

Designing the Future – An American Perspective

Thomas Kuk

I would like to share two quotes with you.

"Lacking a compelling sense of direction, few employees feel a compelling sense of responsibility for competitiveness. Most people won't go that extra mile unless they know where they are heading..."

from Hamel & Prahalad, *Competing for the Future*

"Knowledge has become the preeminent economic resource – more important than raw material; more important, often than money. Managing intellectual capital should be business's first priority".

Stewart – *Intellectual Capital*.

These two quotes offer a clear and compelling reason why I am speaking to you today. Together, they outline what I believe to be the heart and soul of our current dilemma facing baking industry today. These two quotes also offer us an opportunity to rediscover our passion for baking while we struggle to define the changing needs of our workforce.

Before I begin, let's do a little soul searching.

As an industry, are we operating at optimum or near optimum performance? Are all industry stakeholders, whether they are investors, suppliers or employees reasonable satisfied with their investments of money, time or labor? Have we anticipated or are we creating new skills that will be needed to insure our future success? Do we maximize learning opportunities by exploiting any or all industry resources? Do we establish an environment in our workplace where people are constantly and spontaneously learning and applying that knowledge? Do we create an environment where learning is valued as the most critical resource for competitive advantage.

In short, do we place value on learning. Do we recognize and reward skill building or do we perceive knowledge sharing as a threat to our business operations.

What values do we use as the basis of our employee relationships?

In a recent survey conducted by the Society relating to future workforce issues, two questions offered quite conflicting information. When asked, "Does our workforce know what skills they need to advance in their careers, approximately 70% either strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

And yet when the same the group as asked. "My organization has a clearly defined career advancement program, approximately the same percentage either disagreed or strong disagreed.

An interesting predicament: a workforce that thinks they know what skills they need to advance in their careers and yet the perception that their is little support and no defined process for their advancement.

Whether we care to admit it or not, Baking historically has been perceived as a semi-skilled, highly transient workforce. We have viewed our workforce as task oriented and accepted high employee turnover as a cost of business. We have done little to elevate the perception of their knowledge and skills. At the same time, workers possess a strong need for recognition and affiliation. Without a sense of purpose and belonging, workers will migrate in search of significance elsewhere. My first question for you to consider today,

"Although our manufacturing processes and systems are highly automated, do we possess a low tech mentality in a high tech world"

My brief presentation has two objectives. The first is to focus on the need to recognize professional growth and development in our workforce and secondly to communicate to you a vision of a learning management system that fosters professional development in an effective and cost efficient manner.

A second thought I would like to share with you centers around the concept of professionalism and why it is important to employee development. If our workforce knows what skills they need to advance in their careers, why don't we have successful career advancement programs. The following thought might help to clarify such a question. In their book, *Competing for the Future*, Hamel and Prahalad offer a second suggestion.

"Perhaps the greater hazard, is that individuals don't know what they don't know... and worse yet, they don't know that they don't know".

Such a statement drives to the heart of our current dilemma. What is the basis of our employee/employer relationships. As an industry are we function/job oriented or are we career/execution oriented. Relationships built on the concept of function and purpose are generally task oriented, limited in scope and responsibility and earn little respect or real income.

Relationships built upon the concept of execution imply responsibility, integration of skills, recognition and accountability -values that imply respect and interdependence.

Why certification?

By nature, people are not good at self-diagnosing their skills or learning requirements. As mentioned earlier, few employees feel a compelling sense of responsibility for competitiveness. Professionalizing our workforce provides workers with a structured environment in which to create a mutually meaningful relationship with their employer.

Workers today want community, integrity, affirmation, education and leadership. They need to be assured that their investment of time and labor is appreciated, recognized and respected.

Certification and professional development work hand in hand. Professionalism is defined as a collective body of people engaged in or practicing a particular calling or vocation. It is also the process by which a novice becomes an accepted member of a congregation or skilled group.

Professionalism helps to create and define meaningful relationship by placing value on perceived skills and knowledge. It enhances recognition and it lays the foundation for changing basic beliefs and assumptions, which in turn alter values and behaviors.

Professionalism integrates accountability, integrity, skill building with behavior standards and service, attributes that are peer-created and regulated and enforced.

The challenge facing us is how to create such an environment where knowledge and skill building are recognized and rewarded.

As a professional society it is our responsibility to initiate this leadership role. We must foster values that help to define the concept of professionalism. Values such as community, integrity, collaboration, education, leadership and excellence must be affirmed and then implemented. A highly structured, peer-based certification program sets and defines professional standards upon which such values are implemented and recognized, not only in the workplace but throughout the employment market as well.

I would like to take the next few minutes to demonstrate a vision that begins to address some of these issues.

