequate when presented with information about some one else doing the same role/ activities more effectively than they are. An effective self-protection mechanism is to reject the practice
- *Fear of failure* - best practice comes with a double blow - 'not only are you not doing the best available but you are so useless you have failed to successfully implement a better way!'

The human responses above are emotional and cannot be overcome through rational argument and logic.

Organisational

- The organisational culture/ power structure makes it impossible for any practice to take root which is not completely endorsed by 'the person at the top.' In such organisations the political climate means that the 'people at the top'

are very likely not to take a strong position on any topic

- There are too many diverse organisational stakeholders who must own the change for it to become embedded in the organisation
- The organisation is poor and roles and accountabilities are not well understood so it is unclear whose role it is to adopt best practices

'Infertile ground'

- The capability and skills of the people receiving the best practice are not sufficient to support its use
- There are many different activities vying for mental space and bandwidth - people cannot/ do not take the time to fully understand the new practices

Situational/ Right solution - wrong problem

- The situation/ issues faced are subtly or significantly different from the situations the 'best practice' was developed in. Last year's best practice may already be obsolete
- Best practice transfer is the wrong solution

In order to improve performance there are four strategies which can be adopted:

Different routes to improved performance -

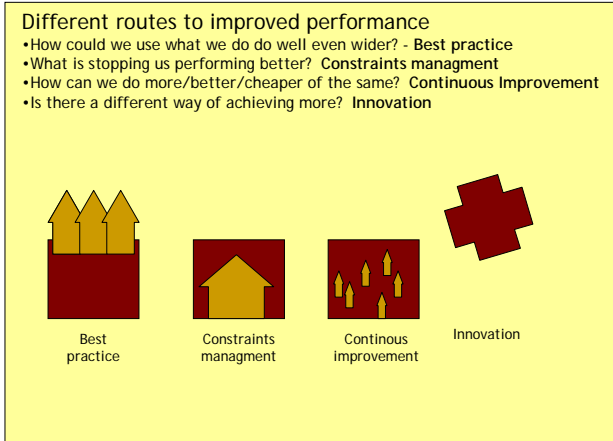
- How could we use what we do well even wider? - **Best practice**
- What is stopping us performing better? **Constraints management**
- How can we do more/better/cheaper of the same? **Continuous Improvement**
- Is there a different way of achieving more? **Innovation**



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Communication/ collaboration

- Skills/ Personal credibility of best practice transferor - The ambassador is wrong. The ambassador is seen to be a talking head from head office. Messages are seen as distant or theoretical
- Over-reliance on technology to 'do it for you' - Setting up a website or an intranet as a vehicle for sharing best practice rarely works effectively. At best a dialogue is established amongst those who need to learn least

Given all these factors it isn't surprising that so many attempts to transfer best practice fail.

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Making best practice work

At Pentacle we have identified four crucial factors which ensure that best practice becomes normal practice:

1. Effective change management
 - Emotionally/ logically preparing stakeholders for change
 - Emotional engagement of stakeholders
 - Making sure the giver and receiver understand their roles
 - Carry out a fast but thorough situation analysis
 - Map out benefits
 - 'Chunking' implementation into small enough pieces
 - 'Chunking' to ensure that each effort is quickly matched by benefits
 - Effective project/ programme management of open change
 - Learning and review
 - Creating a team which will 'live the change'

2. Effective learning management
 - The messenger - check the credibility and fit. By fit we mean don't match your higher Best Practice performer to the worst receiver, but instead to the best receiver. There is more likely to be empathy and the experience will be less threatening
 - The message/ learnings. Mix anecdotal with principles and theory. Ensure that you have learnt from the best practice, not just learnt the best practice
 - Using technology - choose the technology platform to meet the receiver's needs and capabilities
 - Use technology pro-actively - assume that the receiver will be reactive
 - Mix Emotional content and Logical content

3. Sustained Feedback and measurement
 - It takes at least three months of repeated behaviour for new habits to form and for the new practice to feel 'natural' It is important to

have simple transparent measurement shared freely among the stakeholders

- Too many measures confuse and do not provide enough information for people to feel proud of themselves
- The optimum is to use a maximum of eight measures

4. Stopping reversion to the original state
 - Remove all facilitators of the old practice - systems, equipment, processes, staff goals & measurements, sign-posting etc.
 - Put in systems, procedures, new performance indicators based on the old practice
 - Inform and raise the expectations of (external) stakeholders in order to make stopping the change more risky than carrying on with it.

