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A Shortcut to Motivated and Adaptive Workforces

June 2000 – Phase 1 Results

Foreword

You say that your organisation needs people who can learn and adapt quickly, who can solve problems without being told to, who can come up with creative ideas and not wait for others to do it for them. People with a positive, responsible attitude.

You also say that you need a reliable return on the time and money you invest in your people. Too much money is already invested in skills training, yet most of the expected return is not there. So, what is missing? The Talent Foundation believes that today's training strategies are sophisticated and well-thought through, but they have a critical blind spot – the learner's motivation to learn.

Without appropriate 'readiness' to learn, training investments are destined to fail.

Over the last few months, The Talent Foundation engaged several organisations and individuals in researching the issue of motivation to learn. We scanned several factors that affect motivation and found amazing results in the area of emotional intelligence (EI). In essence, those individuals who have developed EI were significantly more proactive towards learning and had higher 'readiness' towards adaptation than those from a control group.

This leaves organisations with two options: Either recruit only people with higher levels of EI or develop the workforce they already have. Can people be trained in emotional intelligence? Fast? What difference will it make?

Our research shows that workers trained in emotional intelligence techniques have significant advantages in:

- 'Can do' attitude – confidence in the contribution they can make at work, attitude towards finding opportunities to use their skills at work
- Willingness to learn – positive attitude towards learning
- Confidence on what and how to learn
- Win-win attitude regarding training provided by employers

This research compared 100 people who attended a three-and-a-half-day course, with 100 people from a demographically similar control group who did not. The results are attached (I have highlighted the key elements to help you skim through).

Over the next months we will extend this research to other programs, identifying the ones that create better results – faster. Also, we understand that 'readiness' to learn is not sufficient. Competence to learn and 'big-picture thinking' are also strategic skills for adaptive organisations. We will soon pilot a comprehensive strategy at a call centre, including all 3 (readiness, competence to learn and big-picture thinking) aspects and will measure key performance indicators to test the value of the solution.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge Astute Solutions (for conducting such a professional piece of research), Landmark Education (for letting us 'challenge' their product) and the 200 individuals who gave their time and honest answers for this work.

I am delighted to share the first part of our research on motivation with you. It is my hope that not only will it bring insight but that it will encourage action as well.

Let's keep in touch.

Kind regards,



Javier Bajer
Chief Executive
The Talent Foundation

Background and Hypothesis

In today's economy, individual and organisational ability to learn and adapt is key for success. Organisations are focussing their efforts in creating good learning for their employees, using best possible strategies including web-based 'just-in-time' delivery of training. Consistently we see that good intentions get stopped at the receiving end of the learning equation. People cannot be forced (or bribed) to learn and, in most cases, learning is perceived as a threat or at least as an inconvenience, not allowing the natural learning 'engines' to do their job.

Our belief is that an individual's emotional intelligence is the major driver for that ability. Workforces where individuals share this ability will be far more adaptive and responsive to continuous change. They will learn easily and faster than others. They will not need the 'push', but will 'pull' for learning and development opportunities.

So the question is two-fold: first, whether emotional intelligence makes a difference for learning 'readiness' and second, whether these skills can be developed in people or is a condition from nature.

Methodology

In this study we compared two similar groups of people (mainly) in employment. Group A was randomly selected from a database of individuals who have attended an EI / motivational course over the last 2 years¹. Some of these people have gone on to undertake other courses, although exactly how many were taken did not form part of this enquiry.

Individuals in the control group (B) have not experienced any similar training. This group was matched up to the condition group in order to allow valid comparisons between them (this required a significantly larger control group). However, only the 100 respondents which most closely matched the demographics from those in group A went forward into the research shown below.

Researchers conducted one hundred telephone interviews per group. All samples were UK-based.

The subset chosen were participants whose surnames began with the letter S and lived in London. The control group was taken from a series of London telephone directories, all of whom also have surnames beginning with the letter S and who have either an 0208 or 0207 telephone number. (In some cases only a mobile telephone number was listed, in which case the address was used as corroboration.).

