

I hate commercials and advertisements where I don't have a clue what's being advertised. Usually they come from big companies that are selling their services to other big companies. I recognize that if our company isn't big enough to understand the need, then the advertisement wasn't meant for me anyway. But, it makes me feel dumb because I don't understand what exactly is being bought and sold.

So when someone asks me, "What is a 'learning solution'?" I immediately empathize because my greatest fear is that people will feel dumb for having to ask. They shouldn't. You don't hear the term in casual conversation and today when I checked dictionary.com and Wikipedia neither provided a definition.

*So why use such an unusual term to describe the work we do? Let me explain.*

As our merry band of thinkers and problem solvers coalesced to form Vivayic two years ago we realized that we had three shared primary passions in life:

1. Being part of efforts to transform people's lives for the better
2. Creating powerful and engaging experiences where people really learned
3. Being really, really, really good at delivering on expectations

This realization helped us clarify our mission in the world - to build a company that partners with organizations (corporate, non-profit, government) trying to do outstanding work in the world and accelerate their efforts by helping them design and manage effective learning solutions.

*"And what is a 'learning solution?' you patiently ask again.*

Simply put, a learning solution is any service, program or set of materials that causes learning – not just information transfer or awareness – to take place. A learning solution is needed when the progress of an organization's vision relies on the acquisition of new knowledge or skill by employees, customers, members, or stakeholders.

A learning solution could include one or more of the following:

- Curriculum/training plans
- Online learning tools
- Assessments
- Delivered workshops
- Review and analysis of current efforts
- Evaluation of an existing or in-development learning program
- Collaborative learning environments
- Use of Web 2.0 tools (blogs, Twitter, wikis) for learning purposes

Unlike some training and development companies, we don't get hung up on the technology used to deliver learning. That's not our passion (nor are we trying to make money on a prior investment in software design). We love to create innovative and effective solutions. We don't get thrills by overselling partners on tools not really needed. Technology can be appealing in learning but it can't make up for poor instructional design or misunderstanding learners' needs.

For those left brained people that need concrete examples of learning solutions, let me share a few hypothetical situations.

- A national association needs its 200 members to better understand how to access, navigate and apply an array of resources available on its portal.
- Leaders of a corporation have designed a new client-relations process and want to get all employees up to speed on the new process within six months.
- An advocacy organization wants to develop a set of instructional materials that would help classroom teachers better present current realities to high school students.

In each example there is need for learning to take place; learning that will advance the mission of the organization.

One final note: Learning goes way beyond information transfer. 20 years ago, information was difficult to access and organizations that controlled information had great influence. That reality doesn't exist anymore. We are saturated with instant, ready and usually reliable information. Your employees, customers, members, and clients aren't making poor decisions because they lack access to information...they've not learned what to do with it. That's the job of the 21<sup>st</sup> century organization – provide learning, not just information.

And when you figure out how to provide learning – you've got a "learning solution." Cool, huh?

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