

### Critique of "What is Human Performance Technology?"

As I read about the Human Performance Technologist's job, I feel ever so grateful for being an independent in business for myself since 1986. I couldn't have bothered to have conversations with knowledge management types working on me to discover whether I was aligned or angry with the change management that took place in the nineties. And as an independent contractor today, I am eager to discover how corporate culture in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has changed as we move through this course.

The talk regarding change management in the nineties centered on political gossiping around the water hole, where much of the work of HP technologists put people at odds with themselves and their fellow co-workers and set competition in place that caused a major dis-engagement between those employed and those unemployed in our society. (Bandura, 2002) As an outside observer of the results of this phenomenon, I look forward to listening to speakers who have successfully traveled this path in hopes that my fears and concerns may be allayed. But first, I need to get a few things off my chest.

Right off the bat, I am both stunned and not surprised by the author's bold admission that "At work, the word 'human' is not referred to or spoken of when applying HPT, but it is a focus in application of the HPT process when applied in societal issues." (Stolovich, H.D., Keeps, E. J., 1992) This statement by the authors conjures up deep implications for both internal and external environments. No doubt the word "human" was never referred to nor spoken when applying HPT, given that the job seemed to put in place a fear that

removed humanities from the workplace and replaced it with immoral reasoning. (Bandura, 2002) I would never have been one of the workers who adapted to enable the corporation to ignore the social costs of dis-engagement with our American citizens, just to pay out abnormally high salaries for management, to pay excessive profits for shareholders, and to insult me by lowering wages or by bluntly removing me from service. I am grateful I had a community of practice and was not subject to such terror. I have a fierce sense of what American freedom and independence feels like in the pursuit of life, liberty, etc., and I fear that many are left damaged instead.

I wonder to myself how HPT will deal with human capital issues once robots occupy the professions of a new middle class as told by Illah Nourbakhsh (2013), a professor of robotics at Carnegie Mellon University, in his new book called Robot Futures, published by MIT Press recently. While Stolovich, and Keeps (1992,1999) may currently tie return on investment to "human capital as more valued over physical capital", this may not continue to be the case. Robots only cost \$20,000 and generate less controversy when disposed of. And there will be no legal issues. Problem is, what will happen to the real people left behind?

While the corporation and its soldiers of profit march on, the burden of humans reacting, going 'postal', or simply losing faith and falling into despair is not a corporate issue. It is a societal issue that increases due to survival pressure now addressed by budget allocation for military, justice, and health alternatives paid for by our tax dollars. This catch 22 situation forces our people left out of the job market to survive by joining the military, by committing a crime, or by becoming sick and/or dependent on public services.

Weren't we supposed to all be working 4 hours a day by this point in time? (David Graeber, 2013) I am concerned that rather than improve the quality of life for all, this profit driven group of social engineers may now turn their focus onto a society already hurling toward absence a la Jean Genet. Would HPT practitioners, who will proceed on societal issues, dare to doublethink our Social Security benefits as if they are expendable entitlements rather than the Fiduciary Trust Fund of paid-in payroll tax dollars that Social Security actually is? Would this not perpetrate yet another major deception to release the burden on corporations and on Congress for such treasonous actions against our citizens? I fear the average American's gullibility is rancid. It needs repair. I sure hope these speakers will put my concerns to rest as they advise on appropriate expectations of our youth arriving just in time to cast robots in roles of value.

I am concerned when HPT states "performance is tied to execution or accomplishment of work that increases productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency" and then leave out the part about working for lower wages and a higher more pressurized workload. Not that I am against productivity or effectiveness or efficiency, but adding ROI as the determinant factor for success seems to justify Machiavellian greed as terms of service. And to prop up these HPT and OD authorities by stating "their procedures and methods are derived from scientific research and professional experience to solve practical problems" is plain *newspeak* if nothing else. Americans and their treasury are devastated by this art of deception perpetrated by players walking around with big bucks and little connection to the grief they have caused. Sociopathic and indifferent, these influencers are pulp in a comic book world of non-fiction.

Now HPT seeks to avoid training solutions. Training is expensive, and HPT is preferred, unless training is less costly (elimination of incompatible tasks, introduction to feedback systems, design of job aids.) Higher cost-benefit ratio must be derived, and HPT is preferred to training, unless training is an optimal solution.

In summary, I hope for another option. I don't think Instructional Designers and Trainers are Interventionists. Psychiatry is for the sick and disturbed, not for the young developing eager and engaging mind. We are trained to care for the learner. We will not be satisfied in a workplace designed and managed by Human Performance Technologists and Organizational Developers who want to train people to respond via corporate beliefs and expectations, never to think and feel authentically or to participate and gain experiences that are disruptive and cause real growth that can help them to realize their full potential as knowledge workers. I won't. Talk me down?

### **References**

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