

# INCREASING LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT'S IMPACT THROUGH ACCREDITATION



How to drive-up training quality,  
employee satisfaction, and ROI

William J. Rothwell | Sandra L. Williams | Aileen G. Zaballero



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palgrave  
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-030-14003-8      ISBN 978-3-030-14004-5 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14004-5>

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Cover design by Fatima Jamadar

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

William J. Rothwell *dedicates this book to his wife, **Marcelina V. Rothwell.***  
*She is the wind beneath his wings.*

Sandra L. Williams *dedicates this book in memory of her father,  
**Robert C. Williams***—always a supporter of learning & development*  
*and a strong proponent for continued education.**

Aileen G. Zaballero *dedicates this book to her mother, **Aleli,***  
*and in loving memory of her father, **Alfredo,** for their continuous*  
*support and encouragement.*

# Foreword

I first met Dr. William J. Rothwell in 2010 when I attended the American Society for Training and Development (now the Association for Talent Development) International Conference and Exposition in Chicago. Dr. Rothwell was there as a speaker and I as an attendee. I made it a point to be in the front row of his session. I wanted the chance to meet one of the most significant people to have such a tremendous impact on my career through his writing, although he did not know it or me. Through his written wisdom and guidance, I was able to successfully secure the accreditation of a comprehensive corporate training program in one try.

When I became Manager of Learning & Organization Development at Rotary International in 2007, I committed to the organization's CEO that I would get Rotary's professional development program accredited to issue Continuing Education Units (CEU). That promise ultimately led me to the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET), the successor organization to the US Department of Education task force that initially developed the CEU. Upon review of IACET's accreditation standard, it became clear that accreditation was going to require some work to thoroughly demonstrate and ensure that the processes for which Rotary conducted needs assessments, designed and developed curriculum, secured highly qualified instructors, delivered instruction, and measured and evaluated results—and the environmental conditions in which all of that occurred—were sound and consistent with best practices.

In preparation for accreditation, I worked with our learning team to establish a number of policies and procedures to govern our learning function. To do so, we consulted with a plethora of resources, including several

textbooks that we had used in our graduate programs in learning and development, many of which were authored by Dr. Rothwell. That is how I came to know of him. Most of what I know about learning and development, I learned through his work.

In 2009, a year before my meeting Dr. Rothwell, Rotary's Learning & Organization Development function was fully accredited by IACET, and we have been reaccredited twice since. That remains one of my proudest professional accomplishments.

That accomplishment took a lot of work and a lot of hours of combing through numerous books. This book would have been a godsend for us had it been published back then. It is an excellent compilation of the material we had to seek out separately and is a comprehensive resource that is sure to prove helpful for any learning function seeking accreditation.

Dr. Rothwell, Dr. Sandra Williams (with whom I have the great pleasure of teaching alongside in the Human Resource Development graduate program at Northeastern Illinois University), and Dr. Aileen "Leen" Zaballero did an outstanding job assembling the information needed to not only secure accreditation but also run a world-class learning function. While this book is intended to assist those desiring to seek and prepare for accreditation, I highly recommend it to anyone who is responsible for managing the learning function.

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# Preface

A few years ago, the authors of this book worked together to conduct research on the status of instructional design in organizations. Many organizations of different kinds and from different locations participated. As the authors carried out the study, they realized that employers were looking for a way to make organization-sponsored training and continuing education more appealing to workers. One way to do that is to pursue accreditation, which may qualify some training initiatives for college credit, as well as ensure that the learning meets the highest standards of quality.

## **Why Will This Book Be Helpful to You?**

When organizational leaders begin to think about pursuing accreditation for their training and continuing education efforts, they inevitably think of many questions that must be addressed early in the process. This book seeks to answer as many of those questions as possible.

