Editorial

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Our Viewpoint for this issue is from Marianne Tracy (pp. 3-6) who shares some aspects of her PhD research into reflection. You know, that aspect of learning that some of us don't practice much, some of us engage in from time to time, some of us practice but are unaware of how we practice and a few of us ensure is a conscious, strategically placed part of our learning routines. Whichever group you would place yourself into, the research in this article points to the need for more and better quality reflection in our organizations.

Reflecting with others often forms an important activity within "communities of practice" (COPs). Maria Antonietta Impedovo and Amelia Manuti invite us to see our organizations as constellations of COPs where the boundaries between these communities can act as "permeable membranes", allowing learning to pass both ways. They identify the positive role COPs can play, particularly in times of significant organizational upheaval, by encouraging communication across the boundaries within and outside an organization (pp. 7-10).

Crossing those external boundaries is increasingly common through the creation of "network alliances". The complexity of ensuring that these relationships prove fruitful for all parties is increasing [. . .] and the rate at which they currently fail is too high (up to 60 per cent according to research cited in the article). Mark Thomas provides an easy to remember framework (ABCD) that might help guide those engaged in this work and offers a successful example of one alliance with 27 members in the airline industry (pp. 11-14).

Mike Greatwood invites us to consider how to better engage the rising number of "millenials" entering the workforce (pp. 15-17). His simple but powerful message, through the work of Matthew Kelly, is that if we don't engage fully with them and how their work fits into their whole lives, they won't be fully engaged in the roles we wish them to perform and/or may vote with their feet.

Sticking with the younger generation, Debora Jeske and Carolyn Axtell touch on a relatively new phenomenon, that of e-internships, providing practical advice on how to make them work (pp. 18-21). The interns they interviewed were located in five different countries and the article points to the opportunity for increasing diversity, particularly for SMEs. Their four final recommendations are particularly helpful.

"Making older workers happy to carry on" takes us to the opposite end of the working-age spectrum (pp. 22-24). It sets out the results of a study into what makes older workers (aged 50+ based in The Netherlands) feel satisfied and continue to do well in their careers. Some of the conclusions may surprise you.

In "Small talk's big role", we are offered a succinct summary of how conversation between colleagues drives informal learning with five types being identified: informational, operational, conceptual, reflective and social (pp. 25-27). However, in my view, the critical issue is raised in the final paragraph "How people engage with each other will determine the nature and depth of discussion". Providing the answer to this latter conundrum is where we prove our value as L&D professionals, as effective enablers of the "70" in the 70:20:10 model.

"Taking the outsider route to learning" offers one such answer, as it details the benefits gained from peer coaching within one particular "career community" program (pp. 28-30). Participants from diverse organizations, but at a similar level of responsibility, reported positive impacts on their performance and career.

We loop back around to find reflection cropping up again in "How knowledge workers become effective learners" (pp. 31-33) where an online survey in the financial sector found some interesting links between the "workplace learning context" and the "workplace learning activity" undertaken.

Finally, before you pass your copy of the journal over to a colleague, take a few moments to check out Steve Flynn's book review of "Leading Teams: 10 challenges, 10 solutions" (pp. 34-36).