



He's taught it, digitized it, virtualised it, videoed it, printed it and mp3'd it. He's definitely e-learned it. Think of a delivery medium and Bob Mosher has crammed training through it. He shares what he's learnt with the new kids on the block.

ADDRESS TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

Dr. Allison Rossett of the American Society for Training and Development, and just-retired professor of Educational Technology at San Diego State University, is one of my favourite people in our profession. She's one of my favourite people in the entire world for that matter. She has single-handedly done more for our industry than most. I admire her dedication to research, her dedication to educating the next generation of learning professionals, and her dedication to the overall L&D industry. Her wonderful blog [My commencement address for the workforce learning class of 2012](#) got me thinking – Allison's work usually does – and

inspired me to take my shot. After all, this is important stuff. So here is my contribution to the dialogue.

Commencement address to the graduating Learning Professional's class of 2012.

“Congratulations on the start on what will hopefully be an amazing career. You have just completed your studies and are about to enter one of the most exciting, innovative, progressive, impactful and rewarding fields. Actually, that depends. It can also be one of the most boring, close minded, backwards-thinking, stubborn and self-centred industries ever. What makes

the difference? What YOU choose to do with it.

I have been at this for almost 30 years now and have seen it all. We have an amazing opportunity to have an impact on the organisations we work for and more importantly, on the learners whom we serve, in ways that can be life changing and have a global effect. This is pretty profound stuff.

This comes at a cost and a level of responsibility that not everyone is ready for, nor do they choose to pursue. You will find the same to be true of your learners. They, like you, have a choice to either



engage or to coast. I would recommend engaging. It will be like nothing else you have ever experienced.

During my travels, I have been fortunate enough to have seen and learned a lot, often the hard way. Here's my effort at easing your journey a bit, by passing along a few nuggets.

ONE Always be a learner first, a learning professional second.

This field is ever changing. The tools of our trade are many and in a constant flux. The classroom of yesterday is the iPad of tomorrow. Both learning theory and delivery will be constantly changing. Don't settle. Don't fall back on old tried-and-true ways. The learners that once sat in front of Mager, Skinner, Bruner, Dewey, Knowles, Senge and even Rossett (to name a few) are NOT the same learners you will be challenged to engage tomorrow.

That's not to say that the learning theory of yesterday is not applicable. It is, but probably not at face value. Keep learning. Keep up. Challenge the status quo. Don't settle. Listen to your learners. BE a learner yourself. I once asked a room full of e-learning developers if they would use their own stuff to learn. The silence was deafening and then the chuckles were many. That was a sobering moment. The days of forcing learning down a learner's throat are gone.

TWO If it isn't about performance and sustainment – DON'T waste your time.

'Finding' Performance Support saved my professional career... literally. I was done, or naively felt I had tried it all. I had done most everything possible to training. I taught it, e-learned it, digitized it, virtualized it, videoed it, printed it, mp3'd it. Think of a delivery medium and I had

crammed training through it. But in the end, my efforts fell short. Why? Because training is a means, not an end, it is only a small part of the learning journey.

Depending on what percentage you believe, our learners spend well over 80% of their time trying to perform, to learn, to innovate and grow on their own... without us. If this is the case, why has the learning industry spent so much of its time NOT helping them get there?

It's where the rubber meets the road. It's where the work gets done. It's what pays their salary, feeds their families and promotes their career. In other words, it's where things TRULY matter. L&D has known this for centuries. You will live it every day, yet as an industry we've ignored it. When you get out there – stop! Pay attention.

Don't build training to teach and create job aides if you have time. Instead, build performance support applications and sustainment solutions first, and then backfill with training if needed. If nothing else at least train them on your application, transfer and sustainment solutions. The knowledge will come.

The days of knowledge having any shelf life are over. We live in a world where knowledge is changing at an alarming rate and this situation will only get worse. It's not about knowledge dissemination. It's about knowledge aggregation. Performance Support is the L&D of the future. If, back in the 90s 'Content is King', then 'Context is King' of the millennium.

THREE Find your heroes in both your personal and professional life.

Then zap them for all you can get – and give back in return – and honour them by passing along what you've learned. I have

been fortunate enough to have had several heroes in my life, and here are two of them. One works with me every day, and helps me maintain a performance support community, learning strategist Dr Conrad Gottfredson. The other is the aforementioned Dr. Allison Rossett. They have unselfishly given much of themselves to me.

I have done my best to internalise what they've taught me and pass it along. As learning professionals we often feel we have to have the answers. After all, we have the degrees and take pride in staying current. This doesn't mean we know it all or that we even should know it all. We have a responsibility to avoid leading blindly, and we have an even stronger responsibility to model good listening.

The more I learn about this field, the more I realise that I only understand a small part of it. We can't go at this alone. Others have done great work. Find them, befriend them, learn from them – and then be like them. Every day I try to be more and more like my heroes. It's a lifelong task, but one I'm committed to.

I wish you well. Learning isn't easy. If it were easy, you wouldn't be needed. But you are needed – and you're needed BADLY. Don't feel overwhelmed by what lies ahead. Embrace it. Enjoy it. Learn from it. For the sake of your learners, be really good at it. Their livelihoods depend on it."

*Bob Mosher is Chief Learning Evangelist at Ontuitive
www.ontuitive.com
Become a member of Mosher's Performer Support Community
www.performersupport.com*