

Just like teachers need to get trained regularly, learning heads need to do the same so that they can help others learn better

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Yesterday, after having finished a session at one of our client's place, I was having a chat with their leadership and development head. In course of our discussion, I heard him remark that learners today want only 'cognitive stuff'. It seemed it was a statement of disappointment about them not willing to go through the experiential struggle of learning and un-learning. And this remark was made a few minutes after having had more than a dozen learners come to me and express their delight for having been enabled to go through the 'process' of learning and feeling enriched about their take aways. The remark sounded so much like a mother cribbing about her children being drawn to junk food, with a show of 'responsibility' and 'concern' and not wanting to acknowledge the inability to cook and offer nutritious food that could also be also palatable.



To bring value to the learners and the organizations they belong to, it's

Enable the enablers

high time that the learning enablers and leaders within corporations need to get themselves enabled first, to take on this crucial role before they venture out to experiment with growth and enablement of other human beings and the business that

they contribute to. This applies to the subject matter experts who have glorified their presence in corporations as gurus, mentors and coaches, too.

The first step to enabling the enablers would be to recognize certain inherent blind spots and confront the realities.

Blind spots:

Package training is faster, more visible and more predictable and therefore more easily saleable. In the need to have a predictable turnover of training days, learning leaders and enablers often fall into this trap of taking a hi-control, deterministic and delivery-centric approach to 'learning'.

Trainers / instructors are conditioned to believe that there is one right answer to every question. And they are the ones who know it. The learners don't. This know-it-all mindset comes in the way of their raising 'how' and 'why' questions evoking inquiry.

To value struggle and live with paradox in the pursuit of bringing radical change in the system is really hard. If the enablers invoke deep inquiry about meaning and cause and demand extended period of reflection, they will be blamed for being not practical, objective and action-oriented.

Learners tend to hide their inter-personal differences behind their pre-occupations. If enablers create opportunities and lead them to engage into deeper conversations, they resist and even revolt to spare themselves of the struggle and pain of authentic self-disclosure.

The much clichéd train-the-trainer programs in vogue are essentially bed-rocked on teaching the methods for carrying out instruction-led, trainer-centric session. This is re-enforcing the hi-control and pre-determined approach to training (not learning).

Realities

We can't become learning enablers. We can however choose

to uncover the inherent one. It is not a profession that can be pursued to make business sense. It is a passion that is purpose-led. No amount of resistance, either from the organizations or the learners, asking for hi-control and pre-determined solutions, can come in the way of purpose-led enablers shepherding a group of learners, with compassion (sometimes, if required ruthlessly), on a meaningful journey of sustained learning.

We ain't no experts in nothing. We do not have answers to everything. And yet we can enable a process of inquiry where each one can find an answer which he or she will proudly take ownership of. We need to value struggle over prescriptions, questions over answers, tension over comfort and capabilities over needs and deficiencies. The power of a learning enabler lies in the authentic presence, not in the position.

It calls for a radical shift - from the need to feel significant and therefore the anxiety to "deliver" learning, to humility and joy of accepting and witnessing the group co-creating its own agenda, objective and methods of learning.

With learning now indisputably becoming a business imperative it is a mandate for learning enablers and leaders to surrender to a process of sustained self-enquiry, encounter and enablement. Often life long, under the guidance of an able mentor and get certified. Not just in use of some fancy tools and methods, but for being equipped as an individual to enable learning in a group. Learning, that is contextual and business relevant.

The author of this article is a life coach and mentor and is open to engaging with individuals for enablement, in the professional and personal contexts. Write for a free consultation.