

Workplace Learning Systems Overview

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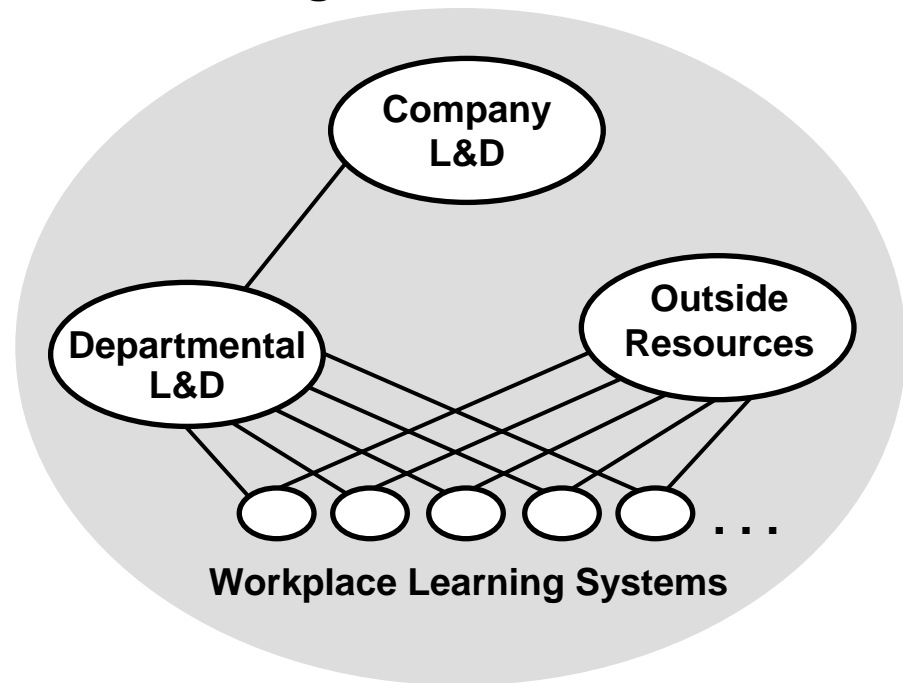
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Workplace Learning Systems (WPLS)

- ❑ What are they?
- ❑ Why do we want them?
- ❑ How do we get started?

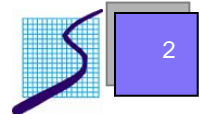
Learning Resources Network



What is a Workplace Learning System?

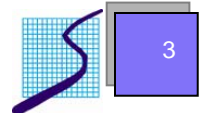
A systems approach to meeting the learning needs of a work community with common performance requirements

- ❑ Managed and controlled by the workplace community
- ❑ Uses a combination of local and non-local resources
- ❑ Takes advantage of a variety of formal and informal ways of learning



