

THE FUTURE OF CORPORATE UNIVERSITIES

How Your Company Can Benefit
from Value and Performance-Driven
Organisational Development

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How Your Company Can Benefit
from Value and Performance-Driven
Organisational Development

BY

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Universities and Academies, UK*



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This book was conceived some time ago and I have been exploring this vital development ever since, keeping ahead of changes in the corporate university management paradigm. I have been privileged to be able to use some of the best models, which have helped to define the future of these highly dynamic and change management processes.

Many of the comments and data in this book have come from a wide range of people and companies internationally who have met the challenges and achieved the changing benefits of the corporate university in their organisations.

I would like to thank my staff and the many people who have contributed to the success of this work, with a special thanks to Keith Howard, Chairman of Emerald Group, who was the sponsor of the EC ECUANET Project which was instrumental in refocusing the corporate university thinking to become a whole organisation process of development.

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FOREWORD

Richard Dealtry has extensive international experience in organisational development initiatives and renewal. For many years he has been dedicated to helping organisations to design and manage competitive strategic management platforms for change and development through inspirational discovery of dynamic new learning management solutions.

His work includes real-time learning and actionable processes that significantly leverage performance standards and organisation capability. He has written many corporate university articles and books including the *Corporate University Blueprint*, *Dynamic SWOT Analysis* and *Quantum Performance Management*.

Richard is an authority on the dynamics that contribute to successful corporate university outcomes and is a Visiting Professor at university business schools, advising on high-value corporate university development programme design.

He is Chairman of G-ACUA, the Global Association of Corporate Universities and Academies, promoting world-class best practice in constructing a highly adaptable infrastructure in the design and performance management of business-inspired new learning.

G-ACUA is a collection of people who have had the courage to understand the needs of business across many levels and most importantly the dependency that those companies have on the energy and willingness of their people to want to understand new learning challenges and make every effort to take them forward. The work of G-ACUA is as unrelenting as it is exciting. Taking business forward is dependent on many issues of time, resources

and people. However from small beginnings it is now fully engaged with many organisations worldwide and has had to change to a leadership role in real-time process and management practice. This book sets that scene for the future.

G-ACUA is proud of its role in continuously looking forward in its management of the many dimensions of change in organisation and business management. Its role has been a landing process for many organisations worldwide, who have and will continue to benefit from its research and action developments. The comments and case work described in this book well describe how companies learn from the past and interpret that knowledge in redefining the future success of their businesses in real time.



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Alan Bostakian

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INTRODUCTION

THE REAL-TIME PROCESS

Every successful corporate university or academy is very different due to variations in its age, priorities, size and shape and the nature of its competitive position in time. This book is all about how to successfully manage those many differences and determine a modus operandi for success with your real-time corporate university process. It will be of special interest to managers and academics alike who are looking to the future.

I make no apologies for using the term corporate university as it is an all embracing term, crossing the boundaries of corporate and academic worlds. It captures the very essence of people at work, creating new knowledge through its application in the growth or in the maintenance of the company's activities.

The corporate university is an ever-changing paradigm, improving high-level situational awareness across a range of management issues and disciplines. It implies a significant new approach from all management if it is to be successful today and everyday going forward.

This book starts with a review of the many different and overlapping aspects of the corporate university development process over time. These are now on the cusp of the next evolving stage of its growth, enabled mainly due to changes in management technologies that are impinging on every part of organisations. These changes started many years ago and have gradually arrived today

after much overlapping and new development. The book illustrates progressively how these developments have come and gone over time to the present day, which is now at a new beginning.

Where to next is an important systemic step for everyone and will involve many people, including a top management cadre and all managers and academics, combining new real-time learning of management practice and theory together in specific situations, a process that works immediately for all concerned.

Yes the corporate university process design is experientially based and can now reach into every corner of a company's activities. Are you ready and are you prepared for these changes?

STARTING POINT

The professionally managed corporate university is a whole organisation endeavour today, tomorrow and for the future. It starts with a clear and unambiguous statement of where you are today, what material resources you have and your people's working knowledge capabilities. It raises questions about size, shape and the economies of all business units and crucially how they are managed.

The presentations in the four parts of this book define a growth in knowledge and experience of the author over a substantial real-time period. During that time the effects of change are evident in the chapters, which overlap and move forward defining a rugged progressive series of new learning events through to the present time as the corporate university process has developed. This progression of overlaps and advancement in the new learning process can be seen in the text. It is a deliberate intention of the author to progressively capture for the reader the dynamic and changing nature of the process and its effects on real-time management practice.

