

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

INTRODUCING PLA TO EMPLOYERS



module 10

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Introduction to This Module

15 minutes

This is an interactive module designed to help people in post-secondary institutions introduce PLA to employers and to establish better partnerships with employers to make learning, assessment, and crediting services available to employees. The module will enable participants to work more effectively with employers to address a range of human-resource development and business needs.

At the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- Clarify the needs and priorities of individual employers
- Describe PLA and related services that could be offered to meet the needs of employers
- Prepare a draft action plan for cooperative action

Participants should have a basic understanding of PLA, through background reading and/or participation in Modules 1, 3, 6 and 9 or the equivalent. The module is intended for institutional personnel who have expertise in PLA and who are committed to developing partnerships with employers to provide workplace assessment and accreditation services for employees.

Recommended Reading

Training for What? BC Labour Force Development Board. Victoria: 1996.
Your Institution's Mission Statement
Your Community Demographics (as available)

Facilitation Plan

9:00 am:	Warm-up
9:15 am:	Determining Needs
10:15 am:	Break
10:30 am:	Determining Expectations
11:15 am:	Advertising to Employers
12:00 pm:	Lunch
1:00 pm:	Working with Employers
3:15 pm:	Wrap-up

You can introduce the schedule for the module based on your own ideas or patterned after the suggested plan. The timing for each part of the module is included as a guide. It can, of course, be adjusted to fit your circumstances. A full day is ideal, but the module can be adapted depending on the needs and range of knowledge of workshop participants. Review the plan of the module with the participants, confirming when breaks will be, the time the day will end, and any other “housekeeping” details that are necessary.

Warm-up



To introduce the module to the participants, use transparencies **T1** and **T2**. Unlike the modules that have focused mainly on promoting change within the institution, this module is about helping participants extend PLA and related services to groups of learners who are in employment.

Inform the group that although the focus of this module is on the employer, the ultimate goal in this module is to meet the needs of the diverse learners who are currently employed. You may want to cite examples of work in other nations to emphasise the importance of this effort. In Australia, New Zealand and the UK, for example, employers are increasingly looking for ways to cost-effectively train, develop and motivate their employees. PLA services have provided an important route for this.



Activity

It is important to begin the module by having participants meet and introduce one another (this includes you, the facilitator), and have some interaction. You may choose one or more of the following activities to ease into the session:

- Ask participants to introduce themselves, the area they work in and the organisation they represent.
- Ask participants to rate their knowledge and skills with PLA on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is the highest).
- Ask participants to raise their hands to indicate the rating they have given themselves: 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 10? Ask those who rated themselves between 7 and 10 where and how they have experienced PLA. Point out to the full group that these individuals will be excellent resources.
- Ask participants to each give you one expectation that they have of the session. Write the list of expectations on flip-chart paper, and refer to the list periodically and during Wrap-up.

! *At some point during the day, you might need to remind participants that the learning in this module may stretch the boundaries of how they and their colleagues have traditionally understood the role and responsibilities of educational providers and faculty. Not all institutions will proceed immediately in working directly with and for employers and unions. But all institutions should see the benefits of examining possible new ways of serving the growing community of learners, many of whom will be in employment.*

Remind them that it is not just shifting economic factors that are driving us to find new education partners; it is also the need to provide high-quality education and training services that are of increasing concern to employers, workers, unions and government policy-makers throughout the world.

Benefits & Issues for Employers: 40 minutes

Begin this session by suggesting to the group that most of us are myopic: we see only what we want to see in our own context. In order to provide services to employers, we need to understand:

- What their needs are
- What motivates them
- What concerns them



Activity

Divide the group into small discussion groups and ask the groups to respond to the following questions, spending 10 minutes on the first question and 10 minutes on the second:

1. What are the human resource issues now confronting employers?
2. How could PLA services help them to address these?

After 20 minutes, take responses from the group. Depending on the nature of the group you are working with, you may want to amend one of these questions or add another. Here are some questions you may find helpful:

- What are the challenges facing public-sector employers and private-sector employers as they strive to compete in world markets?
- What are the implications of needing more adaptable and flexible employees capable of working with the minimum of supervision?
- What are the implications for employers having to meet the expectations of customers who are becoming increasingly sophisticated and demanding in terms of quality, consistency, and timeliness?
- What are the implications of the changes created by the new expectations of customers/clients, new technologies and materials?

