

## November 2009 – Building Work Process “Bridges”

To Department of Energy Learning and Workforce Development Community,

For the past months, we have talked about different aspects of communications and employee engagement without mentioning a key phrase: work processes. Communications, whether among team members or a Power Point slide show to develop support for a program initiative, are work processes. They require planning; organizing of resources; budgeting of time, people, equipment, materials, machines, and attention; assessment of expected results; and reporting back on results to ensure accountability. We can take a Departmental [Project Management](#) or a Six Sigma quality control approach available through courses on the [On-Line Learning Center](#). Here we are going to take a much less sophisticated approach and talk about “bridges.”

A work process is just a bridge carrying a product or concept from one point to another and transforming its value on the way. Bridges can be extraordinary. See [Bridges Around the World](#). Bridges can lift us up or, in the form of tunnels, bore us until we see the light. (Puns and poems are also bridges from the right to the left side of the brain and from one person to another.) Bridges can be complex like the Springfield mixing bowl in Northern Virginia, simple as stepping stones in a flower garden, or as ethereal, but just as real, as a blog on the internet. In Europe and Asia, bridges can have shops, open markets, and artists’ exhibits. Bridges can have tolls, inspection points, weight limits, potholes, and EZ Pass lanes. As people who work in a Federal agency, we know about inspection points, potholes, and bridges to nowhere.

One, you have to build the work process by linking together the people, materials, machines, money, and design. Two, you have to maintain the bridge and make sure the people in charge of the bridge have the money, materials, time, and competencies needed to keep products and services moving across the bridge. Three, the work process and the people running it have to be upgraded or even redeployed, replaced, or eliminated as technologies, objectives, products, and services change. Build and link work processes together and you have a product line. It might look like a rope foot bridge in the Himalayas or the Golden Gate across San Francisco Bay as long as it works.

Training and development is a work process or bridge to improved performance and career advancement. Universal competencies like communications skills, flexibility, and problem solving provide major structural support along the span. Business management competencies like acquisition, human resources, and IT management direct traffic across the bridge, and mission critical competencies, like science, engineering, and accounting capabilities are needed to define and ensure delivery of the right products and services to customers and stakeholders. Start with a skills or competency assessment, put in place an individual development plan, and follow-up with specific training and development activities. Your work processes and your career demand that you plan, build, maintain, and reinvent a bridge to your future.

Take advantage of a learning opportunity everyday. Go to the [Guide to Learning & Development](#) on our website and be sure to make use of our [Training Consultants](#) to help you on your learning and development path to success.