¹ The course used for this initial part of the research was The Landmark Forum, widely offered throughout major cities by Landmark Education Corporation, a global organisation with many years of experience in this field (www.landmarkeducation.com, or phone +44-20 7969-2020 in London). For the business application of this technology, you can contact Norman Dayron at Landmark Education Business Development on +1-415-616-2478.

Detailed Results

#	Question	Options	Group A ²	Control
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I will read you a statement and give you four options which I'd like you to put into your order of preference. The statement is about individual learning styles. Simply put, the statement is:

1	I learn best from	Internal Courses	4th	3rd
		External Course	2nd	1st
		Self Study	3rd	4th
		Other People	1st	2nd

Please think about the last two or three things you have learned or skills you have acquired. These can be anything from learning a new computer programming language to working out how the tube system works, or learning snap, bridge, flower arranging or anything else. Again, using the same options please tell me where you learned these. Was it from:

2	Internal Courses	4th	3rd
	External Courses	2nd	4th
	Self Study	3rd	2nd
	Other People	1st	1st

Please think about the types of skills that are normally taught at company-sponsored courses (e.g. interpersonal skills, management and organisational skills, time management, etc) and the training you have been given.

3	What percentage of what you learn at work do you feel you can apply in your job?		68.4%	62.3%
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4	What percentage do you feel you can apply elsewhere? (home, hobby, etc.)		57.7%	43.4%
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5	Do you believe that the training provided by your employer is beneficial...	to you	7%	3%
		to the company	12%	52%
		to both	81%	45%

6	How much do you feel your own talents are being developed at work?	(%)	52.4%	42.8%
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7	Do you feel the organisation you work for takes personal development seriously?	Yes	58%	34%
		No	42%	66%

8	Do you believe you have a unique and valuable contribution to make at work?	Absolutely	69%	30%
		Mostly	26%	48%
		Other	5%	22%

² These are graduates from the Landmark Forum that have participated from the course over the last 2 years. Results from groups B and C (graduates from other two similar courses) will be reported when the research is completed.

#	Question	Options	Group A	Control
9	Do you believe you can find and use opportunities to apply your skills at work?	Absolutely Mostly Other	40% 39% 21%	11% 50% 39%

10	If you were looking for a new job now, how important would the provision of Personal Development training be in your choice of organisation to work for?	Absolutely Mostly Other	31% 39% 30%	8% 42% 50%
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I will read you three statements, to each of which I'd like you to answer either "Yes, I agree", "No I do not agree" or "Don't know":

11	i. Learning is fun	Yes No Don't know	88% 7% 5%	64% 24% 12%
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11	ii. I know how I learn best	Yes No Don't know	62% 19% 19%	43% 39% 18%
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11	iii. I know what I would need to learn to be more successful	Yes No Don't know	71% 5% 24%	61% 8% 31%
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Primary Findings

Within 2 years of participating from a short motivational course, individuals surveyed showed significantly higher levels of motivation, self-esteem and confidence in relation to their learning and the application of skills at work.

Participants from the course showed a more proactive attitude overall, whether it related to their own learning or their ability to apply new skills at work. Their level of motivation, when compared to the control group, was significantly higher, even 2 years after having participated on the course.

In today's work, being able to relate to learning in a positive manner is key for the continuous adaptation and flexibility of the workforce. More than two-thirds of participants from the course saw training as beneficial to both their organisation and themselves. Less than half of those in the control group saw the training they receive as a win-win deal.

Participants that developed EI-type skills perceived learning to be fun (88% versus 64% from the control group), had a higher level of self-awareness (62% versus 43%) and knew what to learn in order to succeed (71% versus 61%).

