

Elliott Masie's

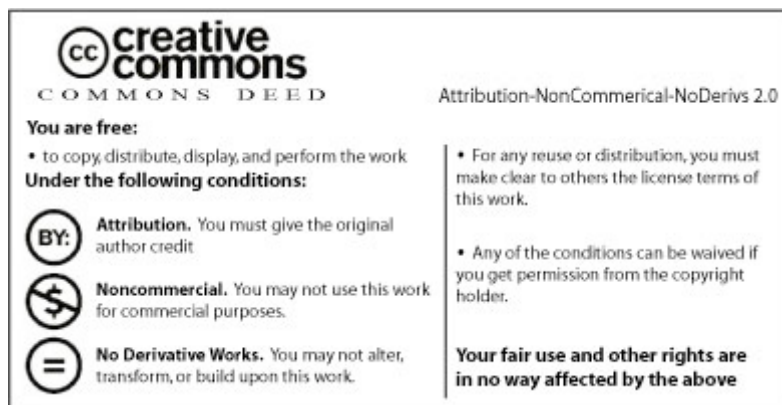
LEARNING2009

Doug Lynch University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business

Learning 2009 Keynote – Excerpt on Company Responses in Uncertain Times

November 8, 2009

Transcription of Video Segment Available at:
<http://learningwiki.editme.com/douglynch>



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Learning 2010 will be held from October 24-27 in Orlando, Florida.

Elliott Masie: When times get tough, different organizations respond differently. I am even curious here [at Learning 2009]: how many of you have seen a constriction in the budget in your learning department over the last year? Just by show of hands, [for] how many has it been flat? [For] how many has it been growth? We may not be representative - in the sense that you got permission to attend here - so it may be a slightly different...

Doug Lynch: Selection bias it's called.

Elliott Masie: Yes, but different groups respond differently in that, and it seems that - I have recently been talking to organizations who are saying that they are really worried about what their bench strength is going to look like for leaders in five years, [and] that some of the disruptions right now are not really hurting them in their current talent profile, but [they're] really disrupting the bench. Have you seen something?

Doug Lynch: Yeah, and I am worried that what has happened, because it was a perfect storm really - the both sort of the failure, if you will, of Wall Street and Main Street concurrently - that it's a game changer. Those organizations that are investing in their people are ultimately going to win that game, because sooner or later, people are going to look to start to get going again, and they are just not going to have the talent there. And the pipeline doesn't look so great.

Elliott Masie: One of the themes we will come back to a couple times here is the tension between preparing people in deep and real immersion versus having the assets ready so they can learn at that moment of need. Now, you are dealing not only with this cohort, but with other students at UPenn. Is there a generational proclivity to say, "If I can look it up I don't need to digest it now?"

Doug Lynch: I guess so, but we try and encourage them, ultimately, to think. When I was listening to your story about the fellow in Western India, the thing that struck me the most was the fact that he had been taught to think in such a way where he could solve the problem, and that, ultimately, certainly what we are trying to do at Penn is instill in people an ability to think, recognizing that odd level of sophistication in the academy is not necessary, right? If you are trying to sort of evaluate the efficacy of your program, you don't need to prove it to a scientist, but maybe you need to prove it to a jury of your peers, if you will. And there might be a different sort of standard for evidence. But there seems to be this sort of two extremes: either "Let's not worry about it at all and just sort of do the latest thing", or "Let's study it to death and never actually come to any conclusions."

So what we are trying to do is say, even if you have a tendency to just consume, it's better if you sort of teach yourself to think, ultimately, because times are going to keep changing.

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