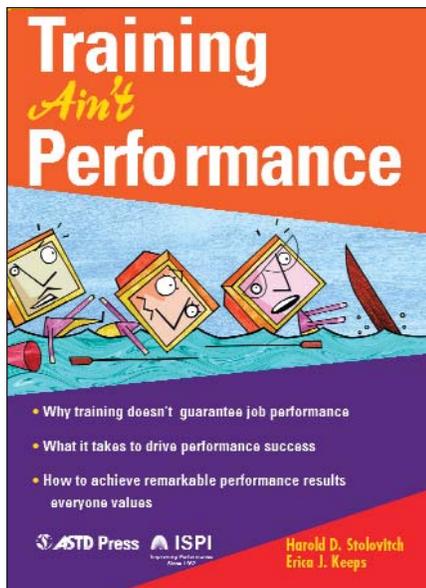


BOOKS



Better Than the Last

I must be up front. I've known the authors professionally for many years. I've attended their workshops and read all of their books. Consequently, I have high expectations for whatever learning product they create. And so far, they haven't disappointed me.

Recently, I made everyone in my department read their previous book, *Telling Ain't Training*. Knowing the positive impact that book had on my team and our training programs, I've been looking forward to reading its sequel, *Training Ain't Performance*. It's just what I need to help my trainers make the transition to performance consultants.

I've been a performance consultant for many years and have read many industry-related books. I can honestly say that this book does the best job of reaching out to new professionals. It explains what performance consultants do and why their work is important to an organization's success. The book also gives trainers and managers the broader skills and knowledge they need to develop solutions and improve performance.

Like the previous book, *Training Ain't Performance* targets trainers who are frustrated with the minimal impact their training has on employees. In addition, managers and experienced practitioners will find it full of useful tools to educate themselves, their employees, and clients.

There are two key parts to the book. The first part describes the theories, models, and processes needed to identify

and improve performance. The second part describes the roles and competencies that performance consultants must have. But *Training Ain't Performance* isn't just about theory; it contains practical, down-to-earth advice, exercises, and case studies to reinforce learning. Checklists and job aids guide readers through the performance improvement process and save them money, time, and grief.

Also like the previous book, this new one is easy to read. The authors don't pontificate; they write like friends talking to you. They successfully translate research-based knowledge into easy-to-understand information and easy-to-use skills that any professional can master. They also include Gilbert's behavior engineering model, a must-have for every performance consultant, as well as their own model. Both are clearly explained, and readers learn to apply them through practical exercises.

Throughout the book, Stolovitch and Keeps emphasize these points:

- Training isn't performance. Don't let training become the default intervention for improving performance. Rarely do single solutions work for complex performance problems.
- Start with the environmental factors before trying to fix performers.
- Show key stakeholders the money. Demonstrate the worth and ROI of your contributions.
- Don't let anyone overwhelm you with the latest and greatest enthusiasms or old



Training Ain't Performance

By Harold D. Stolovitch and
Erica J. Keeps
Reviewed by Petti Van Rekom

Author View

Training Ain't Performance
authors Harold D. Stolovitch
and Erica J. Keeps talk to *T+D*.

truisms. Separate myth from fact, and use science and credible information as your guides for improving performance.

My favorite part of this book is chapter 11, "Hit or Myth: Separating Fact From Workplace Performance Fiction." Similar to a chapter in *Telling Ain't Training*, that section unmasks myths, fallacies, and ineffective training practices that organizations undertake in the name of improving workplace performance. In a fun and engaging manner, the authors separate fiction (masquerading as common knowledge) from research-based fact. That alone is worth the price of the book. In fact, I recommend that you take the section's quiz before reading the book and then again when you get to chapter 11. You'll be amazed at what you're sure is true and what isn't. For example, it's a myth that job-satisfaction increases tend to improve worker performance. And when readers hear someone stating one of those fallacies, a chart at the end of the chapter tells them the appropriate responses to make.

The authors' goal is to transform readers into performance improvement consultants—a huge objective for just one book. Do they achieve it? I don't think so. Readers will have the knowledge but not the skills that come only with practice and feedback. That's not to say there's no practice in the book; there are a lot of exercises and case studies. However, in my experience, I've found that it takes practice—and time—to make the conversion from a trainer to a consultant.

Is this information new? It depends. If you have been an active member of ISPI for a few years, then the answer is no. But for most people, despite years of practical on-the-job experience, this is new and important information. In some cases, the book provides the rationale and research to support what readers are already doing. I recommend that managers and their teams read this book. Once everyone is up to speed and speak-

ing a common language, an honest and well-informed conversation will result.

I plan to use this book in an activity based on an actual business problem in our company. I did something similar with *Telling Ain't Training*. After my team covered the case study in the book, I had them analyze one of our training programs. Their findings were based on content in the book and presented to the group for discussion. As a result, they convinced themselves that improvements in our training courses need to be made.

I do foresee two downsides to the book. My team reports that *Training Ain't Performance* takes a long time to read and digest the ideas. That's because the information is new and includes many exercises that illustrate and reinforce the learning.

Readers also may believe that once they've completed the book, they will know all they need to begin performance consulting. But I think that more practice and feedback are necessary before they can accurately call themselves performance consultants.

Training Ain't Performance is even better than *Telling Ain't Training* because it gives readers the full picture of what it takes to improve employee performance. Because it exceeded my expectations and provides value to all readers, I give it four enthusiastic cups of my favorite Ethiopian coffee. Read it, and get to work!

Training Ain't Performance, by Harold D. Stolovitch and Erica J. Keeps. ASTD Press and ISPI: Alexandria, Virginia. 216 pp. US\$38.95

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Why did you write *Training Ain't Performance (TAP)*?

Stolovitch and Keeps

Writing *TAP* was a natural. Before we

completed the manuscript for the earlier companion book, *Telling Ain't Training*, we knew that we had to continue the story. *TAP* takes learning and performance professionals to the next level.

What are some of your favorite performance books?

Stolovitch and Keeps We really like *Performance Consulting and Moving From Training to Performance* by Dana G. Robinson and James C. Robinson, *What Every Manager Should Know About Training* by Robert F. Mager, and *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance* by Thomas F. Gilbert.

What made you get into training?

Stolovitch Since I can remember, I've wanted to be an educator. My father instilled in me a passion for learning. Because I started working when I was 12, I also learned a lot about the workplace. Joining the two has been natural for me. I learned to think systemically and connect an array of factors to achieve desired performance. How people learn and perform in workplace settings continues to intrigue me. I'm hopelessly hooked, even after more than 40 years at it.

Keeps I never intended to go into training; I was interested in business. My first professional job was a market research analyst position. However, my next position was in the corporate training department of a large retail chain. While there, I observed what training could and couldn't do. I later managed that training function during its transition to performance. My fascination is with broader workplace performance issues.