Responses to Question 1 might include:

- Motivating employees
- Developing more cost-effective methods
- Making sure people are current and adaptable
- Multi-skilling
- Developing cross-functional teams
- Reducing turnover
- Increasing productivity

Responses to Question 2 might include:

- Help motivate employers
- Reduce time away from work
- Help employees earn credit for what they know and can do at work
- Reward employees for learning
- Identify further learning needs
- Enhance employees' confidence as learners
- Help employees take more responsibility for their own learning
- Reduce training costs

Summarise and highlight key points. Then move into a discussion on the benefits and issues for the institution.

Benefits & Issues for the Institution: 20 minutes

With the entire group, now ask the question:

What are the potential benefits to the institution from working with employers?

Write responses from the group on the flip chart. Sum up, and identify any ideas that you think are important, but have not emerged.

Possible responses might include:

- Status and reputation of the institution in the eyes of employers, securing their support as potential champions for the institute
- Status and reputation of the institution in the eyes of potential students
- Income to the institution, enhancing flexibility and responsiveness
- More learners
- An opportunity to deliver services to groups
- Enhanced independence from the vagaries of provincial funding
- Attracting more learners from the workforce and their relatives
- Enhancing the base for securing co-op placements
- Being seen as responsive to the needs of the community
- Updating of staff; widening their experience and appreciation of learning services outside the traditional classroom
- Contributing to the ability of the community to compete and succeed, to attract employment opportunities, and to enable individuals to enhance employability and job security

Begin this session by pointing out that in any work with employers, the institution and the employer will have distinct roles and responsibilities. It will be essential for each partner to understand these roles and responsibilities and to develop effective communication strategies that recognise them.



Activity

Divide the room in half. Assign one half to be a group of employers; the other half to be the institution. Within each half, ask participants to form into small groups of four to six. Ask the side of the room that represents the employers:

"What are you going to expect of the institution as you enter a joint venture arrangement to provide flexible assessment and learning opportunities to your employees?"

Ask the side of the room that represents the institution:

"What are you going to expect of the employer as you enter a joint venture arrangement to provide flexible assessment and learning opportunities to the employees/learners?"

Ask each group to prepare a flip-chart sheet summarising their ideas.

At the end of 20 minutes, ask the groups to post their flip-chart pages on the wall and invite the full group to look at the responses. Ask the group to make observations about the lists. Ask:

"Are they the same? Different? Which ones are realistic?"

Once participants have agreed on which ones are realistic, ask them to return to their tables and identify five ways they could make sure those ideas happen. Again, ask them to jot their notes on flip-chart paper and post them. Give 10 minutes to carry out this activity. Advise them that they will want to refer to this list as they move into the next portion of the day.

Once they have finished this exercise, post the flip-chart pages on the wall and briefly review. They will want to keep these strategies in mind as they move into the next portion of the day—actually working with employers. Remind them that all of these will be useful to them in their future work.

In light of the previous two sessions, suggest to participants that they will need to be clear about the nature of the services they can actually offer employers. (Some participants may have attended the Module 7: *Marketing PLA*; if so, draw on their expertise in this session.) The clearer participants can be about what they are offering, the more likely it is that the employers will want to buy into their services. The next activity is designed to help the institution clarify its messages.



Activity

Once again divide the group into smaller groups. Inform the group members that they have been given a 90-second free public-service advertising opportunity on their local cable TV station to convey to employers what the college has to offer in the way of flexible assessment, learning and credentialing opportunities. Their job is to design one or two visual aids (which can certainly include words!) to be used in the broadcast.

Remind them to think about what they have already covered and refer to the flip-chart pages displayed around the room. Focus on:

- Needs of employers
- Potential benefits of PLA to their work forces
- Role and responsibilities of the institution.