## **What Do We Mean by Training, Learning & Development (L&D), or Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP)?**

Training, learning & development (L&D), or workplace learning are terms that are often interchanged, but it is important to understand the distinctions between training, human resource development (HRD), and

workplace learning and performance (WLP). Training and development is rooted in the origins of education. However, the field of adult education emerged from the recognition that the learning needs of adults are different from children in that adults are influenced and motivated by their immediate needs and interests. Furthermore, the drive to learn is focused on actual problems that need to be solved (Knowles 1990; Merriam et al. 2007). “Learning is embedded in everything workers do to achieve results on their jobs ... investigating problems, finding solutions, serving customers, and performing work on a daily basis” (see p. 2 in Rothwell 2008). Rothwell further differentiated training to be “something done to others” where knowledge and skills are imposed on them. Training is an episodic “push” strategy aimed at improving job performance and increasing production with a “problem-centered” approach. Learning on the other hand is “something that individuals do on their own” where knowledge and skills are drawn from others. Learning is a “pull” strategy aimed at improving the learner holistically with a “person-centered” approach (see p. 3 in Rothwell 2008). The notion of development is future focused and emphasizes growth opportunities and potential performance. Career development, human resource development (HRD), and organization development emerged to improve individuals, groups, and organizations. Instructional system design (ISD) models evolved to adapt the changing working conditions. “Although training remains the word that most people in the field identify with, the term workplace learning and performance reflects the ways that WLP professionals are trying to contribute more to their organizations by encompassing technology, applying business acumen, demonstrating bottom-line value, and managing talent in organizations” (see p. 31 in Estep 2008).

## What We Mean by Terms Used in This Book

The learning and training field uses many different terms, such as ‘continuing education of employees’, and those terms tend to differ depending upon the background and focus of authors about training. In this text, we use terms most frequently encountered in today’s employee education climate, referring to the education of adults within organization settings as *Learning and Development*, rather than *Training*. We also take a practical approach to the terms used in order to focus primarily upon topics of interest to a manager, and where a manager has influence. Clearly, a learning and development manager will have influence over the training activities and creative pursuits within the learning and development department. A line manager, or operations

manager, will have influence over the activities of persons on the job and the day-to-day performance of the work that needs to be accomplished for the organization. An executive leader will have influence over the direction of training, the philosophy of employee education held by the organization, and the emphasis placed by the organization on the continuous development of its employees. All learning and development (or training) that occurs is intended to positively influence the actions of workers—those doing the work of the organization—across many levels and throughout the enterprise.

Below, we define certain concepts that apply across jobs and levels of education, and we describe the expectations associated with key training terms as used in this book.

- **Client Outcome:** the resulting impact of an internal change upon the external client experience. The client outcome tends toward greater satisfaction, increased loyalty, fewer returned purchases, etc. These types of client outcomes are increasingly considered true measures of business results and are sometime distinguished from “performance outcomes.” Client outcomes differ markedly from training outcomes or training results.
- **Goal:** a measurable expected change, usually carrying a time deadline for achievement. For most organizations, a goal sets a target level for a new result.
- **Instructional Objective:** a planned change in worker/learner behavior at the end of a training session, or upon completion of a training course. The instructional objective will focus upon a change in knowledge, skill or attitude (or all three), and it will be specific in describing the change expected (per individual) at the end of training. The worker/learner behavior change takes place as a result of learning within the training session(s) and is not a result of experience or practice on the job.
- **Learners:** adult individuals actively engaged in personal knowledge, skill, or attitude improvement. Learners in this text generally refer to employees or workers within the organization.
- **Learning and Development Department:** the structured unit within an organization charged with improving worker performance and increasing the organization’s talent effectiveness.
- **Learning and Development:** determining and meeting the needs of adult workers within an organization to enhance employee performance, and actively pursuing the development of talent throughout the organization to achieve strategic goals.
- **Performance Objective:** a planned change in worker behavior when he/she returns to the job and performs work in a different manner. This

performance is a result of the person doing the job differently after experiencing training. The individual worker's (or trainee's) ability to actually apply what was learned in training to the job is not entirely due to the training experienced. Line managers have great influence upon a person's ability to achieve performance objectives because line managers have control over the environment of the workplace, the resources available to the worker, and the structure of the work unit. Clear performance objectives can lead to improved work output, but only if the expected new worker performance is made clear to the individual and supported by positive influence from the manager.

- **Performance Outcome or Business Outcome:** the business result of work being conducted differently. This is a measured change in overall productivity of a group of workers, or of a business unit. The performance outcome or business outcome is usually the result of many people doing their jobs more effectively or efficiently after experiencing training. For example, overall yield may be increased, output volumes may be increased, or mistakes may be reduced across the business unit's output.