Almost two-thirds of individuals from the course felt they can make a 'unique and valuable contribution at work'. These levels of confidence and self-esteem were quite low in the control group, where only a third of individuals gave a positive answer. This study also shows that those with higher levels of self-esteem are 4 times more confident at finding opportunities to apply their skills and make a difference at work.

'Non-obvious' Findings

From questions 1 and 2, we can see that there is a high degree of 'fidelity' in group A's answers, not observable in the control group (group A gave the same answers to questions 1 and 2). This could be evidence of a higher self-awareness when reporting about learning preferences. In these two questions we can also see that people prefer learning from others and from external conferences rather than from self study or internal taught courses. (1, 2)

The final question asked whether respondents knew what they would have to learn in order to be more successful. We would have expected, in the light of all the answers above, that group A would be more positive in knowing what they need to learn, as opposed to the control group. In this case the answers were markedly similar. What was surprising was the high number of group A respondents who said they did not know what they would have to learn in order to

be more successful. However, when asked to qualify their answer, most respondents from group A mentioned that they did not currently know what they would need to learn in the long term. They mentioned that they knew what their skills gap was today, but did not want to close themselves off from other factors in the future. (11, iii)

Conclusions

Having the right attitude towards learning is essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of the development of new skills. An organisation's ability to adapt depends primarily on each individual's confidence and attitude towards learning.

Based on our findings, it appears that readiness to learn can be developed through short interventions, such as the one evaluated in this research. Contrary to popular belief that sees

attitude as a 'given', where people either have it or not, there is clear evidence that not only can good attitude towards learning be developed but also that it can be done quickly.

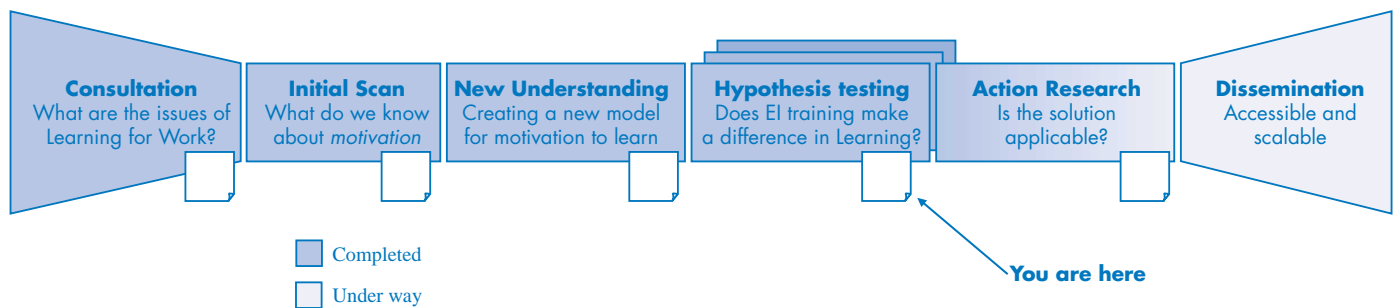
The course in question produced radical and sustained change in the way individuals relate to their own development.

Big Picture and Next Steps

A few months ago, a group of Chief Executives helped us identify the ‘hot’ issues in their organisations during a **consultation** event at the RSA. We listened carefully because this was going to define our work

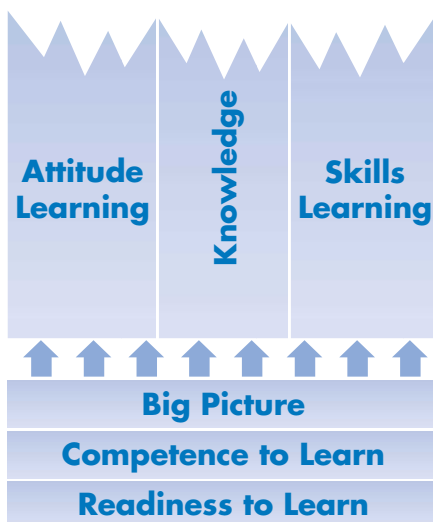
agenda. The issue at the top of the list was ‘how do you motivate a workforce to learn and adapt’. We took this as our challenge for the first year of the Foundation.