Each presentation will be rated by the group on a scale of one to five for effectiveness and innovation. Suggest that winners receive the Public Service Advertising Council's award worth \$50,000! (All in jest, of course.)

At the end of the 25 minutes, ask each group to show the outcome of its work. Ask participants to rate one another's work for effectiveness and innovation. Record the marks given to each presentation. At the end of the presentations, ask everyone to applaud for the excellent ideas—regardless of the ratings!

- ! *Encourage a sense of fun with this exercise and be sure to post the illustrations around the room.*

Before bringing the session to a close, summarise the primary messages that have come out of the groups and as appropriate, link back to their previous work. Although you will no doubt get a range of extremely interesting material and ideas, use the transparency **T3** to remind the group that all employers want to have:

- Clear, unambiguous statements of the process their employees will undergo, the potential benefits, and the added value for the organisation
- Straightforward information about costs and time
- A statement of expected outcomes (linked to the benefits to the organisation and the respective individual employees)
- The roles and responsibilities of institutional staff
- The roles and responsibilities of company staff
- An easy, direct method of communicating with the college
- Realistic and accurate timelines
- Success criteria—for them and for you
- A single contact person who can respond quickly and appropriately



Lunch

60 minutes

This session will allow participants to combine everything they have learned from the morning session and try out through role-play what they have so far only talked about. There will be four phases to this activity:

1. Preparation for the role-play
2. Presentation of the role-play
3. Action planning
4. Feedback and points of good practice



Activity

Ask the full group to move quickly into three separate groups. Ask each group to select two or three people to represent employers; the rest of the group will represent college staff. Of the college staff, select two or three people who will actually meet with the employers.



Once the employers have been identified, distribute one set of role-play instructions to each group. (There are three different scenarios, one for each group—**H4**, **H6**, and **H8**).

Then distribute the relevant college role-play instructions to the other members of the group (**H3**, **H5**, and **H7**).

Participants have 20 minutes to prepare for the meeting with the employers. Remind them that there will be three different role-plays, each one lasting no more than 20 minutes. Also remind them to note, during each role-play, what worked well and what could have been better. Ask them to keep notes on one another's presentations for later feedback.

At the end of 15 minutes, give the groups a five-minute "warning" so the actual role-plays can start on time.

While the groups are working, rearrange the furniture and chairs in front of the room for the meeting between the employers and the college staff. Make sure the chairs are situated so everyone can see the faces and interactions during the presentations.

Ask the first group to begin. To create a realistic start to each role-play, have the employers already in the chairs. Let the role-play begin with a knock on the “door” so the college staff can enter and begin the meeting.

Take each role-play in turn. Try to minimise comments and discussions between each presentation because it will be difficult to complete all three within the time-frame if things get too unruly! Immediately after the third role-play, ask the three groups to reconvene and begin their action planning.



Distribute handout **H1** to the college group and **H2** to the employer group to guide them through their deliberations. Give the group 20 to 30 minutes to respond to the questions and anything else they think they need to identify. Have the groups appoint a spokesperson who will present their action plan to the full group. They should present only the most salient points and keep their comments brief.

At the end of the 20 minutes, ask each group to give its feedback. After each presentation, ask the “employers,” if what they heard was consistent with their expectations, as per their work plans.

Note differences and applaud similarities!

At the end of this session, ask the group—as individuals—to reflect on Points of Good Practice they would recommend to others in preparing to offer flexible assessment, learning and credentialing services to employers. Give them five minutes of personal reflection time before asking for their thoughts from the floor.

Generate a list of their Points of Good Practice.

If time allows, also ask them for key issues—or learning points—that they think they will need to address within their institutions.

Thank participants for their participation and remind them that all the flip-chart responses will be typed up and distributed. Ask what they found most valuable about the day and what they think they will do next as a result of attending this workshop. If you have time at the end of the day, offer participants an opportunity to move around the room and to connect with anyone they worked with that day who offered them a new idea or perspective, or simply someone they enjoyed working with.