At the onset of a pursuit of accreditation, or an investigation of the accreditation process, the above terms need first to be clearly defined and described by your learning and development organization. You must be able to distinguish terms used at each step of the learning and development process in order to assure your organization's clarity of purpose, achieve organizational objectives, and ensure effective communication.

## What Is Meant by Accreditation in This Book?

There is a long-term trend globally for individuals to pursue certification and for organizations to pursue accreditation. *Certification* means that individuals meet research-based standards that are aligned with competence. *Accreditation* means that the learning and development program meets research-based standards, which is aligned with quality.

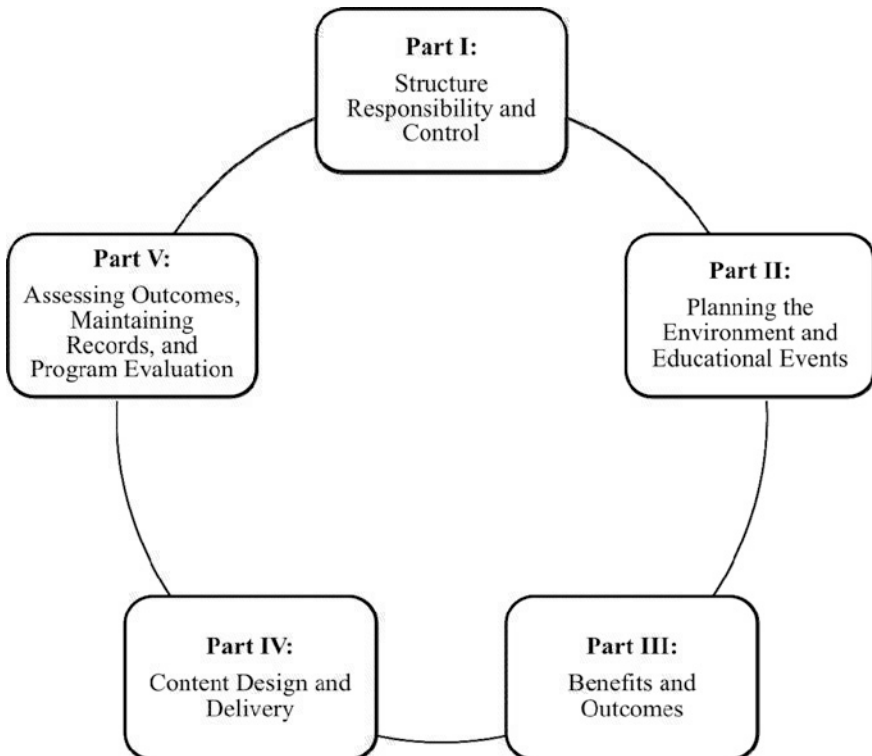
## Why We Wrote This Book

By writing this book, we wish to inspire people to pursue greater professionalization within the learning and development field. Just as medical doctors go through intensive training to ensure they are qualified and then pursue

rigorous licensure requirements, hospitals must also meet rigorous quality standards to ensure they provide the environment for physicians to apply their skills. We believe that learning and development deserves well-qualified practitioners who manage accredited training programs that are aligned with rigorous quality standards.

We also hope this book will serve as a catalyst for the crucial conversations within organizations and between organizations about accrediting learning programs. Do learning programs really meet rigorous standards of quality as identified by best practices from well-researched sources? Do organizations' learning programs match up to learning best practices? We urge you to address these and related questions as you read this book.

## How Is This Book Organized?



Book Organizer

The **Preface** explains what prompted the authors to write this book and offers a short explanation of terms. Chapter 1, **Introduction**, provides the rationale for accreditation. The value proposition from practitioners and educators is shared, with a strong emphasis for building a business case for learning and development programs to become accredited. Chapter 1 Supplement includes **The Advance Organizer**, intended to help managers zero-in on learning and development topics so that it is possible to identify only those chapters of primary interest to busy readers.

**Part I: Structure, Responsibility, and Control** includes the following chapters. Chapter 2 is entitled **Align Learning and Development with Organization Mission and Values**. It describes how to link learning to the essential business needs of a sponsoring organization. Chapter 3 is **Structure for Accountability**. It examines how an organization should structure a learning and development department to meet business needs. Chapter 4 is entitled **Establish the Learning Environment**. It promotes unique perspectives needed for managing the learning and development function within different organizational settings.