I start this treatise with some leading questions about the future of the professionally managed Corporate University:

- *What is its purpose?*
- *Is it necessary to use the term corporate university?*
- *Is the corporate university just for large companies?*
- *What types of companies are getting involved in corporate universities?*
- *Where are corporate universities located?*
- *Is it like a traditional academic university?*
- *Is the corporate university all inclusive, for everyone? Who sets the pace?*
- *Do you think we would benefit from the introduction of a corporate university?*
- *Who is responsible for the development and management of the corporate university?*
- *What programmes and awards will it give to participants and will they have value outside the company?*
- *Will we need to form alliances with universities and business schools?*
- *Do our staff and managers have time for this?*
- *How much does it cost and what is the payback/return on investment?*
- *Can it work globally?*

You can start to put some answers to these questions on behalf of your company. You will find that you do not know all the answers to all these questions straight away; you are at the beginning of a learning curve. But you now have the opportunity to find the answers.

TAKING IT FORWARD AND DOING IT – CHANGE OF CULTURE AND DIRECTION

Professional experience with this intellectual challenge and development processes has taught that it is a highly variable experience. There are constant demands for new ideas and working methods and you need to identify the people who want to search for those changes. Experience shows that every company has a different starting point and you have to determine where that is in every case. Setting out and making a public development, from your people's point of view, is the start of the success story and is the key to a successful intervention. Getting people to understand the nature and size of the change across the company

The corporate university is constantly changing as economic development priorities and technologies have moved unrelentingly forward over a number of years and in many countries across international boundaries.

This book aims to inform and assist people in management to learn about those changes and the new career opportunities that they will be facing during their careers. The corporate university is a dynamic environment of an increasingly systemic process. You can use this book as a reference point on different aspects of your corporate university development. The knowledge that you start with has to be realigned and developed to meet the growing challenges and specific needs of your business, its future structure and its customers.

WHY THE TERM CORPORATE UNIVERSITY?

The corporate university is a term that has many variations. Learning and in-depth follow-up in the company's business practices and processes are all key learning factors in its purpose. It is however a highly dynamic and ever-changing development. Its central focus is on helping and directing all willing employees at

all levels to create new knowledge and expertise in the real-time events of a particular business. And if that is not sufficient their development has to be linked to increasing the value of the company and its success depends upon the commitment of top management to seeing the whole process through. I hope that this will become apparent to you as you move forward through the book.

It has a highly variable title that has grown in image, content and capacity over a number of years. Its character and intended capabilities are constantly growing as the know-how for its construction and related business technology increases daily. The central theme is, however, the development of capabilities in your people; their intellectual growth and the opportunities for greater engagement in the business and its future management.

So the corporate university is a dynamic and flexible entity that is constantly changing in line with management and company needs. In this book you will observe information on its developments that serves and ensures that changing purpose. This is due to the movements of the underlying development process that is presented to you with an introduction to a new set of change dynamics for managing the real time of the business. So be prepared to learn and relearn over your career. It's a most exciting career adventure and one that will take you and your colleagues over.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK IN FOUR PARTS

This book introduces you to the major areas of performance and value management.

Part I: Managing Research Reporting

Part II: Considering Design Parameters

Part III: Reviewing Strategic Considerations

Part IV: Enhancing Management in Practice

These headings provide you with a first-class guide to the major areas of business that you have to get right if you are to be

successful with your corporate university. You will be dealing with a new era in management where continuous improvement is evident in all aspects of the business. This increasing progression is based upon personal and group new learning dynamics, giving meaning and emphasis to the emergence of new knowledge and eye-opening new thinking for action.

You will be introduced to the key pieces of a very large jigsaw which are there for you to assemble in whatever way and disciplines you hold. Read and re-read each chapter and then progressively work on your key solutions for creating the very future of your organisation. There are further readings available to you in Additional Reading at the end of the book and References sections at the end of each chapter.

In preparing this book I was concerned about where its strength should lie, and finally determined that it should provide a middle of the road service for all directors, managers and their intellectual advisors. The central text of this book is, therefore, for all managers and readers whilst the references for each of the chapters allow you to select and explore in greater depth all the related issues and their further real-time development possibilities in much more detail.

This book recommends not only an expansion of content but also an emergent vision for this important area of human evolution in business development. Too much of corporate development has become sterile and repetitive instead of focusing on the future evolution with its emergent new challenges where the past and the future are redefined. It provides a new awakening to that future in this age of achievement.