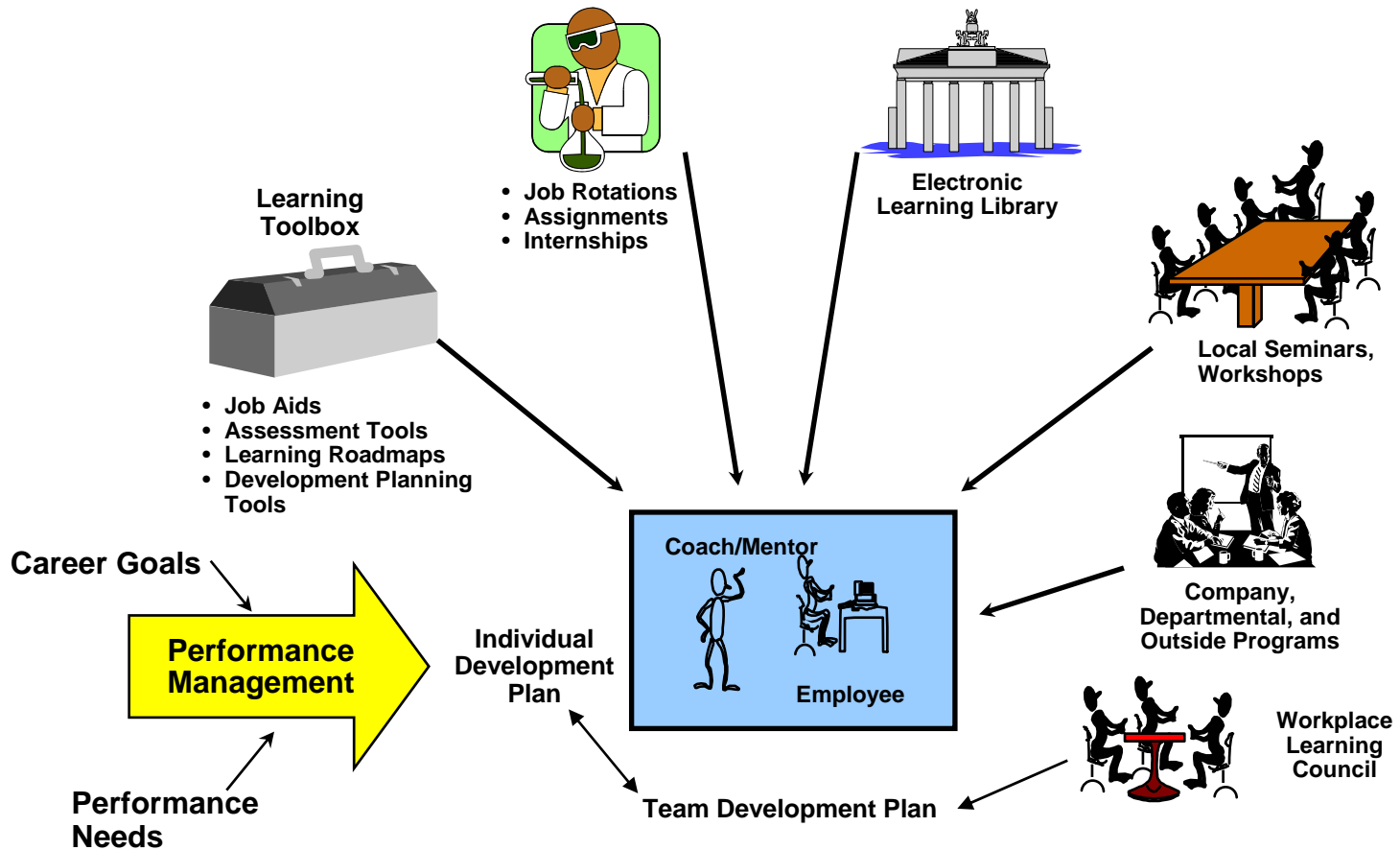
What is a Workplace Learning System? (cont.)

- ❑ **Workplace** – **First of all, let's clarify what we mean by *workplace*.** For our purposes, a *workplace* is some work community that shares a set of common learning needs and performance requirements. Examples might include:
 - A manufacturing plant
 - A customer service center
 - An engineering work group
 - A product team
 - A sales district
 - Program managers
- ❑ **Learning** – **Learning is the acquisition of a new response capability.** At the individual level, this can include learning new vocabulary, concepts, and tasks; new ways of doing an old task; and physical, intellectual, or interpersonal skills. At the work group and organizational level, this can include new ways of working within the group, new ways of working across group boundaries, changes in group cultural values and decision patterns, and the like. Much learning occurs naturally in the context of doing work.
- ❑ **Development** – **Development is the longer-term integration of learning into individual competencies and organizational capabilities.** At the individual level, this can include competencies such as leadership, large-scale project management, technology forecasting, etc. At the work group level, this can include capabilities like process management, continuous process improvement, and technical innovation. At the organization level, examples might include capabilities such as opening new global markets, lean production, product portfolio management, and so forth.
- ❑ **Workplace Learning System** – **A Workplace Learning System is an organized way for the people in a workplace to manage the individual and group learning in a way that**
 - **Meets work performance needs**
 - **Meets career and organizational development needs**
 - **Takes advantage of resources in the workplace and outside of it**



