

TRAINING MAGAZINE SELECTION BEST IN THE NATION FOR 2002

#3 // AMERICREDIT

(Reprint of article that accompanied AmeriCredit's award of 3rd place in the nation)

Like a finely tuned automobile, a first-rate training department is well-oiled and meticulously maintained. At AmeriCredit, this maintenance is reflected not only in the execution and evaluation of its training, but also in the preparation, in which employees become part of the process, rather than simply end-product recipients. Learning style assessments of both instructor and student

fuel the company's instructional design machine. A year-long leadership development program for management trainees inclusively weaves learning styles into on-the-job training, individual learning, group action-learning and distance learning. Such innovative methods, of course, live or die through the support of top management, and AmeriCredit's learning and performance team thrives on a firm foundation.

A case can be made that a corporate training initiative or any course of learning for that matter is reliant on the learner's state of mind at the time of the training. Inspiration breeds motivation and viceversa. Rick Daly of AmeriCredit knows this all too well. But the senior vice president, learning and performance, also hinges the Fort Worth, Texas-based auto finance company's training efforts on another subjective factor of learning: a person's learning style.

As part of AmeriCredit's Organizational Engineering juggernaut, Daly has spearheaded a prediction and performance instrument, called the **I-Opt Learning Style Rollout**, that attempts to actualize David Kolb's Learning Cycle Model and its accompanying learning styles.

Daly's vision was to measure the company's 4,800 employees, from the CEO to the janitors, and log their preferred learning styles into a database where course content could be attuned based on the individual, the facilitator and the design of the course. Before a training class begins, Daly explains, they run an I-Opt group profile on all the students,

along with a motivation questionnaire. Algorithms yield predictive data on an employee's likelihood of success in learning from the course, based on course design, their motivation to attend and the style of the facilitator

Course facilitators receive a report prior to a session that allows them to adjust course delivery, content and design based on the learning styles of the participants. "I can do a little bit about their motivational state up front," explains Daly, "but I can do a lot about content shifting and training our facilitators to be fluid in each of the different style zones so that they can shift their own methods."

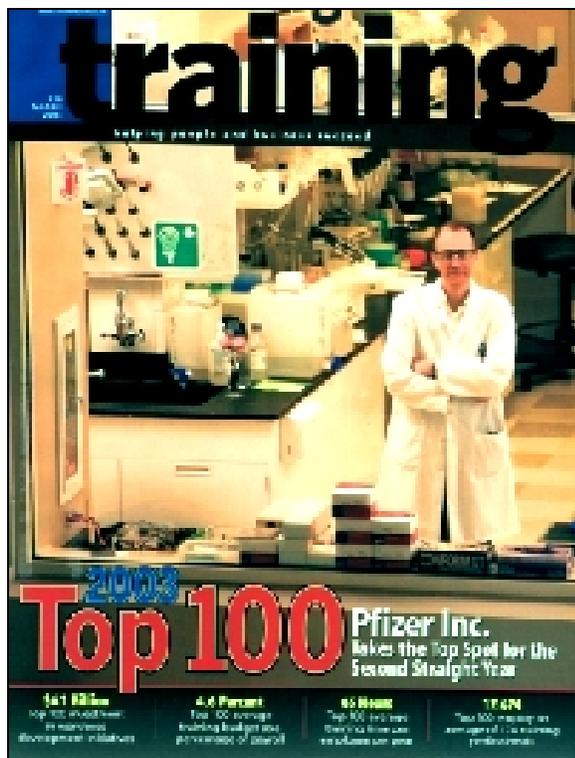
AmeriCredit also equips employees with cards that indicate their personal learning style. Before and after a class, students can give the cards to the instructor for an instant "style" check, allowing the instructor to fine-tune his or her delivery on the fly. "They're kind of like trading cards," says Daly. "It's doing something different from just Level I feedback, and it makes the learners remember that they own this stuff too and that it's important for them to share with us their preferences."

The versatility of the **I-Opt Learning Style** database permeates all areas of the organization, including team development and leader analysis, as well as Amercredit's e-learning programs that also can be tailored on-the-fly. "The next step for us is when you log onto a course through our LMS, we'll know your primary style, and we can shift the material more dynamically," says John Shearer, vice president of e-learning. "Okay, you're more action-oriented; you want more involvement in the courseware,' versus, 'you know what? You're more thought-oriented and will delve deeper into interpretation"

AmeriCredit's creative learning interventions are playing a fundamental role in an ongoing culture shift that will reposition the company more as a proactive sales organization. For Daly, getting a mandate from the top of the organization has been key. "We're doing all these things under the guise of change management," says Daly. "This isn't just another OD intervention. And the best thing I did was convince [senior management] that I wasn't some wild-eyed exotic new guy, but that I would use tried and true methods, and that I would measure the heck out of them."

World Wide Web Link as of March, 2002:

http://www.trainingmag.com/training/reports_analysis/feature_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1350647



UPDATE

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Training Magazine again elected AmeriCredit to a position among the top five in training groups in the United States for the second year in a row. This year AmeriCredit placed 4th after such giants as Pfizer, IBM and Sprint. In addition, AmeriCredit was named Best in Class in Financial Services ahead of such giants as Edward Jones and Capital One. The magazine cited Rick Daly's use of "I Opt" technology as

one of the major factors contributing to granting this award.

World Wide Web Link as of March, 2003:

http://www.trainingmag.com/training/search/search_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1481063