



## p-TIPS

## Breakaway (Picking up the speed of value delivery)

Just as you must break away from the pack to win a race, a company must break away from the competition by delivering more value to customers faster, proposes former president and CEO of several service industry corporations and now performance improvement expert and distance runner Charles L. Fred in *Breakaway*. Today, he contends, speed is equal to quality for consumers and rapid delivery outweighs price considerations. "The ability of people to deliver more value to customers in a shorter period of time" enables the desired break-away.

"Speed to proficiency" is the most competitive weapon when scale, automation, and capital are subordinate to a well-trained workforce. Therefore Fred recommends establishing a proficiency threshold (a benchmark), accelerating the accumulation of experience (allowing training to be actualized to deliver value by putting into practice what was learned), and measuring time required to achieve proficiency and its benefits (evaluation of training results).

Six themes should be adopted by organizations aiming for a breakaway:

- 1) Make proficiency an organizational priority. Utilize a measurement system

for evaluation/reevaluation.

- 2) Be impatient with wasted activity. Determine what employees already know, then encourage trial and error while they turn information into value delivery.
- 3) View employees as consumers of learning. Let them choose how/when/where they learn (talking with customers and others, browsing the Web, etc.).
- 4) Stress simplicity and flexibility. Once the proficiency threshold is reached, move it up. Emphasize specific problems.
- 5) Innovate to learn. IT converts passive workers waiting to receive information into proactive learners who satisfy their own curiosity.
- 6) Cultivate candor. Subject training to scrutiny just like other operations. Encourage employees to identify gaps/inefficiencies in training efforts.

Leaders must guide this breakaway process. Managers must view training as boosting the bottom line and learn continuously themselves. They should remember that change will only be faster in future, requiring ever faster service provision. Getting up to speed now may stimulate additional competitive advantages that others cannot duplicate, creating the desired breakaway.