Make sure that you:

- Review the purpose of the session
- Address the Parking Lot of issues
- Remind participants to complete and submit the evaluation form

Action-planning Questions for Institutions

1. What are the primary needs of this employer?
2. What services do you think his or her employees need most?
3. What services can the institution offer now? What will it need to develop?
4. Who from the institution will need to be involved?
5. How much will you charge? (Will you have an hourly rate for consulting services? Will you charge based on the services provided? Will you charge per employee?)
6. What will you expect of the employer?
7. What are your criteria for success?
8. What proposal will you present to the employer?



Action-planning Questions for Employers

1. Based on what you have heard, what do you expect the institution to provide?
2. How do you think your employees might benefit from these services?
3. If you proceed with this work, how will you disseminate information throughout your organisation or to the targeted employees? Who will need to be involved?
4. How much do you think you should pay for the services?



Yum-Yum Foods: Instructions for College Staff

As part of your College's drive to expand its activities you are approaching a number of businesses to explore what educational services you could offer. One of the businesses is Yum-Yum Foods, a frozen foods manufacturer. Today you are making your first visit.

Talking to colleagues at work you have gathered the following key information about the company:

- Employs about 150 people
- Has sent apprentices in engineering to the College from time to time
- Has, on occasion, contacted the business school to recruit administrative staff
- Has taken the occasional co-op student in the summer months
- Approached the College to see if any science students wanted placements during the summer to work in the laboratories, but since they didn't contact the college until May, nothing ever came of it
- Has a reputation for employing low-skilled women on a part-time basis

Nobody has ever seen Yum-Yum Frozen Foods in the store and so you suspect they produce low-price products for one of the big chains.

It took several attempts to get in touch with the CEO and then she seemed a bit off-hand. However, when you talked about prior learning assessment and the benefits to her employees she became interested and invited you to this meeting.

Impressions on arrival:

- The small waiting area was very clean: you had to put on a white coat and hat before walking to the manager's office
- The production area had a lot of water on the floor and mobile bins loaded with different types of vegetables.
- The air smelled of vinegar and spices. There was a lot of noise—music, people shouting to each other, and the clanging of machines— and conveyors working flat out. It seemed like organised chaos, but everybody seemed to be purposefully employed and happy.
- On the wall there were big notice boards with lots of charts and tables, a few pictures and cartoons, and some plaques that looked like awards from some well-known supermarkets.

H3a



Yum-Yum Foods: Hints for College Staff

- Your PLA services are recently up and running in several different program areas. The college offers different approaches to PLA, including work-based assessment, portfolio and challenge examinations. You have a clear fee structure in place. A number of support services are also available—portfolio development workshops and preparation for assessment seminars, both of which could be delivered on-site.
- This meeting is to learn more about the company's needs—its culture, expectations and success measures. You will also want to learn about existing training programs for staff.
- You should be prepared to conduct some sort of skills audit or review with the groups of staff the employer would like to introduce to PLA. This will require developing (if you don't already have them) some sort of self-assessment checklists based on program outcomes for the employees to use.
- You need to assume that the CEO and whoever else is at the meeting knows little about PLA and the range of services your College has recently introduced. If possible, write a few things out for the employer, as though you had a brochure.

H3b



Yum-Yum Foods: Instructions for Employer

You are the CEO of Yum-Yum Foods and with you is one of your production managers.

The business is currently repositioning itself. Up until five years ago you primarily produced frozen deserts for one of the big supermarket chains. Now you supply frozen non-meat ingredients (relishes, sauces, mixed vegetables) to all of the outlets of a major fast food chain in Western Canada. Recently you won the contract to supply Washington, Oregon and California, with the possibilities of expanding even further.

To get the new business you had to refurbish the premises and replace much of the equipment. You had to release a lot of the part-time staff, which had been the basis of your established work force. With your new business you needed a more stable full-time workforce, able to operate to the higher standards required by this new market. You now employ nearly 200 people on a full-time basis.

Issue 1: You want to ensure that all of your production workers are up to date in food safety and hygiene. You have provided a lot of training that has cost you a great deal but you would like everyone to get a proper health and safety certificate—which you understand the local college offers. This is particularly important as you move your operation south of the border. The Americans seem obsessed with certificates and credentials.