At the core of any community lies a fundamental purpose for associating. Our mission as a professional organization should be to provide leadership to the meaning of professionalism and secondly to demonstrate a compelling reason why professional development is important to the success of the industry.

Learning Management – A systems approach to inspiring behavior

Currently, many of your organizations have state of the art systems for managing accounting, purchasing, regulatory compliance, inventory, hiring and training. But few, if any of you have an organized system that manages knowledge and skills or monitors learning.

Learning Management is a process that integrates competency analysis with performance planning. It then applies assessment and planning tools to achieve organizational goals.

The benefits of such a system are that Learning Management

- 1 - Actuates strategic planning
- 2 - Increases productivity
- 3 - Improves staff management, morale, recruitment and retention
- 4 - Increases ROI on both assets and operations

Learning management brings vision to planning,

This is achieved by:

Applying systems thinking

Creating an aggressive vision

Developing and implementing competency standards.

Such a process requires us to ask

What do we know

What do we need to learn

How are we planning

How do we link learning plans to performance.

What evaluation tools do we need.

Professional Certification Model.

Approximately 10 months ago the Society began to explore the concept of certification as a long term solutions to enhancing the quality and longevity of our workforce.

After reviewing a number of different models, we elected to create a learning management systems that is based upon competency and skill recognition. The model I will share with you is a multi-level program that is intended to parallel the industries employment disciplines.

The process involves five critical functions:

- 1 – Defining the body of knowledge in which to assess competency skills.

- 2 – Establishing performance standards
- 3 – Creating a management system
- 4 – Assisting content providers to in creating course content
- 5 – Creating an effective testing and monitoring program.

As I indicated earlier, such a program would mirror our current commercial career tracks offering employees a road map for development. Phase 1 of our program was to focus our attention in creating a model for Engineering and Maintenance. We elected to create a three-tier program that parallels the career path of a maintenance worker. Our program would begin to define the skills and knowledge that was appropriate for each level. Certification would be accomplished by proving competency within a range of skills and knowledge.

The three levels would be

Certified Bakery Engineer

Certified Bakery Maintenance Supervisor

Professional Bakery Engineer.

The Certified Bakery Engineer Designation would be appropriate for any baking industry mechanic with skills assessment in

Plant Engineering

Applied Baking Skills

Occupational Safety

Good Manufacturing Practices

Administrative and Management

To advance along the traditional career path to a Certified Maintenance Supervisor, a entirely new set of skills and competencies would need to be acquired and tested.

Such skills might include knowledge of Maintenance Management, Training and Development Strategies, Purchasing and Warehousing, Recording keeping and Hazard Communication systems.

Professional recognition will be awarded to an individual that has already demonstrated a high degree of proficiency through career advancement and training and desires to continue their development through continuing education and service. The professional development program measures advancement through the

accumulation of Professional Development Credits and the successful submission of a "Knowledge Brief" to the Society's "Knowledge Bank".

The Knowledge Brief will serve as an alternative to a formalized test. Each applicant for professional status will submit a proposal to address an industry recognized issue or problem area. Such a proposal will utilize the individual's area of expertise and experience. The candidate will have the option to present the material in a written format or as a technical presentation during an industry event. The process will be managed through the ASB Education Committee. After completion, the Brief will be added to the Society's **Knowledge Bank**, creating additional problem solving resources for our members.

Professional Development Credits (PDC's) will encompass five program areas. An applicant will need to acquire 22 credits over a three-year period from the following areas: Education (formal and continuing, Employment, Community Service, Instruction and Mentoring

Professional recognition will be awarded for a three year period during which time the applicant will continue to work toward re-certification through the accumulation of Professional Development Credits by attending industry educational events, credit for on-the-job training, serving on industry committees or organizations, serving as a speaker or writing a technical bulletin, online course or publication. Earning industry related professional credentials or participating in a mentoring program:

I would like to quickly demonstrate how such a system might work.

As a learning management system, our certification program is designed to educate workers on what they need to know to advance in their careers, assist them in acquiring that knowledge, testing that knowledge or competency and then managing that knowledge base.

We are designing our system to be internet based, consisting of three components

An Internet manager

An Internet Instructor

Internet Exam process.

The curriculum is divided in specific competencies. Each competency translates to 1 certification credit.

A Certification Candidate creates a personal Internet Manager page that lists all the core competencies required for that level of certification. The applicant individually manages their own process by selecting the order they choose. Each competency is linked to a variety of various educational resources.

An applicant can receive their training from a range of sources, vocational colleges or technical training centers, on the job or even mini web based courses.

Once the candidate feels ready, they take the specific web-based exam pertaining to that competency. Successful completion of the test earn 1 credit. Completion of all competencies earn the certification.

The second component in building our knowledge base lies in measuring who we are and what we know. It is a system for monitoring and archiving our skills building activities.

