

**Sustaining Distance Training:
Integrating Technologies into the Fabric of the Enterprise**

**Edited by Zane L. Berge
(Jossey-Bass, 2000)**

Commentary by Associate Professor Alan Smith

Zane L. Berge's latest publication *Sustaining Distance Training: Integrating Technologies into the Fabric of the Enterprise* is the sequel to his 1998 publication *Distance Training*. Both books have a common theme - using distance education as a mainstream delivery tool for providing effective training in public and private organisations. The emphasis in this latest publication is to move beyond the isolated use of distance education in planning corporate training events to the integrated use of information and communication technologies as part of the training framework in selected organisations.

Sustaining Distance Training includes seventeen in-depth case studies and presents a framework for how organizations, such as Hewlett-Packard, Ford, and the US Post Office, are using distance training to meet uncommon challenges, set competitive standards, and achieve business goals. Importantly, it moves beyond the initial implementation phases of distance education training activities and events and places them in a broader context - something which many other writers in this area have never adequately embraced or successfully achieved.

The individual case studies themselves are most informative, particularly those involving the larger public and private organisations with which we have some familiarity - and where the practitioners have been extremely proactive and energetic in establishing and maintaining their training programs. The various contributors write with obvious enthusiasm and pride about their individual achievements, highlighting obstacles faced along the way and how they were overcome. For those new to distance education it will open up a range of possible options to be explored and considered in their own organisations. For those more experienced distance education practitioners it highlights yet again the variety of ways that the appropriate use of information and communication technologies, as part of a well-planned distance education-training framework, can be successfully implemented and maintained in selected organisations. This book proves beyond doubt that distance education is more than just another effective approach to training - indeed, it should be embraced as essential and integral to many organisations addressing their immediate and future training needs.

Zane Berge's contribution to this volume of works is well thought out and articulated, providing the reader with a useful conceptual framework in his introductory chapter and a final chapter which brings together neatly, in a short but effective summary, the main elements of success from the case studies. I would have liked to see more prominent discussion, up-front, of the case study methodology rather than have it placed in the summary chapter. Also, the inclusion of some international-based case studies would have provided some interesting additional flavour to this publication, dominated as it is by US-based professionals and academics.

These minor points aside, *Sustaining Distance Training: Integrating Technologies into the Fabric of the Enterprise* is a suitable publication for those who are responsible for developing and implementing staff development programs in large public or private organisations and are examining the potential of distance education, through the integrated use of information and communication technologies.