What Did You Mean When You Said Proximity

White Paper

Denise Reading, PhD
Global Corporate College
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By Denise Reading, PhD, Global Corporate College

Recently, a tweet from Chief Learning Officer engendered by an article on ROI by Bob Mosher raised the question, “Is there a correlation between proximity and learning outcomes?” As the CEO of Global Corporate College, the largest distribution network created to reach incumbent workers where they are, I answered this question by simply stating – absolutely, proximity matters.

According to Kerry Johnson in “Making Global Programs Feel Local: 10 Guidelines”, proximity means having an understanding of the culture and the context in which the learning experience will take place as well as understanding and speaking the language of the participants. Moser expands on the importance of proximity as it relates to the design and deployment of performance supports that are available on the job in real time to support application of learning. At Global Corporate College, we support the idea that proximity as defined here matters to the achievement of learning outcomes. After all, this idea of “proximity” is one of our driving principles for creating the Global Corporate College Network which puts boots on the ground in all 50 states and 30 countries.

By having “boots on the ground” (facilitators and coaches) within thirty minutes of our global clients, Global Corporate College is able to consistently drive for the behaviors and skills sets that our global clients believe will garner the greatest positive outcomes in reaching their companies’ strategic business goals across their large footprints. Further, our belief in the importance of understanding the culture, community and environment of the learner is a critical factor in creating a learning experience that achieves the highest level of outcomes. Proximity removes the barriers in the formal learning experience; and proximity allows real on-the-job application and feedback to take place. Let me illustrate with the following two stories.

Boots on the Ground: Application Coaching Drives Results

A large global manufacturer and retailer in the health and beauty space had a specific goal of taking its newly formed IT shared services group to the next level by improving their internal client driven consultative skills. The organization, fighting time as their barrier, desired to piggyback the learning onto their three regional meetings in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. Because of the diversity of languages spoken in each regional area, it was determined that the formal IL learning experience would be delivered in English but all participant materials would be in the native language of the learner. In addition, field coaching and facilitated social networks were selected as the primary performance support tools to drive application and mastery of new skill sets. Because of Global Corporate College’s “boots on the ground
approach*, coaches were in country, understood the cultural nuances around the application of skills and were able to be real time observers of the newly acquired behaviors in action. Proximity Support + Context & Culture + Boots on the Ground = ROI

**Boots on the Ground: Preserving the Outcome**

A large manufacturer had a clear goal to improve reliability. To that end, they worked with one of Global Corporate College’s domestic partners developing and executing a basic skills training program for non-maintenance workers to proactively identify when equipment was not operating correctly, thus avoiding shutdowns. The program proved to be significantly successful with a direct correlation to positive ROI. When the company decided they wanted to duplicate the program in another state in another region of the United States, the Global Corporate College “boots on the ground” reviewed the curriculum for context and cultural fit. They discovered that the foundational skills needed for the program to be successful in that location did not exist among the workforce – a high school graduate in that state was highly unlikely to have the basic skills required to maximize the benefit of the learning program and thus the same ROI would likely not be achieved. As a result, the local plant was willing to add two extra weeks to teach the foundational skills thus resulting in an equivalent ROI once the maintenance support program was rolled out to the team. Proximity Support + Context & Culture + Boots on the Ground = ROI

So yes, I stand by my original tweet – proximity matters. At Global Corporate College, we want the maximum ROI for each client experience. To ensure that learning sticks, proximity is key to success. When you have real “boots on the ground”, your training delivery decisions are part of selecting the best methodology to get the desired results. Our motto “We are where you are” ensures the ROI with each Global Corporate College interaction.

To learn more about Global Corporate College, go to [www.globalcorporatecollege.com](http://www.globalcorporatecollege.com) or call 440-793-0202.

**Resources**

Bob Mosher, June 28, 2013 – *ROI: It’s all about Proximity*

Kerry Johnson, Ph.D., October 2011 – Hemsley Fraser Group, *Making Global Programs Feel Local: Creating Effective Global Learning Solutions*

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