**Part II: Planning the Environment and Educational Events** includes the following chapters. Chapter 5 is called **Plan for Quality and Strategic Learning**. It explains the Learning Blueprint that links learning and development's products to the organization's core knowledge needs. Chapter 6 is entitled **Is Training the Answer? Assessing Learning Needs**. It describes how to assess the need for learning and development and communicate that need to leaders, thus helping to ensure that the training produced meets organizational strategic goals.

**Part III: Benefits and Outcomes** includes three chapters. Chapter 7 examines the **Intended Learning Outcomes** of learning and development, distinguishing training program goals and performance objectives. Chapter 8 is **Who Should Be Involved in Instruction?** which addresses different roles and skills of persons involved in delivering learning and development effectively. Chapter 9 encourages managers to **Conduct Learning Events Professionally** and describes professional integrity, competence, and certifications for learning and development staff.

**Part IV: Content Design and Delivery** includes two chapters. Chapter 10 looks at **Deciding What to Include** in learning products, or how to write instructional objectives and design learning sessions. Chapter 11 reviews **Methods to Achieve Consistency** in learning and development products.

**Part V: Assessing Outcomes, Maintaining Records, and Program Evaluation** includes the following chapters. Chapter 12, called **Learner Feedback and Job Application**, looks at on-the-job application and

examines what employees learn. Chapter 13 reviews learning and development *Program Evaluation and Records*, outlining a process for critical examination of the full learning and development program. And finally, Chapter 14, *Accreditation Sources*, reviews accreditation bodies and sources of accreditation for learning and development programs.

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Chicago, IL, USA  
Atlanta, GA, USA  
2019

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# Acknowledgements

Completion of a book such as this one requires collaboration and the combined efforts of many parties at several stages of the work. At the conceptualization of this book in 2016, Kris Newbauer proved both inspirational and encouraging of the need for an accreditation-focused guide for managers of learning and development programs. The authors thank him for his encouragement, for his support of the book progress throughout 2017 and 2018, and for his contribution in writing the book's foreword.

Appreciation goes to the many people who participated in interviews about learning and development quality and accreditation. These persons came from various backgrounds, professions, and educations. Collectively, they represent several areas of expertise within the field of talent development and accreditation. Their quotes are used throughout the book as the "business case for accreditation." These contributions add a qualitative depth of expression for our reader, enabling readers to understand the significance of accreditation in learning and development efforts from a practical perspective. Interviewed contributors included: Reg Bonfoco; Jessica Burnett; Scott Critchfield; Peter Finn; Dr. Arthur Holder; Dr. Maureen C. Jones; Laureen Kaczmarek; Dr. Karen LaMarsh; Dr. J. Kevin Perry; Clyde Seepersad; Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero; and two anonymous contributors.

We are also sincerely grateful to those who served as reviewers of the manuscript pre-publication: Peter Finn, Mark Hurley, Kris Newbauer, and Joe McClary. Insights provided from these four reviewers helped the book to focus on managers as readers and to offer examples useful to managers of learning and development programs.

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part I Structure Responsibility and Control</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Align Learning and Development with Organization Mission and Values</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Structure for Accountability</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Establish the Learning Environment</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Part II Planning the Environment and Educational Events</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Plan for Quality and Strategic Learning</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Is Training the Answer? Assessing Learning Needs</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Part III Benefits and Outcomes</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>113</b>

<b>xx</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Who Should Be Involved in Instruction?</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Conduct Learning Events Professionally</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Part IV Content Design and Delivery</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>Deciding What to Include</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Methods to Achieve Consistency</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Part V Assessing Outcomes, Maintaining Records, and Program Evaluation</b>		
<b>12</b>	<b>Learner Feedback and Job Application</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Program Evaluation and Records</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Accreditation Sources</b>	<b>237</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>259</b>

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Before arriving at Penn State in 1993, he had 20 years of work experience as a Director of Training, HR and Organization Development in government and in business. He has also worked as a consultant for numerous multinational corporations—including Motorola China, General Motors, Ford, and many others. In 2012, he earned ASTD's prestigious Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning and Performance Award, and in 2013, ASTD honored him by naming him as a Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) Fellow. In 2014, he was given the Asia-Pacific International Personality Brand Laureate Award (see [www.thebrandlaureate.com/awards/ibp\\_bpa.php](http://www.thebrandlaureate.com/awards/ibp_bpa.php)). He was the first US citizen named a Certified Training and Development Professional (CTDP) by the Canadian Society for Training and Development in 2004.

