THERE ARE SOME **EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE SUPPORT TOOLS AVAILABLE**

THE GROWTH OF BUSINESS PROCESS GUIDANCE

Sometimes an answer is staring us in the face, but we just haven't seen it yet.

Most organizations face the challenge of ensuring employees can navigate and use defined processes and systems. All require new hires to come to terms with their ERM and CRM environments and with other specific processes and products. Almost without exception this challenge is met with some form of training solution. Equally, there's usually a call for more training when systems and processes change or when the initial training hasn't "stuck."

However, there are far more effective and efficient approaches than training that address this challenge of improving speed-to-competence. One of the most powerful alternatives to the train-and-train-again approach is performance support.

Performance support has been part of the toolkit for building human performance and productivity for centuries. For instance, the master-apprentice model is based on the concept: On-the-job support is always at hand as the apprentice develops mastery. More recently, job aids, whether delivered through technology or not, have been used as simple forms of performance support.

Electronic Performance Support Systems (ePSS) are job aids' younger brother. ePSS itself has been around for at least the past 20 years. Gloria Gery's excellent 1991 book *Electronic Performance Support Systems: How and Why to Remake the Workplace Trough the Strategic Application of Technology,* which emerged from earlier ideas at AT&T, was an important waypoint for the concept and practice of ePSS.

ePSS has grown up since Gery wrote her book.

There are some excellent performance support tools available for today's learning professional. The Web has provided a platform for the development of integrated performance support environments that are being used by more enlightened organizations.

More recently a new and exciting approach to performance support has emerged, called "business process guidance." BPG is "performance support on steroids" and is specifically focused on ensuring policies and procedures are followed by providing context-sensitive on-screen assistance within a rich support environment. When a user requests guidance there are a number of ways that this can be given, including a process map, a procedure flow or a series of qualifying questions. Having obtained guidance, the user can continue on. Compete the task with assistance a few times, learning has occurred, and proficiency is obtained.

In the next few years I believe we will see BPG replace most of the systems, process and product training that is done today. In my view, the sooner BPG takes a firm place in training and development portfolios, the sooner we will stop wasting time, effort and money on using a sub-optimal train-and-train-again model, and instead, will improve speed-to-competence across our organizations.

Charles Jennings is the director of Duntroon Associates, a training & development and human capital consultancy company. Charles is the former chief learning officer for Reuters, where he was responsible for developing 55,000 professionals. E-mail Charles at charles@duntroon.com.