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# “Use technology to face reality”

*With seven simple questions regarding the concepts of employee learning*

DR. ROLF ZAJONC | MANAGING DIRECTOR

When companies are confronted by the challenges associated with an increasingly aging society, coupled with a world that is going digital, there can be only one solution: putting in place optimal conditions for lifelong learning. People find it difficult to imagine the scale of such exponential change and the buzzword 'VUCA' (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) fails to do justice to the magnitude of the transformation that awaits us. Armed with a three-pronged portfolio aimed at innovative employee learning, **tts** supports companies in handling the shift to digitalization.

How can one even begin to comprehend the concept of exponential growth? With difficulty, because our brain is wired linearly, according to **tts** Managing Director Dr. Rolf Zajonc. He then went on to illustrate this using the famous rice and chessboard story.

Grains of rice are exponentially arranged on the 64 squares of a chessboard: 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and so on. It all sounds rather straightforward. But, believe it or not, on the final square there would be a mountain of grains, in fact enough to cover the whole of Germany under a thick blanket of rice.

"The prediction that digitalization will change the world is not some kind of vision of a distant future. We are bang in the middle of it," according to Dr. Zajonc, "and its endless possibilities will result in an increase in complexity, volatility, ambiguity and uncertainty across the board."

**VUCA: everything in a state of flux**

VUCA stands for: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Information now crosses the globe at lightening speed leading us to question the traditional methods of doing things. The consequences of this are impossible to predict. Which is why ongoing training and the development of an agile culture are the best ways to prepare for, and handle, the challenges ahead.

**A kaleidoscope of software, consulting and learning**

In the business world solutions almost always entail a mix of information technology, services and content. The experience of the past few years with the three core **tts** competences of software, consulting

and learning are like a kaleidoscope, explains the Managing Director, a tiny twist leads to a whole new picture.

In the same way that digitalization is characterized by an endless number of possible scenarios, so is the whole field of employee qualifications. When it comes to finding the perfect fit for one's own company, the best approach involves asking seven simple questions: Why? Who? What? How? Where? When? What for?

The 'Why?' is explained by the advancing pace of digitalization and the need for lifelong learning. The 'Who?' naturally refers to the decision-makers in HR and IT, in other words those responsible for employee training.

**Going up and down the knowledge staircase**

As regards to the 'What?', the knowledge staircase model from Prof. Klaus North is a good metaphor. On the bottom step are characters and syntax, both of which only have meaning when linked with data, which in turn can be put into the context of information. "Only then does knowledge enter the equation. But knowledge alone is of little value. It has to be applied," enthuses Dr. Zajonc, "you have to do the right thing at the right time."

Both experience and the model have taught us that it is important to create a whole set of skills that leads to increased competitiveness within organizations. Thanks to its daily transfer of knowledge and strategic planning of knowledge management, **tts** accompanies its customers 'up and down' this knowledge staircase, an activity that bears obvious fruit for both parties.

**Knowledge transfer: not a case of 'nice to have', but a 'must-have'**

But how does one design the transfer of knowledge? How is knowledge weighted, tracked and kept up-to-date? State-of-the-art software forms the backbone of formal and informal learning.

"In itself, this may sound like a trivial statement," declares Dr. Zajonc, "but technology really is the key." The company's best practices are based on proven concepts, but these are not written in stone as they can be adapted over and over again in an almost infinite manner to meet individual customer demands. "It can be compared to evolution: we continually re-assess and modify our

**Facts & Figures**

- Owner-managed company, established 1998, double-digit growth
- Full-service for Talent Management and Corporate Learning
- 500 customers and over 4.5 million **tts** software users
- Awards in 2016:
- No. 1 Provider of Learning Technologies (MMB Institute)
- Partner awards 2015 + 2016 (SAP Gold Partner, Amazon Web Services)
- Brandon Hall Awards 2016: Gold for Performance Support Technology, Silver for Content Authoring

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core strengths, and constantly evolve and enhance our solution.”

20 years ago the transfer of knowledge was still regarded as ‘nice to have’, but it’s now seen as an absolute must by all management levels. When it comes to the ‘Where?’ and ‘When?’ questions, the answer is almost self-explanatory thanks to the advent of performance support: everywhere and always, mobile and virtual.

**Use technology to face reality**

Despite all this commitment to optimal employee learning and widespread enthusiasm for adaptive learning with context, there are still

many dilemmas that have to be confronted. The secret to coming out on top involves pulling off a delicate balancing act between quality formal requirements on the one hand, and the informal transfer of knowledge, coupled with budget limitations, on the other hand.

One has to exploit the available opportunities to make advances, sums up Dr. Zajonc “Use technology to face reality – thereby extracting the optimal outcome.” All this is with the goal of adding business value and propelling the company to new heights – which also answers the last of the seven questions, the ‘What for?’.