His recent books include *Innovation Leadership* (Routledge, 2018), *Improving Human Performance, 3rd ed.* (Routledge, 2018), *Evaluating Organization Development: How to Ensure and Sustain the Successful Transformation* (CRC Press, 2017), *Marketing Organization Development Consulting: A How-To Guide for OD Consultants* (CRC Press, 2017), *Assessment and Diagnosis for Organization Development: Powerful Tools and Perspectives for the OD practitioner*

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Before moving into academia, Dr. Williams gained practical experience in management and training through 20 years as a Senior Vice President, Managing Director, and Training Manager in the banking and finance industry, holding positions at Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company of Illinois and Bank of America. She also operated her own business within the talent development field as a partner in Sharedecisions, LLC.

Dr. Williams creates and delivers training programs that offer practical tools in leadership, mentoring, and corporate responsibility. Topics include Ethics for Leaders, Trust Building in Higher Education, Trust in the Workplace, Leading with Integrity, and Strategic Responsibility. As a consultant, she designs and facilitates customized training programs for businesses, service organizations, and higher education institutions. She is the creator of several values-based ethics training programs offered to commercial organizations by the Better Business Bureau of Chicago called: Ethics for Business Success. Former clients include Bank of America, True Value Corporation, Deloitte and Touche, the Illinois CPA Society, Integritas Institute, the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics, Northeastern Illinois Foundation, and the Union League Club of Chicago.

Dr. Williams' written work focuses on e-mentoring, trust in the workplace, and case studies in HRD consulting and assessment. She has published over 30 articles and proceedings, written 16 training guides and workbooks for managers, and has made over 60 presentations to executives, administrators, and researchers. Her written work has been published in research journals, management magazines, and practitioner blog sites, including the *Journal of Organizational Excellence*, the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, *Business Horizons Journal*, *Human Resource Development International*, *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, *Corporate Responsibility Officer*, *Human Resource Management Perspectives*, and the *Association for Talent Development* Web site.

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Aileen was part of the R&A research team with Dr. Angela Stopper and led by Dr. William J. Rothwell that explored talent development from a global perspective. Partnered with ATD, 31 industry thought-leaders from around the world were interviewed and 1500 talent development professionals from Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and United States were surveyed. The purpose of this research was to describe the components of talent development that organizations can use to build their own individualized talent development structures. An outcome of the research is [ATD's Talent Development Framework](#). This framework is a guide that allows organizations to rearrange, remove, and add functions to fit their needs.

Aileen was also part of the Penn State research team that developed a competency model and career map for the Advanced Commercial Building Workforce, utilizing the US Department of Labor's competency model framework and aligning it with the Department of Energy's Better Buildings Workforce Guidelines. The goal of this project was to produce an easy-to-understand representation of specified job titles and its associated credentials that will support targeted and effective investments in education and training in response to the demand for a skilled and qualified workforce. The outcome of this research is the [Energy: Advanced Commercial Buildings Competency Model](#) published on the US DOL's Competency Model Clearinghouse.

Aileen's additional works include training the DACUM process for facilitators at the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute; examining the competencies and challenges of instructional designers; and supporting Curacao's Ministry of Education to shift to a competency-based education. Aileen co-authored a book chapter titled, *The Participation of Women as Leaders in South and Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis in India, Malaysia, and Philippines* (2015, Information Age Publishing,

Inc.); co-edited and co-authored *Optimizing Talent in the Federal Workforce* (2014, Management Concepts); and co-authored a chapter in *Organization Development Fundamentals: Managing Strategic Change* (2014, ASTD Press); authored and co-authored chapters in *Performance Consulting—Applying Performance Improvement* (2013, John Wiley & Sons); and co-edited *The Encyclopedia of Human Resource Management Volume 2: HR Forms & Job Aids* (2012, John Wiley & Sons). She can be reached at [agz@rothwellandasociates.com](mailto:agz@rothwellandasociates.com) or 702-296-7556. She is at 19 Colonnade Way Ste 124 State College, PA 16803.