Key Features

- ❑ Managed by local management and supported by company L&D

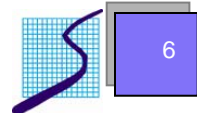


Key Features *(cont.)*

- ❑ **Individual learning and development plans** tied to individual work assignments through performance management
 - ❑ **Coaches/mentors** guide learning and link to job performance
- } Individuals and coaches/mentors jointly accountable for learning results
- ❑ **Workplace Learning Council**
 - Appoints mentors/coaches
 - Reviews results
 - Prioritizes development of learning resources
 - Creates team development plan
 - ❑ **Links to company and outside training and education resources**
 - Electronic access to information
 - Electronic delivery of instruction
 - Attendance at learning events
 - Integration with functional or leadership curricula
 - ❑ **Gives local management the tools** to develop the local talent pool and important organizational capabilities
 - ❑ **The Learning and Development (L&D) department** provides
 - Start-up consulting support
 - Development of instructional materials

Principles and Concepts of Workplace Learning Systems

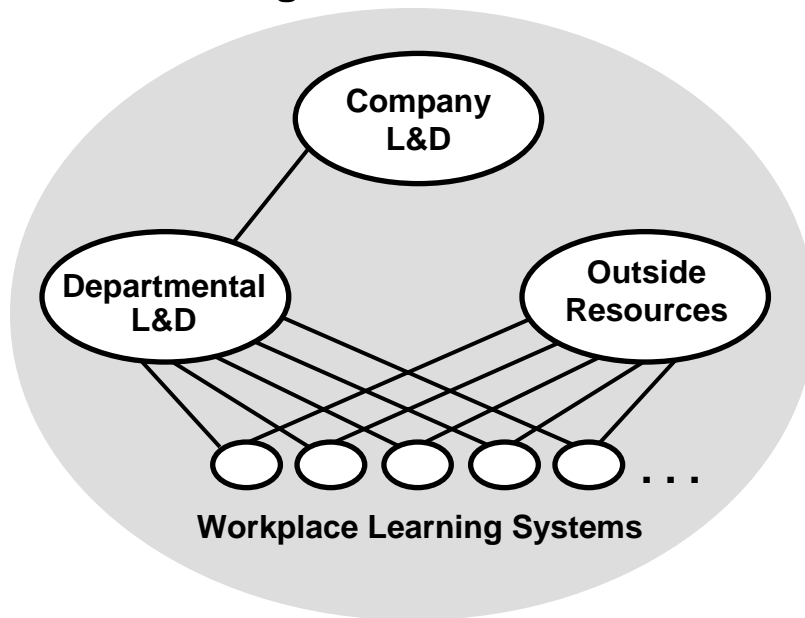
- ❑ The focus is on learning needed to do specific tasks
- ❑ Individual learning plans and schedule are tied to work assignments
- ❑ Individualized self-paced learning takes less time than classroom instruction
- ❑ Learning transfers to real work performance because
 - It is tied to the work
 - The coaches/mentors are part of the workplace
- ❑ Maximum use of informal learning opportunities
- ❑ Materials and resources are used systematically
 - Job-related references and manuals; company and outside
 - Job aids
 - Training/learning materials
 - Company and outside training and education programs
- ❑ Management and learners jointly decide on learning goals
- ❑ Management is in control of the learning needed to achieve critical business performance



Why Do We Need Workplace Learning Systems?

Context

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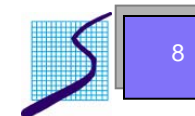


1. Tie learning to workplace performance/business needs
2. Save time and money
3. Accelerate individual ramp-up to mastery performance
4. Put local management and individual learners in the driver's seat
5. Leverage the impact of company and outside training and development resources

Why Do We Need Workplace Learning Systems? (cont.)

