

Business Partnership Is Everywhere

By Jim Kirkpatrick, Ph.D.



Wendy and I recently returned from a trip to the San Francisco Bay area. It was a combination of business and pleasure. While the business side was productive, the couple of days afterwards were fun. We spent two days in the Sonoma Valley wine country. End of story? Not quite.

I have a personality trait (Wendy calls it a flaw) that causes me to see things that others don't typically see. I see representations of the Kirkpatrick model and business partnership in everyday life. These manifestations hit me at odd times, when I am not even looking for them. Recent "sightings" have occurred in church, the grocery store, the gym, and the backyard. No place is immune. The typical response I get from Wendy is "Quit it!"

Apparently my sixth sense was in rare form during our trip to Sonoma Valley. Rather than bother Wendy with the interpretations of what I was seeing, I chose to inconspicuously snap pictures of what I saw. I will share some of the photos with you in hopes that some of them turn into "big pictures" for you.



"The old training model"

The old, dead tree on the grounds of the Gundlach Bundschu winery quietly whispered to me, "I am the old training model." This represents the false belief that training events, by themselves, are powerful and inspirational enough to lead to significant on-the-job application and business impact. While most learning professionals would say they do not believe this, there is still a large number of training events that are being offered with no follow up. While this old, dead tree is still beautiful and should be cherished, it no longer serves the purpose nor holds the beauty it once did. It is time to replace this old tree with a strong, new one called the business partnership model.



"Alignment is critical to training success"

At the same winery, Wendy and I came upon a pond that served several purposes, one of which was to supply a home to wildlife. While others on the tour saw a gaggle of geese serenely floating on a pond, I saw strategic alignment. Each goose represents an element of a comprehensive and synergistic approach to leveraging training to maximize business impact. While these may look like individual geese all facing the same way, to me

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they represent things like stakeholder expectations, targeted business results, leading indicators, critical behaviors, required drivers, Level 2 confidence and commitment, and Level 1 relevance and engagement.

Wendy and I found this odd little house in a historic district near the Sonoma square.



"Less is more with Level 3"

We contrasted it with some of the mansions of winery owners we admired earlier in the day. We both saw a quaint, easy-to-maintain home that would be cozy and comfortable. To be honest, that is more what Wendy saw. What I saw was a great metaphor for Level 3. Level 3 is often daunting and made to be more complex than necessary. Instead, we recommend that you help participants identify the few critical behaviors, that consistently performed, will most likely bring about the targeted

results of a given initiative. When too many on-the-job behaviors are expected to be performed, it quickly becomes confusing and overwhelming to the employees, and impossible to support for managers and supervisors. Less is more when it comes to level 3 (and sometimes houses).

Note the beautiful, robust cactus next to Wendy. While we saw a lot of cacti around the area, this one caught our collective eye.



"Business partnerships are key to success"

In keeping with the pattern, Wendy saw a beautiful, multi-colored, multi-faceted plant. I saw the power of many working together in the world of training, learning, and performance to bring about maximum results at minimum cost. Included in this tapestry should be training, supervisors, managers, executives, marketing, human resources, and, of course, the participants themselves. It takes a concentrated, cumulative effort to make a beautiful cactus or a successful training initiative.

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A soft-spoken but highly knowledgeable employee at MacRostie Winery offered us a chance to sample young wine directly out of one of their vats. While it did not taste any different to me than any of the others we tried, the experience was special for Wendy, an avid wine taster (notice her expression). For me, it represented celebrating success at the end of a learning and performance journey, when all of the good up-front planning, hard work, monitoring and adjusting pay off with demonstrated value to the business!



“Celebrating a job well done”

Jim’s last words: “Please take all of this in the spirit in which it was intended: having a little fun, and trying to bring some of the Kirkpatrick principles to life. To obtain additional information about the concepts mentioned here, go to the [Resources tab](#) at kirkpatrickpartners.com, or feel free to [email](#) or call us.”

Wendy’s last words: “I’m speechless! I was just tasting the wine and enjoying the sunshine on a much-needed day off.”

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Jim consults for Fortune 500 companies around the world including Harley-Davidson, Booz Allen Hamilton, L’Oreal, Clarian Health, Ingersoll Rand, Honda, the Royal Air Force and GE Healthcare.

Jim has co-written 3 books with his father, Don Kirkpatrick, the creator of the Kirkpatrick Four Levels. He has written two new books with his wife, Wendy: *Kirkpatrick Then and Now* (2009 Kirkpatrick Publishing) and *Training on Trial* (2010 AMACOM Books).

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