We then **scanned** the world of motivation to learn, extensively. This piece was performed by Bamford Taggs, in London.



The Learning Primer

We used this research and involved several established experts in the area to help develop a **new understanding** to the challenge of motivation to learn. A new model for learning was agreed:



To use a simple analogy, this model is to learning what a ‘primer’ is to painting a wall. We believe that learning fails when it is ‘painted’ over an unprepared surface. In the case of painting, that surface will not absorb the colour and will eventually peel or rust. Pouring new skills onto people, without developing their readiness to learn and their competence to learn, may be a waste of time and money.

We identified strategies to develop these layers in the model. This document shows the results from our initial research into Readiness to Learn. Two similar EI courses are being evaluated and a final report will be produced upon completion.

In parallel, we have started our **Action research** phase, where we test the complete model with a group of people at work. We are working with experts from organisations such as London Business School, Plymouth University, Birmingham University, Lincoln University, Landmark Education, ELSIN (European Learning Styles Information Network) and some large businesses (the test ground) to prove the value of the model.

We expect this study to support the ‘priming’ idea for learning, showing that those developing readiness and competence to learn are far more motivated, adaptive and ultimately productive than their control group peers.

Up to one hundred performance indicators (from productivity to shareholder value) will be recorded before and after the program and then all organisations involved will jointly report the experience in several business and academic publications.

We are conducting further research with this and other similar courses to eliminate the chance of individuals being ‘self selected’ as they participate from this type of development and test the universal validity of the intervention.

For The Talent Foundation, the challenge does not stop here. We will work with campaigning organisations to package and **disseminate** the solution. We will then go back to the original ‘problem’ list, check that our work is done and then go to the next item.

Appendix A

Questionnaire used in the research project

QUESTIONNAIRE – All groups

Introduction

- Ask to take 8–10 minutes of their time.
- Explain the purpose of this study (we are conducting market research, not selling you something). ‘We would like to make the world a better place and would like your help’.
- Introduce self and the Talent Foundation.
- ‘The Talent Foundation is a global organisation committed to the development of Talent throughout the world of work’.
- Assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the study.

The results will be available on www.talentfoundation.org at the end of March / beginning of April.

Profile validation

1	Are you working at the moment?	Yes No - Please answer the following questions using your previous employer as the guideline.
2	Are you employed or self-employed? (Contract work to count as self-employed)	E S
3	Do you work for a public organisation (including charity) or for a private company?	Public (e.g. Government department / charity) Sole Trader Private Company (limited or plc, includes partnerships)
4	Size of the company you're working for	Small (1–20 employees) Medium (21–200 employees) Large (200+ employees)
5	What position do you hold within your company?	Shop-floor or similar Junior Management Middle Management Senior Management

Demographics

6	Gender	M F
7	Age Group	18–30 31–49 50+
8	Level of Education	No formal qualifications 'O' Levels / GCSE's (includes NVQ's) 'A' Levels (includes HND's) Degree (first- and post-degree qualifications)
9	How long ago did you complete your formal education?	Less than 10 years ago 11–25 years 26 years or more

I will now read you a statement and give you four options which I'd like you to put into your order of preference. The statement is about individual earning styles. Simply put the statement is:

10	I learn best from: And the four options are: i. Internal (company-run) courses. ii. External courses (including night school, conferences, seminars, etc.). iii. Self study (books, videos, TV programmes, etc.). iv. From other people, including colleagues at work, formal coaches, mentors, etc.	Arrange into order of preference.
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Please think about the last two or three things you have learned or skills you have acquired. These can be anything from learning a new computer programming language to working out how the tube system works, or learning snap, bridge, flower arranging or anything else. Again, using the same options please tell me where you learned these. Was it from:

