

Deleted scenes from 'Homo Competens - Let's talk about competent people in the network age'

<http://stores.lulu.com/homocompetens>

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(about me). Pragmatic

I'm also highly pragmatic. I want approaches to be relevant. I'm looking for ways things can and will work. I have less interest pointing out a wonder land or a utopia others need to find the path to themselves.

(about me). What's in a name?

I'm a s\*cker for a good name. I can't help it, I like catchy names. Years ago one of my first eggs in learning was the '6C learning framework'. You'll find it at [6Clearning.com](http://6Clearning.com). It says you need to think of 6 Cs in successful learning projects. I had to stretch some of the areas into a word starting with C I must admit. But hey, 6C and sexy learning are so close, aren't they? The 6 Cs are: concept, computer infrastructure, content, context, collaboration and coordination. I also like the name of this book 'homo competens'. Is that correct Latin? A friend of mine told me it is. But even if it wasn't, I just like nice names.

(about me). What's in a number?

I'm also sensitive to the number 3. Things have a beginning, middle and an end. That's three. I can't help reducing the levels or activity types of competency to three. I'm also a believer in the 80/20 rule. You know: 20% of your customers account for 80% of your profit. Could it be that 20% of your workforce contributes to 80% of its value? (Scary thought.) Formal learning is 20% of learning, 80% is informal. It makes intuitive sense to me. The 80/20 rule is also known as the [Pareto](#) principle. I like that principle.

0.3.8 I look at the world through economic glasses

Let me give you a few examples.

- 'Bert, there are traffic jams all over the place. How would you solve it?'. Allow me to put on my economic glasses. There is much more demand for transportation than there is capacity or supply for it. So there is no balance. Supply does not meet demand at the market price. X does not mark the spot. One solution is to increase supply by building more transportation infrastructure like roads, railways, airports, etc. Another one is to adjust supply and demand via the price. Money influences the behavior of people. If the price of transportation goes up, the demand goes down. Find the price where demand meets supply. There are for example intelligent toll systems in London and Stockholm that automatically charge you depending on the time of the day you use the roads in the city centre.

- 'Bert, people in general and you in particular are growing unhealthily big. What can we do about it?'. I still have my economic glasses on. Have you noticed that fat and sugar are bloody cheap? That's a powerful incentive for food manufacturers to include a lot of it in food. (And fat just tastes yummy too.) Because food is

considered a basic necessity, it is often charged at the lowest possible VAT rate. In Belgium for example the general VAT tariff is 21%. Yes, I know, we Belgians like to pay taxes, it makes us feel important :-). For food it is only 6%. I'd argue to raise the VAT rate for food that contains more than a certain percentage of sugar and fat to 21%. Bad food should be more expensive so it gets consumed less. Yes you'd have to make sure there is no starvation amongst those at the bottom of the ladder of society, but for most people and for manufacturers this will be the correct stimulus. In the same line of thinking I'd argue for 21% VAT on fresh nonseasonal vegetables, but for environmental reasons. Did you know the mileage of an average carrot? In Iowa, the typical carrot has traveled 1,600 miles from California, a potato 1,200 miles from Idaho and a chuck roast 600 miles from Colorado. That is not 'good' food and should not benefit from an exempted or low tax rate.

### 1.13 The three million dollar question: who owns your competence?

In a communist regime everything is owned by 'the people', and thus your competencies belong to society, represented by its government. That means in a communist regime the government decides upon the competencies you will build, and how they will be used. In the capitalistic system, there is free choice of the individual to choose what competencies to develop, but by all kind of legal systems like patents and copyrights your employer will claim the intellectual rights of your work.

Time plays a role too. In the fifties and later, the corporate world was stable and predictable, and changing firms via outside hiring was not a common practice. You would join a company 'for life' when you graduated, and the company would own your entire career and development path and pay for it. Refusal to take the next step on the corporate ladder would mean the end of your career. Your competence development was owned by the firm who paid for it, and you could not take it away and go elsewhere with it because the labor market did not work that way at the time. Nowadays, job hopping is a common phenomena and employers are investing less and less in workforce development because people will on average change jobs before that investment has paid back. The shelf life of a competence has also shortened significantly. That means an employee will have a series of 'mini' careers of 3-5 years each during his professional life. The employee is now in the driver's seat of his competence.

#### 1.14.3 Society sphere

Governments also soften the 'free rider' problem when it comes to competence building. Institutions or corporations invest tons of money in developing employees. A free rider can hire those people away at an unpredictable time, before the investment is paid back. In most nations the government takes on the role of laying a competence foundation through mass (thus cheap) education. Corporations tap into that competent labor market.