Background to the issue: You reemployed those who were interested in full-time work (mostly women) and recruited a substantial number with experience working in health services. They were used to working under conditions where good (medical) hygiene was essential. You also recruited some laboratory staff with the same background.

Issue 2: You want to establish cross-functional teams in production. You have read about reengineering and think that the move to a cross-functional team approach might improve motivation and better prepare people to deal with change in the future. You think the college might be able to provide training in this area—if they can get their act together. They have been slow to respond in the past, but you think you'll give them another try.

Background to the issue: Your fast food customer is talking about you getting ISO 9000*. To improve current productivity and to be able to exploit new market opportunities, you need to be able to change the production lines a lot more quickly. You also want the teams to take more responsibility for quality assurance and monitoring their own productivity.

Issue 3: Although you run a modern factory, your administrative staff are reluctant to make the most of technology. Too much work is still done by hand and you think they need to learn more about the use of technology in the office (particularly in communicating with your new US customer) and they may need help in overcoming some fear of technology itself (which you can really identify with). However, many of the staff have excellent skills already and you don't want to demotivate them in any way.

* ISO 9000 is an award made to organizations with exemplary quality-assurance processes.

Yum-Yum Foods: College Information for Employer

Last week you got a phone call from the local College. You don't know a great deal about the College, but you have been able to gather the following information:

- Your neighbour's child went there after high school when she failed to get into University, but dropped out after the first Christmas and now seems to spend all of the time lazing around at home.
- When you got the fast food contract you had to expand the laboratory quickly to meet the customers' expectations. You phoned the College in April and were told nobody would be available for a job until after the exams in May. When you phoned back a few weeks later you couldn't get the person that you spoke to. Somebody else said he was all tied up with marks committees and anyway he thought all of the students had left.
- Someone in your office said they had been to the College and completed a diploma in Business Administration. He said he liked it, and the staff were nice, but he didn't learn much that was relevant to what he does now. But he is a good worker and keen, so perhaps the college has got something to offer.
- You have read that some local colleges are now giving credit for what people already know and can do—including what they know and can do at work. This concept appeals to you because it means that people won't have to relearn many of the things you have already paid them to learn through your own training program or on the job. However, you don't want to buy credit that has no status. You have heard some scandal about colleges that sell credentials.



Yum-Yum Foods: Hints for Employer

- The most important information is in the issues and associated background. The rest is added only as colour, which might influence your attitude, and the questions you might ask. Feel free to extrapolate beyond what is suggested but after the normal introductions, be very focused on what you want out of the meeting and would like the College to deliver.
- Assume that you don't know a great deal about PLA or understand the details of credit accumulation and transfer. You have a hunch these things might help your employees but you want things spelled out for you by the College team. While you know things can't be developed overnight, you do expect your suppliers to be able to meet your needs within a month and are hopeful that the group coming to see you will be responsive to your needs.
- Listen carefully to what the college team has to say; don't be afraid to ask questions if people are vague or use jargon. Equally, however, let them know when you think something is a good idea or especially clear.



H4c

Community Hospital: Instructions for College Staff

You have recently been contacted by a regional hospital to help its health-care workers to earn professional credentials.

You know the hospital has come under a lot of fire lately, particularly since some mistakes were made in two cases involving children. The hospital itself serves a diverse client group and you know it is always struggling to find qualified people who can speak more than one language.

The person who phoned you said she was hoping your institution would be able to help solve a number of education and training issues that were highly sensitive.

The college itself offers many different types of health-related certificates, for example in Resident Care, Home Support and Practical Nursing. These programs are time-based, and linked to months of study. The faculty have reluctantly—very reluctantly—begun to explore PLA. Some opportunities exist for people to get credit, usually through challenge exams, but things move slowly at your institution. The college recently accepted money from the Ministry to develop assessment by portfolio and a range of assessment support services to individuals. You believe that actually delivering services to the hospital workers could give your PLA program just the success it needs.

