



SOMEWHERE, THERE IS A  
NEW IDEA OR A DIFFERENT  
APPROACH JUST WAITING TO  
BE DISCOVERED.

## THE SECRET TO DEVELOPMENT IS ...

**R**ecently, I left corporate life after 20 years to start my own consulting practice. In my career, I had the privilege of leading the learning and leadership development functions at four progressive Fortune 500 companies. I worked with great people and enjoyed access to the latest development techniques. Not only did I get a chance to learn from others, I was able to tap into the wealth of learning resources that these companies provided. When it came to my own learning and development, I didn't know how good I had it.

Now that I'm out on my own, I'm finding that I have to work a little harder to stay current and find new resources for learning. It's easy to tell myself that I am "too busy" to spend time seeking out new ideas, and it takes discipline to dig through the vast amount of available content. But I'm working to make learning a priority.

Learning is the key to our individual value proposition – what we offer our companies or clients. How many of us would like to go to work tomorrow with the knowledge or skills we had 20 years ago? We wouldn't make it to the end of the day. Whether you're inside an organization or working as one of the 33 million "free agents" in the United States today, you owe it to yourself to make learning a priority. Somewhere, there is a new idea or a different approach just waiting to be discovered – and you can use it to make a significant contribution if you're willing to make an investment in your own development.

I believe the key to making development a priority is to create your own learning plan. Don't wait for your manager or the performance management process to do it for you. If you're independent, don't wait for the client to ask for the latest developments in your area of expertise. The secret to staying ahead of the curve is to create a customized learning plan specifically dedicated to your development needs. I recommend three content areas:

- Core expertise: staying current in your main skill areas
- Expanding your skills: stretching out into related skill areas
- Business & industry knowledge: what's going on around you

### This Month's Guest Editor

**Steve Arneson** is founder and president of Arneson Leadership Consulting. Pre-



viously, Steve was senior vice president, executive talent management and development for Capital One, where he and his team built Capital One University, winning numerous industry awards and recognition for innovative learning solutions. Steve also served as vice president of organizational effectiveness for America Online and as vice president of people development for Time Warner Cable. Email Steve at [editor@trainingindustry.com](mailto:editor@trainingindustry.com).

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*Know someone who'd make an outstanding guest editor? Interested in becoming one yourself? Contact us at [editor@trainingindustry.com](mailto:editor@trainingindustry.com).*

The key is to be honest with yourself and start with a manageable load of learning resources. Whether you're reading or reviewing books, subscribing to trade journals or business publications, joining a public network of professionals, creating an informal cadre of learning partners or browsing the Internet, there are a host of great learning sources available. Start small; find four or five techniques or resources that you'll actually use or review on a regular basis. If you're reading this, you've already found a great source in *Training Industry Quarterly*. Bookmark it now under one of the content areas above, and review it each quarter.

Continuous learning is critical, but it takes time and discipline. Challenge yourself to get into the habit of developing and updating your own learning plan. Take charge of your own learning – and start creating your own personal competitive advantage in the marketplace.