This book is the beginning, not an end in itself. The aim is for you to acquire the many keys to new ways of creating a widespread culture of development thereby discovering group and organisational management practices that will help you to become the leading agent and master of continuous change and development in your organisation. The very future of the business depends upon your actions.

PART I

MANAGING RESEARCH REPORTING



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1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS WITH REFERENCE TO THE CORPORATE UNIVERSITY

Contents

- More Questions than Answers
- Most Frequently Asked Questions with Answers
- Summarising Points

This chapter lists the foundation questions that are uppermost in people's minds when they are considering introducing the corporate university development platform into their organisation. Some of the questions are simple and direct whilst others are rhetorical in nature. The questions are those which have arisen most frequently in early discussions with client companies.

The approach taken in this chapter is to provide informative insights into the subject of the corporate university and to initiate thought leadership that will result in the full realisation of the corporate university concept.

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

The corporate university development, with its melting pot of diversity both in terms of thinking and management disciplines,

can appear arcane – fuzzy and full of mystery. Questions about what it is and what it does often result in more questions rather than providing clear-cut answers.

When introducing ‘hard’ performance-improving management techniques the starting point is usually quite obvious and the instructions on ‘what to do’ and ‘how to do it’ are clear and logically progressive. In these cases, questions about aims and outcomes are relatively easy to answer.

Alternatively, soft development packages aimed more towards releasing individual potential and building organisational capability are more complex in terms of their processes and are more difficult to articulate, although, the majority of these are usually well-prescribed and targeted at a well-defined audience with particular needs. Consequently, managers can get their minds around these subjects without much difficulty.

However, at the level of business development intervention that accompanies the introduction of the corporate university, more serious reflections, research and preparations are necessary to make a successful start. From experience, it is possible to be presented with a wide variety of different answers describing perspectives and scenarios on what the corporate university is and what the intervention entails.

Some experts emphasise one particular aspect whilst those companies already engaged in the development of a corporate university often appear to be adopting different strategies and emphasising different aspects of people, management, organisational and business development.

One of the difficulties is that if someone is asked for their view of something it will be influenced by many factors including self-interest, their experience and in particular their standpoint.

If someone is asked what a car looks like when they see it for the first time, they will give a very different answer to someone who has sat inside a stationary car and to someone who has watched a car pass by them.

The level of confusion generated by asking someone about the corporate university who is not familiar with the full concept and its possible relevance to your particular business can result in you having the unwelcome privilege of paying for their learning curve.

Added to that the fact that the full potential of the concept is still unfolding and maturing, this will detract from what should be an exciting, intellectually challenging and very profitable enterprise for you and your company.

How the initial enquiry is handled from a company who is considering the corporate university application is, therefore, very important. Knowing the right questions to ask is the important first step in this process. The second is to get coherent answers from an independent and unbiased source. Helping managers to achieve these two steps was the main reason why the following question and answer exposé was developed.

It is important to provide such a guideline and questioning clarification for managers who have the task of formulating a meaningful strategic approach to their company's investments in the corporate university.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

What Is Its Purpose?

There are many definitions in the literature of the corporate university. One that reaches out into the meaning of the full concept and its strategic role whilst being quite thought provoking is that:

The corporate university is a management intervention that takes a company or organisation into a new robust and sustained phase of business development that it would not achieve with its current levels of opportunity for thought leadership and styles of learning behaviour.

Is It Necessary to Use the Term Corporate University? What Name Should We Give to Ours?

Many companies are quite satisfied to apply this term as the word 'corporate' captures the company's ownership aspect of the development. The word 'university' connects with a place that provides instruction and facilities for research and advanced learning and also gives recognition to the level of learning achieved.

On the other hand, this title is totally unacceptable to some companies. They neither like a title that could imply that this is a head office driven initiative nor that it has a strong academic focus.

The term corporate university has, however, become the common currency for discussing this development and is a useful cachet. Each company will generate its own preferred title and it is recommended that this is a tactfully managed issue.

Naming and branding the corporate university is very important. It is a symbolic act that sends messages to all the internal and external stakeholders and demands a unique balancing of all the motivational factors to arrive at a brand profile that is positive and energising for everyone.

Guidelines for naming would include:

- name of the company
- name of the industry or business sector
- its intellectual or learning style:
 - academy
 - university
 - school of, etc.

Is the Corporate University Just for Large Corporations?

Not necessarily so. The issue is about how to sustain competitive advantage through the acquisition and application of new learning and this starts at the level of the individual.