You prepare for the meeting by developing a set of learning and assessment methods that could be used by the hospital and its employees. In addition to the challenge test option, you have included assessment by portfolio and work-based assessment. You also think about the advising services, fees and support that could actually be offered. By the time you go to the meeting with the hospital director and personnel officer, you feel reasonably confident that you will be able to offer PLA services to at least some of the health-care workers.

At the meeting you will need to:

- Get as much information as possible about the nature of the employees the hospital wants to retrain or help earn credentials
- Learn something about their working hours and the amount of support the hospital managers are prepared to offer
- Respond to questions clearly and concisely, recognising that the hospital is in a very difficult position
- Assume that they do not understand about the use of PLA and flexible learning and assessment services

H5



Community Hospital: Instructions for Employer

You are the manager of a large hospital that has seen tremendous growth over the past several years. The community in which you operate has continued to expand. A large proportion of your patients represent the emerging immigrant population. Most do not speak English as their first language. This has presented significant problems for you and your staff.

Over the last year you have worked hard to recruit people who are bilingual with the necessary care skills and knowledge. You have had many applicants who have certificates from their home nations; however, you do not know what those certificates actually represent. In fact, you do not really know what skills and knowledge the applicants really possess.

Recently a major problem arose that attracted a lot of media attention. Two children were sent home before they were fully recovered and had to be readmitted after a lot of confusion. You know the staff is working under tremendous pressure and in the current climate mistakes become almost inevitable.

You had a study in staff morale carried out by an external consulting firm and the results confirmed what you suspected:

- Morale is very low
- The staff feel overworked and underpaid
- They feel there are no career opportunities
- They rated the available training opportunities as low, very low indeed

You have recently hired a new personnel manager who seems to have a lot of good ideas. One of his thoughts was to use the local college to help people get updated and earn certificates. He had read about something called prior learning assessment, which enabled people to get credit for what they know and can do. If only you did know what people knew and could do! According to the article, individuals can earn credits towards their certificates while still working. This sounds pretty good to you because you can't afford to have people away from work to learn.

You are going into this meeting to see what the college really can offer. You hope it is simple and fast. You are under so much pressure, you can't wait for long-winded answers; nor can you afford to pay a lot of money. Given your high level of turnover, you don't want to invest in people's training and development only to have them leave.



H6a

Community Hospital: Hints for Employer

- Use the basic information in the case study to get you started. Feel free to elaborate or change the scenario as suits your group's knowledge and background.
- Ask questions whenever you think the college staff are unclear in what they are describing or use jargon. However, also let them know when you think they have good suggestions.
- By the end of the role-play (if it seems appropriate), urge them to put together a proposal to provide services for 75 to 100 staff. Tell them you want to know the cost, timelines and exactly what you and your employees will get for the money.

H6b



National Bank: Instructions for College Staff

As part of your College's drive to expand, you recently gave a presentation to the local Chamber of Commerce describing the services the College could offer to the business community. Afterwards a middle manager from the local branch of one of the national banks approached you. He suggested that the branch CEO would be interested in what you have to offer and said he would contact you to set up a meeting. True to his word, this has happened. Today you are making your first visit with other members of the College team.

Talking with colleagues and friends this is what you have learned about the bank: .

- Employs, you think, about 80 people
- Encourages staff to take the banking examinations to help in their career progression
- Has, on occasion, recruited from the Business School's Diploma in Business Administration program, but people have not stayed for long

You have also heard that the bank may have a small training department of its own and that it recruits degree-holding graduates for its management-training program. Along with all banks, it has to compete for more business. (A recent series of TV advertisements by a particular credit union suggested that the banks were not as responsive to customer needs and expectations.) However, a recent newspaper article also reported that the bank is making excessive profits.

No one at the College seems to know why the bank might be interested in your particular programs. However, when you spoke briefly to the CEO on the phone, he said he had some difficult challenges. If he understood correctly what his middle manager had told him, getting credit towards a credential for on-the-job training might be just what he needed, but it all sounded very complex.