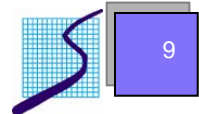
Organizations need Workplace Learning Systems for the following reasons:

- 1. Tie learning to workplace performance/business needs.** Every work group has its own very specific learning needs tied to the work they do. Training programs designed/developed by company and departmental L&D groups can address common needs that cut across work groups but will seldom be able to customize to meet all the specialized needs of the individual work group.
- 2. Save time and money.** Most workplace learning will be at the individual and small team levels.
 - Individually-paced learning saves 40-60% of the learner's time compared with group-paced classroom instruction.
 - Travel time and travel expenses are not incurred.
 - Organized workplace learning almost always leads to improved quality, speed, and cost of doing the work itself.
 - The cost of instructional design is reduced by capitalizing on resources already available in the workplace.
- 3. Accelerate ramp-up to mastery performance.** We learn many things faster and better when we are confronted with an immediate task to be learned and performed. Transfer of learning to job performance is much more successful if the methods learned are advocated by local management and experts.
- 4. Put local management and individual learners in the driver's seat.** WPLS allow local management and the individual learners to
 - Identify specific learning needs associated with individual work assignments and career development goals.
 - Devise individual learning plans.
 - Devise team or work group learning plans.
 - Put the resources in place to achieve the learning plans.
 - Track and account for learning results.
- 5. Leverage the impact of company and outside learning resources.**
 - Learning materials in conventional or electronic form can be acquired and used in the workplace.
 - Course attendance, involvement in professional societies, and the like are made more effective by aligning them with individual and group learning plans.