### 2.3. A new day

Here are a few pickles we still need to solve:

- Everything for free? Does content still have value, or should it be free with a lot of paying services around? Or maybe we go for a 'freemium' model where a few people paying for extra features support the basic free service for the rest. How will the movie, newspaper, music and other creating businesses react? At one end, Andrew Keen shouts that 'the monkeys are running the show' and we need to get back to paid professionals creating trusted and quality content. On the other hand, youngsters today are brought up with the notion that everything on the Internet is for free or hackable and are not willing to pay for it.

- Who is responsible? When a company in country X sells prescription drugs via a server in country Y, to a customer living in country Z but with nationality of country A and ships the goods from country B, what legislation applies? Who pays taxes where?
- Big or little brother? Should we police the Internet or block and censor it to keep out the evil guys, or should we leave it a place of free thought and complete freedom? Should we structure and control it or let it be chaotic and without an owner?

## 2.5. ... to the Homo Competens

Jef Staes wrote a book called 'My organization is a jungle' on innovation. He describes the shift as going from a '2D organisation' to a '3D organisation'. Before, the company was a river ship on a steady, slow river. Now, the company is at open sea, and in the middle of a storm. River ships are not particularly good at sailing the open, wild sea, so adaptation is in order. Captains accustomed with still waters get seasick. Sailing open seas requires other competencies. Detailed and robust planning makes way for setting out a vision, and seeing day by day how to get there. Specialists make way for generalists and people not contained in their silo of expertise. Top-down enforced mandatory courses make way for informal, bottom-up social learning.

### 2.11 It's a spiky world after all

I think of my career as a series of mini-careers. Usually they take between three and five years. That is one year to get good, a year to outperform the others and some years to build and share expertise. A series of mini-careers can be a frightening thought at first, but it is actually quite liberating. You are by no means bound for life by the choice of your degree, or the choice of your first employer or type of job. There will be times to do a lot of interesting work in various competence domains, but let the volatile times guide you when to do what best. You cannot impose your schedule on the world or economy, but you can let it guide you on your path.

### 3.2. Learn, do, share (LDS)

Because it is my book, I've taken the liberty to define the color of learning. It is pink. The color of performing is blue. Teaching and other forms of sharing are green. We'll use these colors from now on. I'm also going to abbreviate the 'learn, do, share' credo, from now on we'll talk about LDS. It sounds like a drug, but it's much healthier for us, HoCos.

#### 3.3.2. Work: talent management

Talent management in organisations is a make or buy decision. It has swung a few times back and forth between making it in-house via corporate universities, internships, management rotation programs etc and buying it on the market, luring people with extravagant salary packages. In my short 12-year career in the ICT industry so far, I've seen two swings going up and down already. When I started, companies would throw company cars at university graduates. Just after the year 2000, the dot.com bubble called for hiring freezes. Then it ticked up again. Then the financial world collapsed at the end of 2008. With events going so fast and unpredictable, can a company honestly just switch from one leg to the other? The choice of make-or-buy a talented workforce is a false choice.

It is not 'or', but 'and'. Depending on the context, there is a level of talent to create in-house, and a level to hire in. It's make-and-buy.

I'm in the learning field, I told you before. On one of my business trips abroad, I visited a client who wanted to rationalize its learning portfolio and internal learning development department. He was complaining that there was no business validation in what people could follow courses for, as long as the first line manager approved and paid for it. I never forget how he jokingly said 'They can take courses in underwater knife fighting if the manager approves it'. Unless you are in the pearl diving business, there is just no way that a course in underwater knife fighting can contribute to your performance. It cannot help build any competence the company needs you to perform well at. There is no business case for it. I kept quiet, but at that meeting I very much liked to shout out "That is not learning!". Corporate learning is education that contributes to business. My sister in law works at a local warehouse chain. As an employee benefit, she can enroll for free in trainings on Yoga and other oriental approaches to life. It's organized in the weekend but she can take a partner that pays only half the price with her. That equally makes me want to shout out: "It's not learning!". I know why companies do that. They do that to keep their people happy and motivated so they'll stay at the company. But that is not learning. That's another part of the HR duties: that is compensation and reward. It should come of the salary budget, not the education budget. (I have a hard enough time in my profession calculating the impact and return on investment on real learning programs, let alone I would need to keep underwater knife fighting courses on my budget.) When I take a more high level view than my own little concerns in my own little field, it does make sense.

