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Title: THE E-LEARNING REVOLUTION

Author(s): Patricia A. Galagan . Source: Training & Development.

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Article Preview:

Training's fundamentalists face a new world. "Let me lay my cards on the table face up," says Peter Drucker, venerable author, consultant, and professor of management, when asked if e-learning is changing the training profession. "I am the author of several online learning tools." That piece of news says it all. Drucker, born well before World War I, recently worked with Corpedia Training Technologies to offer some of his management courses online. That move hastened his appreciation of two of e-learning's most compelling features: accessibility and scalability. Drucker, now 91 and still one of the most sought-after teachers of our time, knows he can reach only so many people through the classroom. Drucker agrees, cautioning that "as things are going, the trainer will be left high and dry. There will, of course, still be training as we have traditionally understood it--training in skills. But it is not a growth sector. The growth sector is learning, especially concept learning." Drucker maintains that his own foray into the e-learning world is based on the assumption that the trainer is obsolete. "The trainer is built into the teaching (or learning) device." Goodbye classes, goodbye books. Goodbye teachers' dirty looks. That old song lyric by the 1970s group Alice

Cooper could be the revolution's anthem. Goodbye and good riddance to the classroom and its artifacts--the test, the lecture, and the semester system, says Roger C. Schank, a vocal critic of traditional teaching methods. Schank is director of the Institute for Learning Sciences at Northwestern University and founder of Cognitive Arts, a company that pursues the commercial use of software-based teaching. He's also the author of Coloring Outside the Lines: How to Raise a Smarter Kid by Breaking All the Rules. "Classrooms couldn't possibly work today," says Schank. "Centuries ago, they made sense: one literate person reading to the illiterate from what might have been the town's only book." But technology and times have changed. The ideal of one-on-one instruction is not practical in today's classrooms. "A computer can give you more one-on-one interaction than a human can when that human has 30 other humans to deal with," he says. "In a classroom, people who are curious, inquisitive, and questioning take up too much time." The best things that technology has given training, says Schank, are "the possibility of one-on-one for every learner, the ability to simulate, and the chance to try stuff out and fail in private without the fear of ridicule from other students." Schank believes that the strongest impetus for effective learning comes not from schools but from business organizations. "It doesn't matter to the school if you learn the Pythagorean Theorem, but it really does matter to your company that you learn to do your job," he says. It is corporate learning programs, many made possible on a large scale by e-learning, that are finding new ways to put human interaction into computer-based programs. "Corporate trainers better figure out how to be part of that," warns Schank. "The ones who are...

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