

## **TrendSpotters:** **Future Watch, Featuring Dr. Jim Hill, CPT** *by Carol Haig, CPT and Roger Addison, CPT*

**During a rare lull in his busy day**, we caught up with Jim Hill to capture his predictions for the next two to three years. Over the course of the past year, Jim has served as the Director of Dynamic Pricing for Sun Microsystems and, more recently, as the CEO of ProofPoint Systems, Inc., a global provider of software and services that help organizations achieve exemplary performance. Jim is the immediate past president of ISPI and may be reached at [jim.hill@proofpoint.net](mailto:jim.hill@proofpoint.net).



### **Top Three Predictions**

As part of the fallout from recent business scandals and the heightened emphasis on accurate representation of corporate information, *business leaders will demand the truth from their performance consultants* and expect to see solid evidence of results achieved and promises honored.

*Our profession will shift from its human performance technology (HPT) focus to a business performance technology (BPT) focus.* The HPT brand will remain, but our mindset will be increasingly business-centric, as we work to improve the performance of the business, not just the performance of the workers.

*HPT leaders will take on greater roles in the businesses where they work* as they realize that to effect real change, they must operate in lines of business rather than in staff support functions.

### **Why These Predictions**

Consider this: Fortune 200 companies spend US\$300-900 million per year on training. They spend additional millions on organizational design, incentive management, business re-engineering, and other improvement processes. Yet, in the case of training, less than 10% of what is delivered finds its way to on-the-job performance improvement. This means a waste of US\$270-800 million per year.

*As part of their quest for truth*, organizations want to stop the waste. They are tired of guessing at solutions. They want to be able to look at an opportunity for performance improvement, determine what it will take to capture it, and get results that net a real return on investment.

These times call for a shift from HPT to BPT. When a solution enables workers to perform better, generates revenue, and improves quality, we are considered successful, and the results are invaluable to the fortunate organization and its stakeholders. However, for HPT practitioners to make this kind of difference requires more than a nodding acquaintance with the organization's business. As performance improvement professionals, at a minimum, we must be able to answer these three basic questions:

- What were the organization's revenues last year?
- Who are our top three customers?
- Who are our top three competitors?

Jim suggests that right now few HPT'ers can do this, leaving us without a place at the executive decision table.

Each of us must determine if we are willing to *take on a greater role* by inserting ourselves into the business of our organizations and assuming the same level of risk as the lines of business do. Are we willing to learn to apply business thinking to business performance improvement? Can we reduce duplication of effort and redundant job responsibilities in our own groups? Can we cut costs, increase our speed of delivery to our customers, and establish common thought, language, and processes for improved efficiencies and a cohesive branding of the products and services we deliver? Some of these suggestions and decisions will be unpopular, but when we can deliver on them we will raise the bar for HPT and truly contribute to our organizations' results.

### **How Organizations Will Be Different**

In organizations that understand the value and power of HPT, we will see structures shifting to support a rising level of business integrity. Some organizations will form

networks of business performance improvement teams with a central distribution point. One team might be responsible for conducting or overseeing analysis projects. A different and appropriately skilled team might then take the findings and recommendations from the analysis team to develop the solution(s). This division of labor will prevent one of today's current difficulties, where the analysis results in the solution the customer originally requested, regardless of its appropriateness.

One way to align effectively with business results in this new environment is for the HPT practitioner to recast his or her role from that of maintenance engineer to one as design engineer. Most requests received by performance consultants are for "fix it" projects because something is not working as it is supposed to. In the scheme of organizational operations, these tend to be mostly low-level efforts that equate to a building maintenance person being called to fix the plumbing.

A better situation is to have a seat at the building design table so we can affect the layout, flows, and operations before the system is badly built. In an organizational context, this role has a much greater impact and considerably higher payoff for both the business and the performance technologist.

HPT, with its focus on principles and practices rather than on models, will be utilized consistently across savvy organizations. Shifting analogies from architecture to medicine, Jim notes that emphasizing diagnosis before prescription, together with consistent HPT standards, will reduce our risk of "malpractice." Practitioners will quickly and accurately identify business performance improvement issues and opportunities and lead the way to solutions, via specialists, that produce valued results.

### **Implications for ProofPoint Systems**

Jim points to an HPT history lesson he learned from Roger Addison who tells us that our field has been driven by interventions, not by analysis. If we develop and implement solutions without an objective analysis, we run a high risk of failure and can harm the organization's health.

To illustrate, Jim tells the story of having a cold and searching the medicine cabinet for a particular remedy. When he doesn't find it, he looks for another that might substitute, such as an over-the-counter medication or maybe the remnants of an old prescription. When his second choice is not effective, he goes back to the medicine cabinet for a third option. Jim continues to try different medications until something helps his cold—much as organizations do when prescribed performance improvement solutions fail.

In Jim's example, it is unclear if the "speedball" of solutions actually helped or if the cold went away on its own. What is very clear is that we've been overmedicated, which is costly and sometimes dangerous.

To guard against these events, Jim and his ProofPoint team educate their clients about the value of separating analysis from solution design and delivery. Established as a diagnostic organization with the capability of referring clients to the right solution specialists, ProofPoint's advisory model and the software applications they are developing ensure the integrity of the results they produce.

If you have any predictions about the future of HPT that you feel would be of interest to the *PerformanceXpress* readership, please contact Carol Haig, CPT, at [carolhaig@earthlink.net](mailto:carolhaig@earthlink.net) or Roger Addison, CPT, at [roger@ispi.org](mailto:roger@ispi.org).