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Learning, collaborating and sharing knowledge in practice

The concept of local learning differs significantly from distance learning;

In recent years there has been tremendous interest in creating communities which share learning and best practice.

Continuous learning (1996)

The concept of continuous learning was invented as part of the way out of the issues facing business education. The diagram below summarises the shift in emphasis away from knowledge provision to a continuous model based around knowledge and skills and application in the real business environment.

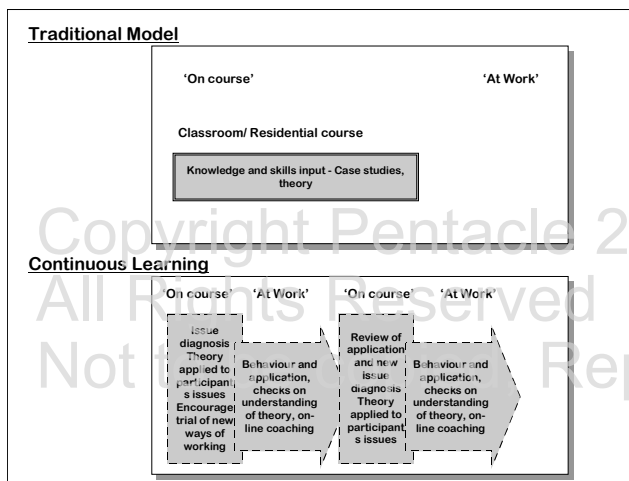
We pro-actively drive the learning process using emails, phone calls etc.

Distance learning	Local learning
Learning is pre packaged Knowledge is dispatched to recipient executive Follow up is at widely spaced points on a structured course. Tutoring is by the tutor Explanation of complex concepts or concepts best understood through dialogue must wait for the group to reassemble at a pre-determined time.	Point of view imposed is from the executive's desk. "What do I need to know/ do/ in order to be more effective with delivering our strategy?" Solutions evolve and are created by the executives. Follow-up and follow-through are by tutors and other executives. Executives and managers may mentor and tutor each other. Explanation of complex concepts best understood through dialogue are through 'classroom' sessions or audio conferences

Virtual development spaces or Webspaces

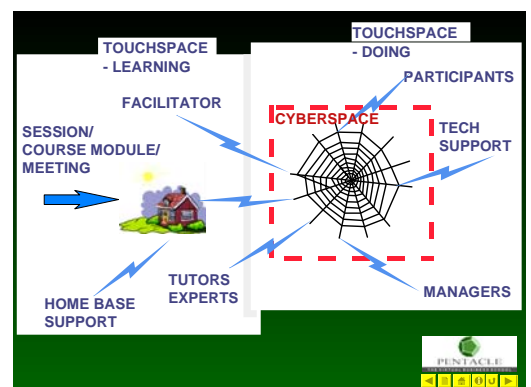
Virtual space is the use of cyberspace through group-ware (software which allows several people to share knowledge and work on the same information at the same time). We use audio conferences, video conferences from a standard computer and the internet to create an area with access by course members and tutors where issues and problems can be openly discussed and resolved. Tutorial support would be on subjects as required and would involve the invitation of tutors to join the space.

We make sure that the spaces are emotionally engaging.



Local learning (1995)

The local learning concept is simple. The additional 'contact time' would be delivered at the participants' place of work, in their own (not course) time. With participants focusing on issues which affect the business directly. The net effect of a reduction in the time spent on general (and often irrelevant) case studies, time and cost saved in travel, and increasing the focus on work which primarily affects business performance or explains typical patterns of business issues which are likely to be encountered in the near future would re-balance the economics of the course.



Learningbytes

Short semi interactive software programs which highlight an issue, provide a rule for its effective solution based on New World principles and suggest an implementation route.



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E-coaches

Hyperlink based data, information and knowledge provider.

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