Although still in it's development stages, our Membership Manager is intended to construct a professional portfolio that tracks the members certification process, employment, leadership development, continuing education activities and industry awards and recognitions.

Here is how such a system might work. Again, it is web based. Each member, using their own password would have the ability to view and add content to a portfolio.

That would include the ability to view

Personal Account Information

ASB Service History

Education

Certification Credentials

Industry Employment,

Awards and Recognitions

Leadership Opportunities

In total you would create you own Professional Profile, a personal record of your skills, interests, achievements and contributions.

Although these ideas of still in the final development stage, the leadership of the Society is committed to making such visions a reality. It is our belief that a well trained, highly motivated workforce is essential for the viability of the baking industry. Organizational arbitrates such as information sharing, team-based management systems, technology enabled informational systems, flexible organizational structures and a high involvement culture are achievable only by creating mutually meaningful relationships. Building a culture requires changing basic beliefs and assumptions. For our industry that means elevating the perception of knowledge and skills and recognizing workers as professional and productive employees. Culturally, we need to create environments where learning is valued as the most critical source of competitive advantage, where people are constantly and spontaneously learning and applying their knowledge, where we maximize learning opportunities by nurturing the collective wisdom of all our industry resources and where we improve organizationally by anticipating and creating skills needed for future success.

In closing, I am reminded of a book by James Belasco titled, "Teaching the Elephant to Dance." In his book regarding organizational change, Belasco asks two important questions, "Why would anyone want to teach an elephant to dance when you could spend your time doing something much less difficult. The second question, and one that obviously reflects the current state of the industry, "Did anybody bother to ask the elephant.? Elephants tend not to want to dance. When they try, they don't do it very well, so what you get is a really ticked-off elephant.

Well, why are these to issues relevant?

Whether you are an elephant, an organization or an individual, change combined with technology will continue to create uncertainty in our workforce. Skill building and communications are essential for success.

Who knows, in the future even elephants might have to learn to dance for their supper.

Q. Linda Young, Chipping Campden

Have you found very many obstacles put in your way in developing something like this?

A. The greatest obstacle tends to be attitude and acceptance. In the US there is a movement because of our employment situation to move towards higher levels of automation so as capital spending increases there is less and less dollars available for training. Last year we saw an across the board decrease in training dollars of 10% in every category and ironically it is going to come back to bite us. You cannot continue to advance technologically without putting effort into training your people so our challenge is to create a cultural change within the mindset of our inventory, corporate directors to place a higher value in human training and potential versus. The expectation that technological and capital spending will solve all your problems. That is my bigger challenge – how to change that culture.

Q. David Marsh, Brackely

You showed a neat web based education package with some examinations at the end, my experience of that is that it is if you fail and need to take it again then the questions second time around are identical and indeed if you cut and paste the questions the first time round and save them you can almost certainly pass the second time around. How would you over come that?

A. The way we have addressed that issue is for example in the engineering discipline our competency base includes 76 different skill areas and we've brought that down to 18 competency exams. Each exam will be multiple choice, random questions with a minimum of 200-250 questions within the skill of which at any one time we'll test 30. So you can go to the site as much as you care to and chances are you probably will never see the same exam in a row. You may see the same question but it will also be time based so that you will have a specific amount of time to address each question. We are trying to make the individual responsible for knowing that knowledge because the ultimate test is their performance in the job. So

the society's task is to create the standards, test that standard but the application will come back through their own development and their employer. So our purpose initially is to create a whole new learning attitude and as we go this will evolve and change and the technology will help us to accomplish some of the things you are suggesting.

Q. Ralph Richard, London

In the US there are several different language problems and you haven't addressed those in your talk but do you **1)** do it in different languages and **2)** there are lots of people in our workforce that have no knowledge about how to get onto websites or infact don't have computers and so how do you accommodate them?

A. First question, our goal is to make it bilingual and at this point we have not. We have just completed the engineering basis identifying those competency standards and as of last week we've completed the technology side so phase 2 to make it multilingual, the challenge in the US is obviously the No. 1 direction but from there, in Chicago we speak 56 different languages, where do we begin to put that priority. Second question, this really goes back to Linda's question, how do you inspire a corporate structure to re-invest in education. Working with our education content provides our goal initially to establish a computer based system which is cost effective and easy to implement and be available in a training centre in a plant environment where employees would be inspired to take an hour a week or a day to go and do this. We are trying to develop an atmosphere where industry changes its pay structure so that you pay for skill and the idea behind our system is you can measure a persons skill level by their testing, by their professional development and their professional credentials are truly a reflection of what that individuals' abilities were and continue to be. We are trying to make it a fluid process and also an efficient one for us to administer because our resources are not endless. It's an evolving process