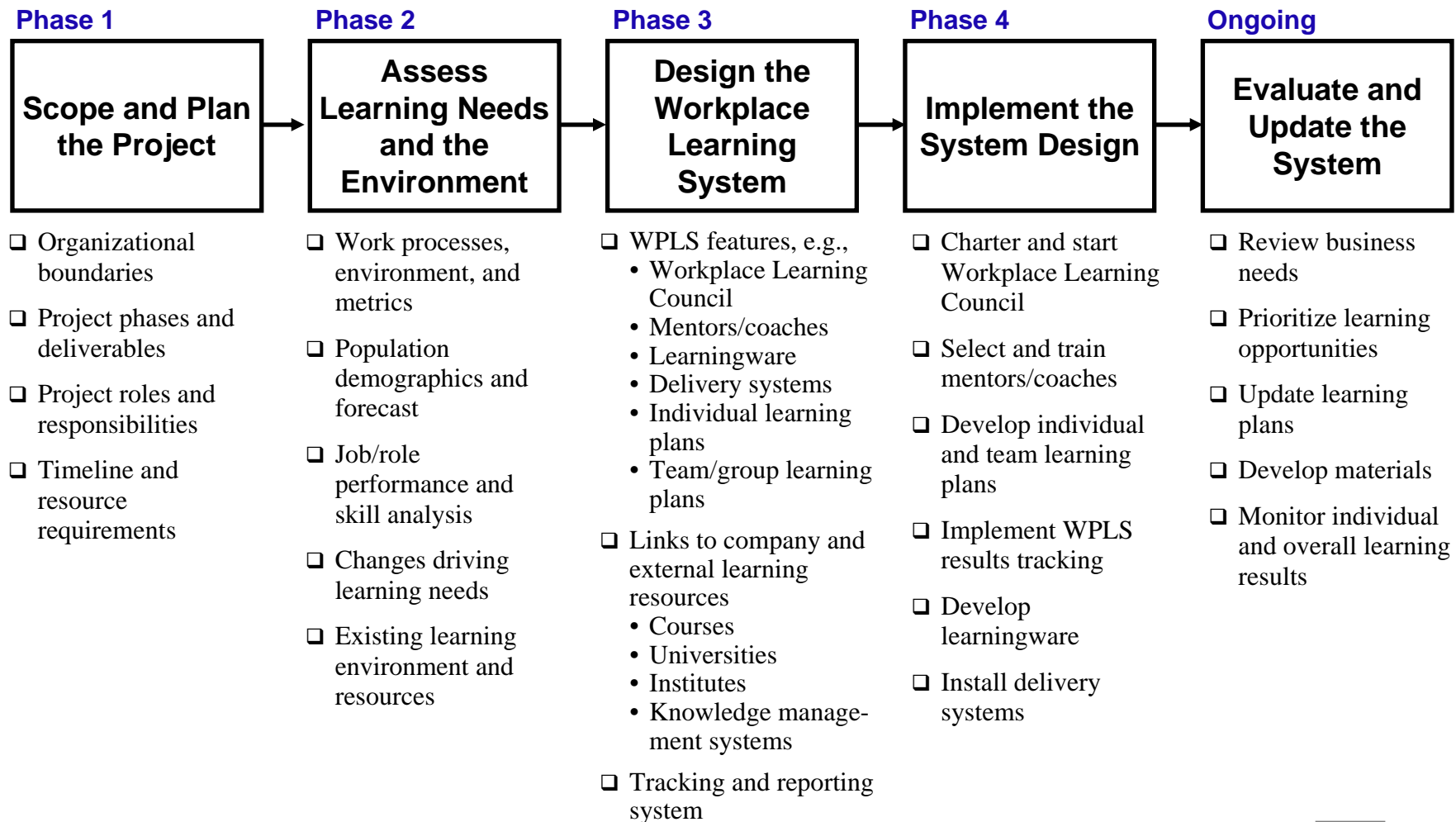


How Do We Get Started? (Requires a Project Approach)

- ❑ Select a project with high-potential value and executive sponsorship
- ❑ Scope and plan the project
- ❑ Assess learning needs and the learning environment
- ❑ Design the Workplace Learning System
- ❑ Implement the system design
- ❑ Evaluate and update the system



Workplace Learning System Project Template



Typical Project Resourcing

This chart on the following page shows a typical project resourcing profile for each of the four phases of a WPLS project. The resource estimates are in eight-hour days and the resources are listed by role.

❑ *Performance Consultant* – A member of the Learning and Development staff or outside resource who has a broad range of performance consulting skills, especially performance analysis and performance systems design.

❑ *Project Manager/Account Rep* – A member of the Learning and Development staff who is assigned as the principle liaison between L&D and the client organization.

This person negotiates the Project Plan, manages the project logistics, and makes sure everyone understands what is happening, why, and what progress is being made.

❑ *Instructional Designer/Developer* – Someone skilled in designing learning materials such as structured, on-the-job training material, job aids, and the like.

❑ *Workplace Leadership Team/Workplace Learning Council* – The managers, supervisors, and technical leaders in the workplace who are responsible for work performance and by extension, the learning necessary to achieve performance.

At the beginning of the project, a team of these people can be organized as the Steering Team for the project and then evolve into an ongoing Workplace Learning Council.

❑ *Design/Working Team* – The performance consultant, instructional designer, and designated members of the workforce.

The workforce members should be respected subject matter experts and/or master performers.

Typical Project Resourcing (cont.)

