

ASTD 2008 Learning Transfer Contest

Second Runner-Up: Sharyn Carter

Foodstuffs Akl Ltd, New Zealand

LEARNING: What key learning from the 2008 ASTD International Conference did you apply back on the job? *Please include the source of this learning (workshops, sessions, certificate programs, peers, etc.)*

At ASTD in 2008, I attended multiple presentations with the themes of ~ Organisational Change ~ Talent Management ~ Engaging employees. The information gained from the conference sessions reinforced that I was already implementing best practice strategies and supplemented my knowledge immensely. The real magic moment occurred when I realised that I was only applying my best practice strategies in just one organisation (my employer) and at a pace limited by their capacity to make and sustain changes. With this new found awareness I invested time at the conference and started to learn a lot more about ASTD and as an organisation, how they facilitate networking and sharing of best practices. Although extremely busy with the task of event hosting, the members from the San Diego chapter of ASTD who manned the stand outside the EXPO were always welcoming of my questions and referred me to the best answer providers on multiple occasions. After seeing first hand the benefits of sharing knowledge I became very motivated to broaden communication of my known successful strategies. However the reality in New Zealand is that this is easier said than done. The clear majority of businesses are small (one person) to medium sized, suffer high failure rates so their owners are busy working in their business (not focusing on improving it). Also to set up networks and marketing contacts from scratch is a time consuming, ever changing and can be an expensive process.

ACTION: (40%) How did you put this learning into action in your organization or with your clients? What challenges did you overcome?

My target audience is notoriously difficult to communicate with; so when I returned to New Zealand I sought contact with agencies that already had existing communication channels. Below are details of my dealings with each agency and how they assisted me in my quest. The Auckland Chamber of Commerce assisted me by marketing, organising logistics and hosting 76 people from small to medium sized New Zealand businesses at a breakfast function. I presented successful strategies for implementing change and gave practical advice about how to remove the typical barriers that get in the way (including ourselves). I have provided coaching to the Chamber's marketing team about practical strategies for gaining efficiency in their personal work practices. In February I will have an article about best practice change management strategies published in their b-innovative magazine which reaches 12,000 business decision makers in the region. The NZ Economic Development Agency of New Zealand assisted me by writing a profile posted on the Management Focus website and promoted me as the Auckland Regional Champion for any businesses to contact when they require assistance. To date I have assisted 15 small businesses throughout New Zealand by resolving a range of enquiries and problems. The NZ Institute of Management assisted me by marketing, organising logistics and hosting 17 learning and development practitioners at a lunch function. I made a presentation about how to ensure that training adds value to businesses, including how to remove wasteful activities and create more opportunities for immediate application. I have provided electronic templates to 15 of those in attendance to assist their post presentation implementation efforts.

RESULTS: (40%) How has your application of learning made a difference to the organization, the business, or your offerings? *Please support your answers with available metrics or other criteria that clearly show the impact.*

Results from the Auckland Chamber of Commerce presentation: Successful strategies to implement change: When surveyed post the presentation, all 76 people in attendance gave a 100% positive responses to two survey questions. "Has your knowledge about change management improved?" and "Have you received practical strategies that you could implement as a result of attending the presentation?". Electronic templates were made available by request and provided to 42 of the attendees to assist their implementation efforts. The following is feedback received from Murray Barton, the Solutions Development Manager for Savio Limited. "Thank you so much from our team, your presentation was great; very pragmatic and real. I personally got the following gems out of it that I will be using in the very near future with my team: 1) Juggling sharks - brilliant, just love that one 2) 5 why's - never heard that before and will absolutely be using it in future 3) Positive consequences for positive behaviours - meetings will never be the same! 4) Just in time approach - I can see real value in using this so as not to inundate the team with information, just because I am a high information person, doesn't mean everyone is". Results from the NZ Institute of Management presentation: Getting business value from training initiatives: All 17 of the Learning and Development practitioners in attendance gave a 100% positive (yes) response to the survey question "will you take action to improve your skills after hearing the presentation?" The following is feedback received from Gerda Gorgner, the HR Manager at Pacific Flight Catering. "I really enjoyed your informative talk today and found it very helpful, making sense and practical. I came back to work and

ASTD 2008 Learning Transfer Contest

Second Runner-Up: Sharyn Carter

Foodstuffs AKI Ltd, New Zealand

immediately used your approach of identifying problems with one of the teams. We came up with a list, and also with who needs to fix what (i.e. management or team) and I will check progress. Again, thank you very much.

SUPPORT: (20%) What factors helped you the most to put your learning into action? Who were your supporters and champions?

My time spent taking these initiatives post ASTD has been volunteered with no financial gain. No payment is necessary when you see relief in the eyes of people as they talk to you; the confidence you see when a previously frustrated person knows clearly their next steps; when you've given freely and made a positive difference to the life of others. None of this would have been possible without my experiences at ASTD 2008 and the agencies mentioned above who have established networks, marketing and communication channels into the challenging New Zealand business environment. However I am also aware that all the actions taken to date are one-off initiatives. Whilst unquestionably there has been an impact made to date; my next goal is to work towards a more on-going solution to facilitate the sharing of best practices here in New Zealand for the future. I am passionate about learning and development and have shared all that I know that works freely. I am certain that New Zealand is full of talented business people who just need a forum to share their experiences. We don't have an ASTD chapter here in New Zealand and the closest one is in Sydney, Australia (3 ½ hrs flight away). I started many conversations whilst in San Diego to seek information about the best processes moving forward to develop one. Please give me the opportunity to continue those discussions by selecting me to attend ASTD in Washington DC. I thank you for the opportunity to apply for acceptance to attend ASTD in 2009. Completing this application form has really highlighted to me what is possible in just 6 months with passion and a bit of oomph! Sharyn Carter Learning & Development Manager.