It is concerned with leadership development and enhancing the quality and relevance of the learning experience. The main thrust is to achieve thought and intellectual leadership throughout a company's business sectors: to have the capability to be a lot smarter and quicker off the mark than the competition.

Size is therefore not an issue, although larger companies have tended to make the running in taking up this initiative. There are logistical and structural benefits of scale that are inherent in corporate university thinking that also make it an attractive development and promotes its adoption.

Small and medium sized companies aim to achieve and sustain this state of know-how leadership, their competitiveness depends upon it. But it is an awareness of the mental processes that counts with them, rather than structural considerations.

What Types of Companies Are Getting Involved in Corporate University Development?

The initial trend was established by hi-tech businesses, professional services firms, consultancy companies and companies with a strong scientific or technological base. The ethos for continuous innovation and leadership in every aspect of their businesses is well established in such companies and the need to press ahead is ever present.

Exercising the full corporate university concept provides them with opportunities to develop thought leadership and provide a more stimulating environment that reinforces cultural values around learning and achievement.

The trend is now taking hold in more traditional businesses where the combined benefits of properly managed business-led learning, shared knowledge and e-technologies are being put to good use.

Where Are the Corporate Universities Located?

Larger companies have tended to locate formal programmes in campus-style training and development centres. However, the essential positioning of it is in the minds of people and in the psyche of the organisation.

Benefits are only realised when people doing things ‘thinkingly’ and take executive action in the real-time environment, in the office, in the factory, in discussion and in negotiation with suppliers, when building relationships with customers, in making interpersonal and organisational links work and in the social environment.

The corporate university ‘campus’ has no outer limits. Learning and development can take place anywhere anytime when you know how to do it efficiently and effectively. Also, it is about adult learners and they are different. They like to learn in different ways at different times. What they do need is a healthy supportive quality learning infrastructure that serves their particular need to learn dynamically, on time every time wherever they may be.

One company defined it in this way, ‘we aim to develop a high quality learning infrastructure and rewarding environment that is worthy of people’s participation’.

Is It Like a Traditional Academic University?

The fundamental objectives of providing quality instruction, facilitating research and advanced learning and giving recognition to the level of learning achieved are the same. However, the management, strategic context, the learning processes used and developmental objectives of the corporate university are very different from a traditional university.

The corporate university is a hybrid development that brings together the rapidly changing nature of corporate training and development as previously known with certain elements

of the intellectual discipline and rigour that underpin academic processes.

It is true to say that it is not like any older patterns, academic or business, but is a new entity and culture more in-phase with the modern business landscape.

Is the Corporate University All Inclusive – For Everyone?
Do the Slowest Set the Pace?

The starting point for every company is that you have the employees, staff, managers, executives and directors that you have and they are there for everyone, not for the slowest or the chosen few. But this does not mean ‘wall to wall’ everything; the opposite is true.

One of the most difficult jobs for the managers of the corporate university is to determine how and when scarce resources are directed to particular groups of people for the success of the business. This is not a link that many companies are really good at making.

This implies considerable fluidity and pro-active management in training and development provision alongside tactical and strategic initiatives.

The all-inclusive strand is more about building basic real-time competencies at all levels, learning how to learn and knowing learning needs. It is also about instilling the ability in managers and staff alike to be able to build a scene at the same time as getting on with their jobs.

Do You Think We Would Benefit from the Introduction
of a Corporate University?

No one knows this for certain. There is a great deal of organisational thinking that has come to the end of its useful life.

The concepts and thinking constantly demonstrate that these ideas are no longer capable of coping with the perturbations of the modern business environment. They stop people thinking out of the box and they bring pressures to get better and better at what served well in the past rather than making adjustments to anticipate and move forward with the times: getting further and further out of synch with customers, competitors and the business climate.

A thorough dynamic situation analysis will quickly show whether the consequences of the current issues facing your business or business sectors can be resolved with or without a major cultural shift to a corporate university styles of development.

Who Is Responsible for the Development and Management of the Corporate University?

This is an important major business-led change platform that has to manifest in the vision of top management. Its success will be dependent on overcoming cultural and organisational barriers at all levels and the introduction of new ideas about what the firm values, where it puts its resources and what it rewards.

This top-level commitment then needs to be underpinned by a team of people who are firmly committed to the survival of the business, e.g. a Project Director reporting directly to the CEO. This will be someone who has high-level skills as a network organiser and in the recruitment and management of the core team and specialist contributors who provide expert advice on specific decisions on an as required basis.