# List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	The Steps to Writing a Mission and Value Statement	27
Fig. 2.2	Supplement—The Steps to Writing a Mission and Value Statement	30
Fig. 5.1	Deming’s Wheel (PDSA cycle) (Adapted from W. Edwards Deming, [1993])	73
Fig. 5.2	The Learning Blueprint	76
Fig. 7.1	Bloom’s taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Adapted from Brown and Green [2016]; Morrison et al. [2012])	120
Fig. 7.2	Psychomotor domain levels (Adapted from Dave [1975])	121
Fig. 7.3	Affective domain levels (Adopted from Krathwohl et al. [1964])	123
Fig. 10.1	Action verbs for cognitive domain levels (Adapted from Brown and Green [2016]; Morrison et al. [2012])	178
Fig. 10.2	Action verbs for psychomotor domain levels (Adapted from Dave [1975])	179
Fig. 10.3	Action verbs for affective domain levels (Adapted from Krathwohl et al. [1964])	180
Fig. 11.1	Available methods per action verbs in objectives (cognitive domain) (Adapted from Brown and Green [2016]; Morrison et al. [2012])	189
Fig. 14.1	Pre-steps to achieve accreditation	238
Fig. 14.2	Accreditation process	248

# List of Tables

Table 1.1	Value of accreditation—quotes from practitioners and educators	3
Table 3.1	Formula to calculate CEU	47
Table 6.1	Root cause examples and sample solutions	100
Table 9.1	Learning and Development (L&D) Credentials	155
Table 9.2	Learning and Development (L&D) Competencies	159
Table 10.1	Sample psychomotor action verbs	180
Table 11.1	Participant activities for different domains	190
Table 11.2	Sample course planner	196
Table 13.1	Evaluation report structure	229
Table 14.1	Accrediting Bodies	240
Table 14.2	Accreditation standards for learning and development	243
Table 14.3	Project plan for accreditation (Template)	245
Table 14.4	Recommendation and tips for accreditation: Quotes from practitioners and educators	250



# 1

## Introduction

The demographic changes in today's workforce are forcing organizations to focus on knowledge transfer, rather than training for job performance. Not only is the knowledge of matured workers leaving the workplace rapidly, but newer and younger workers are also demanding immediate access to information. Products and services are sold electronically, installed technologically, and serviced virtually—with all the work conducted by multiple generations dispersed around the world. The global nature of customer access is increasing the need for cross-cultural and cross-functional skills within organizations. The competitive business environment today can be defined as a digital economy that is driven by a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. “In response to disruption, organizations are increasingly pioneering new models, frameworks, methods, structures and processes to engage with the customer” (see pp. 1–2 in Cousins 2018), which creates a need to build a “learning agile and future ready-workplace” (see p. 20 in Raghuramapatruni and Kosuri 2017).

Organizations are responding with learning interventions which are worker-driven, where employees are encouraged to create a portfolio of skills. Because individuals now have many different jobs and many different employers, organizations are no longer promising lifelong employment security, but are promoting lifelong learning. Workers of all generations are seeking rapid information and portable skills, not long-term experiences or organizational support. This shift in the relationship between the employer and the worker “emphasizes the need for workers to build

and document their skills and special knowledge as a basis for continued employability” (see p. 69 in Shaffer and Zalewski 2011).

All of these factors put considerable pressure on employee learning and development (L&D). Programs must be accurate, content sustainable, and technologically flexible. Additionally, the training programs must take responsibility to meet both current worker and strategic organizational expectations while delivering practical, adaptable, and transferable learning outcomes that update skills and specialized knowledge.

Within this melee of expectations, how can a L&D program assure its relevance to a business, institution, government, or professional association? How can it meet strategic objectives? How can training management assure quality both in knowledge transfer and in content relevancy? What process or authority can guarantee the quality, financial return, and customer service benefits?

## 1.1 Rationale for Accreditation

One answer lies in accreditation. Accreditation is a process of independent attestation to the adherence of standards that meet the requirements of a profession. Accreditation demonstrates “an effective form of professional control that can have a positive impact on values and organizational culture” (Pomey 2002; Pomey et al. 2004; see p. 147 in Segouin 1998 as cited by Paccioni et al. 2008). Accreditation is a planning and control process that ensures quality, professional competence, and accountability.