Impressions on arrival at the bank:

- You arrive at a busy time. There are long lines of people waiting to be served.
- While the bank was light and cheerful, the service representatives looked harassed and downright unhappy. The public didn't look any happier.
- When you were finally escorted to the CEO's office, you noted a lot of other occupied offices. You hadn't realised how many people there were working behind the scenes. Perhaps the estimates you were given regarding staff size were not correct.

You are escorted into the CEO's office and the meeting begins.

H7a



National Bank: Hints for College Staff

- Try to get the CEO to be as clear as possible about his needs.
- Be prepared to describe PLA and all your support services. You may want to jot a few things down on paper to present as a mock brochure.
- Try to discuss things using as little jargon as possible.
- Make sure the CEO understand things as you move along.

H7b



National Bank: Instructions for Employer

You are the CEO of a branch of a national bank in an urban setting. You employ over 100 people, 30 of whom are part-time. You have only recently joined the branch. Previously you were in a much smaller branch based in a rural location. The senior supervisor of the bank who is with you has been at the branch for over 20 years and does not always share your views about change and what's needed.

The bank is facing major challenges. The credit unions are starting to erode some of your customer base; while the public thinks you are making massive profits. Your return on investment and profits are running considerably below some of your competitors. The pension funds are increasingly being invested in overseas markets. If the bank doesn't get its act together, the pressure on the government to allow foreign banks to operate in Canada will become irresistible.

Issue 1: You want your service representatives to recognise that they need to learn new things all the time. You need to help them commit to ongoing learning plans and take responsibility for much of their own learning.

Background to the Issue: The banking world is changing rapidly. New products, legislation, technology and new ways of doing things are constantly being introduced. The difficulty is that too many staff think the only things that are important are the banking examinations that test knowledge, not their ability to work with the customers.

As the new CEO you want to better motivate staff. You think helping them get new credentials may be one way to do it. Also you would like to promote more people from within the bank, rather than get graduates who don't always know very much about banking. Your senior supervisor is not so sure that promoting from within gives proper status to management positions.



National Bank: Instructions for Employer (cont.)

Issue 2: As CEO you want to create a learning environment in the bank; but your senior supervisor thinks you have more important things to worry about.

Background to the issue: Recently you read a book on the “learning organisation.” One of the statements you read made a big impression on you: “The only unique asset an organisation has is its employees. If it doesn’t invest in them, it is doomed.” You heard something similar at a head-office conference just when the Director of Human Resources was announcing that all trainer posts in the branches were to be cut to save money. In the future all training would have to be done by managers or supervisors or in local colleges or universities.

Recently one of your middle managers attended a meeting at the local Chamber of Commerce on your behalf. She reported that a process called “prior learning assessment” involved individuals recording all that they learned in some sort of portfolio. You think this might be a useful idea to explore.

What you really need is people to do a better job, smile more, and enjoy coming to work! Even your senior manager agrees that morale is very low.

You have invited the College representatives in to explore how they might be able to help you address these complex issues. You invited the senior supervisor to join you because although she is a sceptic about some of your ideas, she agrees something urgently needs to be done to improve morale and people’s effectiveness.

Hints

- The most important information in the scenario is the issues. Please feel free to change some of the details in the case study as seems appropriate. But after the normal introductions with the College staff, be very focused on what you want out of the meeting.
- Assume that you know only what your middle manager has told you about the College and PLA. If the College representatives say things that are not clear or smack of jargon, ask for clarification. However, if they say things that make sense, let them know you understand and are pleased.
- By the end of the meeting, ask them to put a proposal together for you, spelling out the services, costs and timelines.



Purpose

To help participants to work more effectively with employers to address a range of human-resource development and business needs.

T1



Introducing PLA to Employers

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Clarify the needs and priorities of employers
- ✓ Describe the PLA services that could meet the needs of employers
- ✓ Prepare a draft action plan for cooperative action



What Employers Want

- Clear process statements
- Costs and time requirements
- Expected outcomes
- Roles and responsibilities of college and company staff
- Clear communication
- Realistic and accurate timelines
- Success criteria
- One contact person

T3



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