Awareness and induction training is essential for everyone who is to be involved in the development of this intervention as not many people will have the subject knowledge, personal profile, skills and competencies, or ready-made cross disciplinary capabilities to immediately take on these responsibilities.

What Programmes and Awards Will It Give to Participants and Will They Have Value Outside the Company?

The corporate university provides the opportunity to give a high level of recognition and reward to new learning and internal programmes. This implies that all training and development should be assessed in terms of what has been achieved by (a) the person carrying out the work, (b) the benefits received by the company and (c) academic credits if the programmes are credit linked to a university, business school or college of further education.

Incentives and rewards are an important area of policy development in the management of the corporate university and should be reviewed in the complete context of career development, remuneration and benefits packages.

The aim is to make your company the company of first choice.

Will We Need to Form Alliances with Universities and Business Schools?

External alliances and learning partnerships with the intellectual supply chain should be formed on the basis of specific learning needs allied to particular strategic learning initiatives. Such arrangements should be competitively and properly contracted.

There is a great deal of case history concerning the selection and management of intellectual partnerships with universities and business schools and these can evolve in various ways – in ascending order of ‘complexity’ and ‘risk’, collaborative intellectual partnerships and alliance projects may include:

- exchanges of information,
- experience sharing and consultancy,
- collaboration on development through research projects,
- adaptation and evaluation of learning media and materials,
- establishing APL and APEL methodologies,

- establishment of credit transfer arrangements,
- the creation of new management structures both within and between/amongst the partners and institutions.

A common framework of external provision assessment in all areas and subsidiaries of the company should be developed.

Do Our Staff and Managers Have Time for this?

The answer to this problem is that staff and managers cannot afford not to have time when the future of the business and their career depends upon participation. This is quite a radical message to get across and is central to the cultural shift to be achieved.

The benefits of properly formulated project processes, a quality supportive learning infrastructure and work based assignments that have real purpose directly linked to tactical and strategic requirements tend to renew motivational aspirations very quickly. Having the opportunity to exercise independent thinking and take on the role of an internal change agent or internal consultant appeals to many people when it is properly managed.

How Much Does It Cost and What Is the Payback/Return on Investment?

The development of a corporate university is a major investment and should be treated as such from a financial evaluation point of view. A feasibility study and funding forecast is an essential step combined with an estimate of benefits arising in terms of improved organisational performance and competitive capability.

Every assignment undertaken by staff and management should be properly monitored and assessed by direct reports with estimates of benefits, i.e. increased sales, cost savings, etc.

Can It Work Globally?

Is it desirable that it works globally?

This question addresses one of the key issues for many companies. Businesses are now subject to global competition and have to think developmentally beyond national and regional boundaries both from a personnel development point of view and from a marketing and customer culture point of view. However, the dependency of some international businesses on sustaining local cultures is immense whilst others are driven by the strength of global brands. Understanding the differences and synergies of the cultural and intellectual competencies across boundaries and their effect on the firm's businesses would make a classic corporate university research project.

E-learning technologies make the collective global learning idea much more realisable and can add significantly to the competitive time advantage through accelerated shared learning. Developing the global learning infrastructure using e-communications, e-systems and pro-active e-management tools adds a whole new set of dynamics to the real-time development process. Building those perceptions and making those connections helps to re-define the global potential of the corporate university.

SUMMARISING POINTS

This brings full circle the investigations into the full concept of the corporate university and the evidential findings and field research that has been carried out over a considerable period. The questions posed by companies starting out on the journey do not change, but the accumulated store of knowledge from this programme has fostered more informed responses.

You can look upon these results as the first iteration in the learning process about the potential and role of the corporate

university as an organisational and business development platform. Further chapters will concentrate on the particular experiences of companies in developing bespoke solutions that optimise their particular corporate university properties and also examine the project management aspects of these interventions.

It is clear from the programme findings that there is a fundamental shift taking place in how investors view business value and the perceived quality of a company's intellectual equity is becoming the magnet that increasingly attracts flows of capital.

The organisations that find the means to achieve this, through the widespread release of intellectual competencies in the context of executive action, are the ones that will prosper in this changing financial market environment.

The responsibility for achieving that transition in corporate reputation lies with top management, in a many-sided development programme that is captured in the concept of the corporate university.

This chapter has been adapted from previously published work: Dealtry, R. (2001). Frequently asked questions with reference to the corporate university. *Emerald Journal of Workplace Learning*, 13(6).

FURTHER READING

The Corporate University Blueprint. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.corporateuniversity.org.uk/blueprint.htm>