Unfortunately, adult education—which extends past formal schooling—has been haphazard in its design and implementation. Furthermore, workplace training has lacked rigor in its standards of program planning, production, and assessment. While organizations worldwide spend billions of dollars on workforce education, there remain few measures of quality consistency within the training world. However, accreditation can ensure quality control. In addition to quality, accreditation is valuable for several reasons, as summarized in Table 1.1.

Accreditation is a needed element within the L&D profession. There is a vast array of offerings and training products in the marketplace, many of which are indistinguishable from a quality standpoint. Accreditation helps to make that quality distinction possible. Completing the accreditation process is not mandatory for L&D departments. However, accreditation does present a strong value proposition. Building a business case for accreditation informs and educates

**Table 1.1** Value of accreditation—quotes from practitioners and educators

Key value	Quote	Practitioner/educator	Organization/ position
Accountability, Continuous improve- ment, Structure, Efficiencies, Reflective process	<i>Accreditation provides accountability for our programs. Being vetted by another organization in a very rigorous way to confirm we met the standards was really a huge value for us. It added value to our membership and with our corporate partners and university partners, which added an external value. From a more intrinsic value, it forced us to be much more consistent in the way we were developing programs and required a certain amount of uniformity. It created a lot of efficiencies and a continuous improvement structure that included a process of reflection. It fits into our overall strategic plan of being the gold standard in terms of leadership programs, diversity and inclusion programs for our engineers.</i>	<b>Peter Finn</b>	Society of Women Engineers (SWE) Deputy Executive Director and Chief Learning Officer
Accountability	<i>Among my colleagues, within my inner circle at (Engineering Firm) we all pretty much agreed that having a third party review our program ensures accountability, and is very valuable.</i>	Anonymous	Corporate Learning and Development/ CEU Program Lead
Accountability	<i>The fundamental value of accreditation means that students have a reason to trust you. They know you've got a stamp of approval. It also provides external accountability. When you have an accreditation review, you've got to explain why you're doing it that way. You've got to be prepared to justify it.</i>	<b>Dr. Arthur Holder</b>	Graduate Theological Union Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

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Key value	Quote	Practitioner/educator	Organization/ position
Credibility	<i>Accreditation provides credibility in the marketplace and internally. Once we achieved our accreditation, we had a leg up in the market place among our competitors and certainly had a more appealing story to tell our customers or prospective customers. It also elevated our credibility internally with our leadership in that we're now recognized by a major accrediting body.</i>	<b>Dr. J. Kevin Perry</b>	Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) International Director, Professional Development
Competitive advantage	<i>Having your organization accredited by international organization truly does give that organization a competitive advantage when it comes to training. Employees know that when they are going to be learning something that is beneficial and will help them in their careers. What I find is a lot of organizations who don't go through the accreditation process often just throw things together, and their programs often have no real impact.</i>	<b>Reg Bonfoco</b>	Canadian Financial Securities Company Continuing Education Specialist
CEU designation	<i>Having the CEU designations sets you apart from those that could just be obtained online. The value of continuing education is so critical and is essential to stay current on how your industry or segment has changed.</i>	<b>Scott A. Critchfield, CFP</b>	Coach Learning Professional

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Key value	Quote	Practitioner/educator	Organization/ position
CEU designation, Legitimacy	<i>A course accredited by a legitimate organization only provides, what I like to refer to as, 'teeth to the program' that is being delivered. Having something accredited through an organization is really to promote the fact that the programs that are developed and delivered do meet the international standard for learning. So, what that does is it actually helps in promoting the course that people are going to be taking and also lets them know that it has met very rigorous standards in order to qualify for the CEU.</i>	<b>Reg Bonfoco</b>	Canadian Financial Securities Company Continuing Education Specialist
Framework/ guideline	<i>Accreditation was helpful because it provided a framework as we moved forward to a comprehensive distance education and provided a guideline for developing learning communities. I tend to go back to the standard sometimes when I'm looking for language around (digital learning) ... and the accreditation standards certainly provides the language to use.</i>	<b>Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero</b>	Graduate Theological Union Director of Digital Learning
Guidelines/ roadmap	<i>Accreditation provided a set of rules by which we operate our program. It removed all of the debate of 'maybe we should do this!' 'maybe we should do it that way'. It allowed us to say or refer to the standard, and the standard is the roadmap ... the guiding light that makes it much clearer to the team about how to conduct the program.</i>	<b>Dr. J. Kevin Perry</b>	Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) International Director, Professional Development

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