### 3.3.3. Private: personal development

The private level holds the main cards for claiming the value of its talents. Because of a fast, blurry, spiky, flat and small world the others two players can or want to be involved less than before in selecting, building and maintaining our competence. We are in the driver's seat. Between the three parties around the table, we HoCos are the managers of our competence. We build our own talent by carefully selecting what to become or stay good at, by investing time and money in building them, and by keeping proof.

### 4.1. Education is the oldest profession

Today, times are different than those of the industrial age. I've said it before: the world has gone smaller, flatter, faster, more spiky and eventually more blurry. Education, be it for our youth or be it in corporations, is still in the midst of adapting to those changes and reinventing itself to properly serve the homo competens' needs in the network age. It's a slow change, but give it a chance. No system of that size changes overnight or without a lot of internal resistance and struggles. Massive systems like education want to maintain themselves. They are rather inert, but they do adapt by grace of the experiments of their innovators. I have seen very promising experiments both in schools and corporations on what the future of learning might look like. I've also seen on the other hand that the education system just wants to maintain or grow its status. For example with the recent BAMA reform in Europe to bachelor and master diplomas for higher education, I noticed that most university programs in my country have gone larger, and take an extra year now. Why? It's a natural reflex of the education system to expand its reach and impact, and its response to a world with more and more knowledge in each field. It's an unfortunate evolution on the whole if you ask me. We are getting a lot older, our effective, average pension age is too low, and if we are going to postpone entry to the real work world by a

year too, when are we going to create the value that pays for our education and pension? By the time we graduate in year 5, some of what we learned in the first year has been discredited and replaced with new insights. In the homo competens area, learning is not something locked up in education alone. Education (school) should take less time, and we should enter work sooner and keep learning while doing. If you ask me.

#### 4.3. The disillusion of e-learning and it's all in the mix

The first step in the learning transformation journey is to increase the productivity of the learning administration. That's what LMS or Learning Management Systems were primarily invented for years ago. In the term LMS, the accent is on the M, not the L if you ask me. It's on the management in the sense of administration of the learning processes, but all too often in a pedagogically neutral way. It's a centralised system to administer your learning catalogue, enrollments, track student progress and report on learning history. Having an LMS is way more productive than having a bunch of spreadsheets in a couple of departments. The introduction of an LMS often goes hand in hand with a centralisation of the back-office functions of the learning department that will act as a service centre for all business units.

The next thing is to go from 100% traditional 'I talk, you listen' classrooms to more e-learning. The LMS can also deliver the e-learning. Some e-learning titles you will buy and some you will make. In short, you'll buy the generic content like language learning and office suites and you'll make the specific content such as your product updates or training on processes or internal applications or anything that strategically differentiates you.

At this stage in the transformation journey, you'll feel the need to integrate and link with other parts of the organisation. The LMS will link up with other HR systems and processes, and get integrated into the business and daily work flow of workers.

For those that are still frightened or disillusioned about the e-learning promises of the past, I'd like to refer you to my 6C learning model for successful learning projects. It's free and it's on [www.6Clearning.com](http://www.6Clearning.com) .

1C - Concept	The question on vision: Why does learning matter?	Learning is luxury - learning keeps retention low - learning helps to increase sales - learning makes better leadership - learning makes us comply with the law - learning is a reward - learning is working
2C - Computer infrastructure	The question on the infrastructure: What technological building blocks do I have/need for this?	open source or commercial software - hosted or in house - fit with IT guidelines/strategy - integrated with ERP - web services - installed or web-based - open standards like SCORM - LMS - social software - mobile
3C - Content	The question on what to learn:	Off the shelf content - e-books library - LCMS -

	What content will I need to find, make or buy?	authoring tools - instructional templates - rapid learning - wikipedia and google - e-learning - classroom slides - games for learning - user generated content
4C- Context	The question on culture, attitude, constraints and other circumstances: How can I fit the learning in to give optimal result?	company culture - learning organisation - learning style or preferences - making it relevant - embedded learning in the work - the carrot and stick - marketing your learning
5C - Collaboration	The question on the social aspect of learning: How do I organise and support people learning together?	finding expertise - coaching/ mentoring - peer reviews - portfolio - ratings - social bookmarking - forums, blogs, wiki's and other goodies - communities of practise - prestige -
6C - Coordination	The question on managing your learning project: How do I monitor and steer the project and its outcomes?	scorecards - dashboards - budgets - evidence of reaching goals - project management - motivation - quality assurance - steering group - community

## 5.2. Black box

I have known sales people who's sales targets went up whenever they were close to reaching them. That is for sure not measuring sales competence. Goals are important for measuring results, but for competence the effort and quality of work also count for something.