11	i. Internal (company run) courses. ii. External courses (including night school, conferences, seminars etc). iii. Self study (books, videos, TV programmes etc). iv. From other people, including colleagues at work, formal coaches, mentors, etc.	Arrange into order of preference.
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(application of skills)

Please think about the types of skills that are normally taught at company-sponsored courses (e.g., interpersonal skills, management and organisational skills, time management etc) and the training you have been given. I will read you both questions to give you time to think and then come back to ask you for your answer:



- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 12 | What percentage of what you learn at work do you feel you can apply in your job? | (0–100%) |
| <i>NB – the two answers do not have to add up to 100%</i> | | |
| 13 | What percentage do you feel you can apply elsewhere? (home, hobby, etc.) | (0–100%) |
| 14 | Do you believe that the training provided by your employers is beneficial to | i. you personally
ii. the company, or
iii. both |

(potential)

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 15 | How much do you feel your own talents are being developed at work? | (0–100%) |
| 16 | Do you feel the organisation you work for takes personal development seriously? | Y
N |

For the next three questions I will give you five choices for your answer – these are (read out as per below). Don't worry if you don't remember them – I'll remind you at the end of each question.

(self-esteem)

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 17 | Do you believe you have a unique and valuable contribution to make at work? | Absolutely
Mostly
It depends
Just a bit
Not at all |
|----|---|--|

(confidence)

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 18 | Do you believe you can find and use opportunities to apply your skills at work? | Absolutely
Mostly
It depends
Just a bit
Not at all |
| 19 | If you were looking for a new job now, how important would the provision of personal development training be in your choice of organisation to work for? | Absolutely
Mostly
It depends
Just a bit
Not at all |

(learning)

Now I will read you three statements, to each of which I'd like you to answer "Yes, I agree", "No I do not agree" or "Don't know". Again, I'll read you all three statements first, and then I'll come back for your answer:

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i Learning is fun ii I know how to learn best iii I know what I would need to learn in order to be more successful | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Y N Don't know |
|----|--|--|

Group ID (for everyone to validate group A, and to ensure group B candidates have not inadvertently "slipped the net").

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 21a | <p>For Landmark Graduates</p> <p>Have you completed the Landmark Forum course?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No (in which case use the questionnaire as part of the control group). Go to 23. |
|-----|---|---|

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 22a | <p>How long ago did you complete this course?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 1 month ago Between 1 and 6 months Between 7 and 12 months More than 1 year Go to 23 |
|-----|---|--|

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 21b | <p>For Control Group</p> <p>Have you heard of an organisation called Landmark Education?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (go to 22b) No (go to 23) |
|-----|---|--|

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 22b | <p>Have you completed the Landmark Forum course?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (go to 22a, use the response as part of the Landmark population) No (go to 23) |
|-----|--|---|

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 23 | <p>That concludes the questions we'd like to ask you. Once again thank you for your time. Please let me reassure you that this research is confidential and anonymous. Before we close, is there anything you would like to ask me?</p> | <p>Q & A (Free)</p> |
|----|---|-------------------------|



Appendix B

Background information given to respondents.

Background information given to respondents

The Talent Foundation - A global organisation, launched at the Royal Society of Arts on March 20th this year. It envisages a world in which work organisations realise the advantages of developing their employees for the mutual benefit of the individual and the organisation.

The Research Project - This is an exercise in finding out how self-esteem, motivation and confidence can affect individuals in their work environment. This is the first piece of research being carried out on behalf of the Talent Foundation, and is conceived to be the first of several. The results will be available on the Talent Foundation's website (www.talentfoundation.org) after the completion of the research, by the end of March this year.

The Questionnaire - Will take about 8–10 minutes to complete, gives multiple choice answers (on the whole) and is totally anonymous and confidential. In fact, your name will only be used to ensure the correct person is being interviewed.

The Researcher - Ela Grabinska runs her own company specialising in research and communications. Will be calling / supervising the research calls. She has worked with both large and small companies, and has over 20 years experience in the field.