



Tool 15-3. Enhancing Learning on the Job

Ellen Van Velsor

Based on chapter 15, “Learning on the Job,” in *The ASTD Leadership Handbook*, edited by Elaine Biech, © 2010 ASTD

Purpose: A checklist to determine how to enhance individual learning in organizations.

Assessment

- Help individuals become clear about what they want or need to learn, for their current assignment or their next or future ones.
- Use assessments (360-degree and self-assessments) to provide baseline, enhance awareness of strengths and development needs, and assess readiness for learning.
- Use reflection techniques: journaling, after action reports, and end of assignment transition reports. Work to build a culture that supports reflection and values learning.
- Use other kinds of tools periodically—for example, key events questions as dialogue tool (see Tool 15-2 for an example).

Challenge

- Encourage managers to play a key role in direct reports’ career planning processes and to work with them to match developmental challenges to learning goals.
- Provide and encourage a variety of career experiences and job tasks for every individual.
- Train people to reflect and learn when opportunities present themselves.
- Think about scale in job assignments—for example, start ups are valuable at all levels but start small and build.
- Create practices or climate that help people reflect on their experiences together on a regular basis. Model this and have managers model it.
- Use coaching to challenge leaders to step back and reflect when difficulty is encountered or success is achieved. Reinforce success when behaviors or skills are achieved.

Support

- Intentionally use developmental relationships in combination with assignments and classroom training.
- Create holding environments for learning—for example, support groups for people who are facing challenges that are new to them or alumni groups from programs.

Permission granted to use with *The ASTD Leadership Handbook*, edited by Elaine Biech, © 2010 ASTD

- Create processes to link classroom training and leadership development programs to job assignments and developmental relationships.
- Provide training to all employees on how to give and receive feedback so individuals feel they can provide good feedback to individuals attempting to learn or change and a climate for development is created.
- Use coaching to help people digest and connect learning from more informal events (good or bad bosses, mistakes) to learning from formal assignments—external coach necessary for some, such as good or bad bosses and perhaps mistakes and career setbacks—consider when a boss might be the best coach and when an external coach would be preferable.
- Create forums where people can share what they have learned and experts can share rules of thumb for dealing with certain kinds of challenge or situations.
- Create opportunities for effective learners to share strategies for extracting learning from new experiences or situations—find ways to train people in the process of learning and problem solving.
- Tailor the type of support to the need—supporting assignments is different from supporting mistakes, which is different from supporting bad boss experiences.