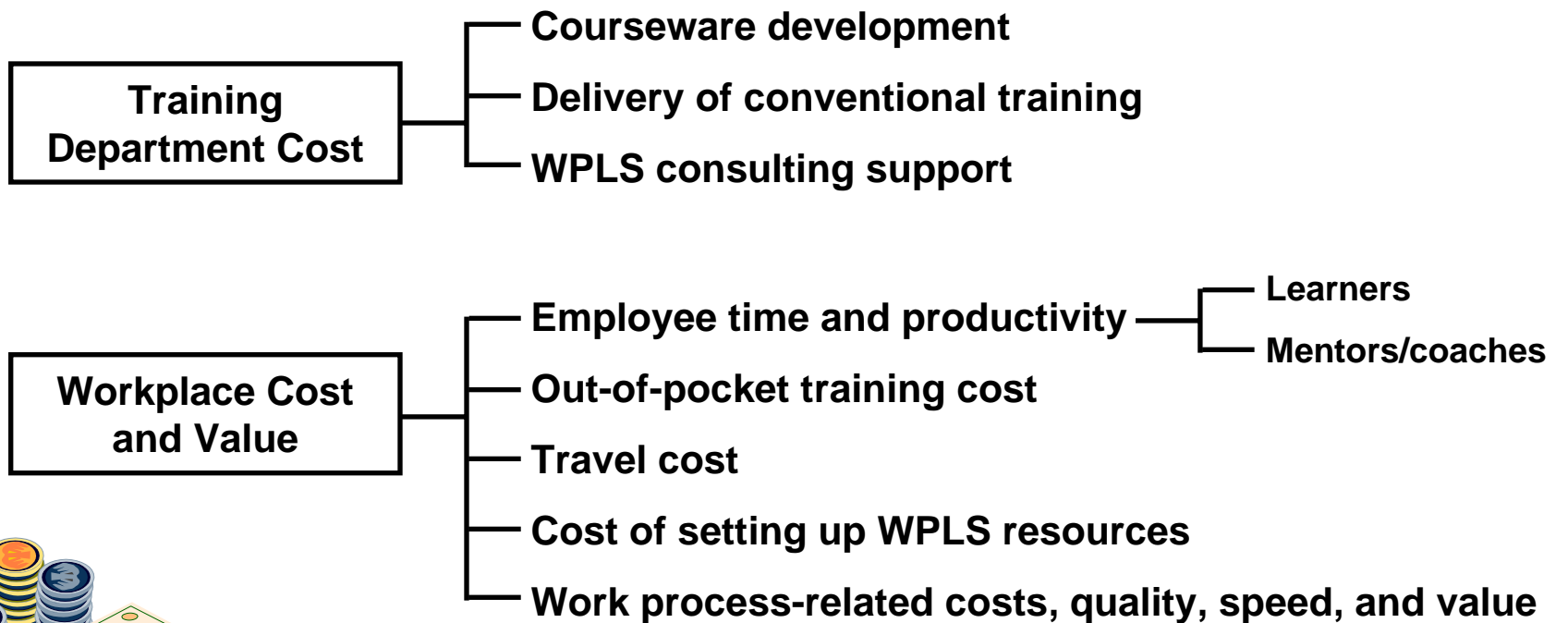
Role	Requirements (in days)				Total	Total Ongoing (per year)
	Phase 1 Scope and Plan the Project	Phase 2 Assess Learning Needs and the Environment	Phase 3 Design the Workplace Learning System	Phase 4 Implement the System Design		
Performance Consultant	3.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	63.0	5.0
Project Manager/ Account Rep	1.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	16.0	1.0
Instructional Designer/Developer	–	5.0	20	80	105.0	25-50
Workplace Leadership Team/ Workplace Learning Council	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0	2.5	4.0
Design/Working Team	–	4	3	3	10	–

Benefits

- ❑ New employees turning out high-quality work the first time
- ❑ Productivity is not lost learning content that is irrelevant to performance
- ❑ Time away from the job to attend and travel to training is minimized
- ❑ Structured programs result in efficient use of both learner and mentor/coach time
- ❑ Mentors'/coaches' value added is extended because learners are turning out expert-quality work
- ❑ By focusing on the work process, better ways to do the work are always found (sometimes worth \$millions)
- ❑ A comprehensive learning program can be started-up quickly without waiting for the long and expensive development of a curriculum
- ❑ Workplace Learning Systems work for small groups where a formal curriculum would be too expensive and time consuming

Return on Investment

Return on investment arises from trading off the following cost and value elements



\$Millions per application are very achievable for high impact work groups

Critical Success Factors

- ❑ Select applications with high-potential return and executive sponsorship
- ❑ Acquire commitment of local management
 - Establish Workplace Learning Council
 - Appoint the best performers as mentors/coaches
 - Reward learning
 - Reward mentor/coach activity (make it a perk or recognition factor to get appointed)
- ❑ Follow the four-phase process
- ❑ Commit adequate start-up support by L&D department
 - Performance consulting
 - Instructional design
 - Project management
- ❑ Measure results

Selecting Pilot Application(s)

Ask the following questions to identify candidate Workplace Learning System opportunities:

- ❑ What work groups have significant learning needs that have high impact on quality, speed, and value?
- ❑ Which of these groups would be likely to embrace this new learning concept?
- ❑ Who would be the executive sponsor for a pilot application?
- ❑ What barriers to successful application of the concept do you anticipate?
- ❑ What tactics could be employed to overcome these barriers?