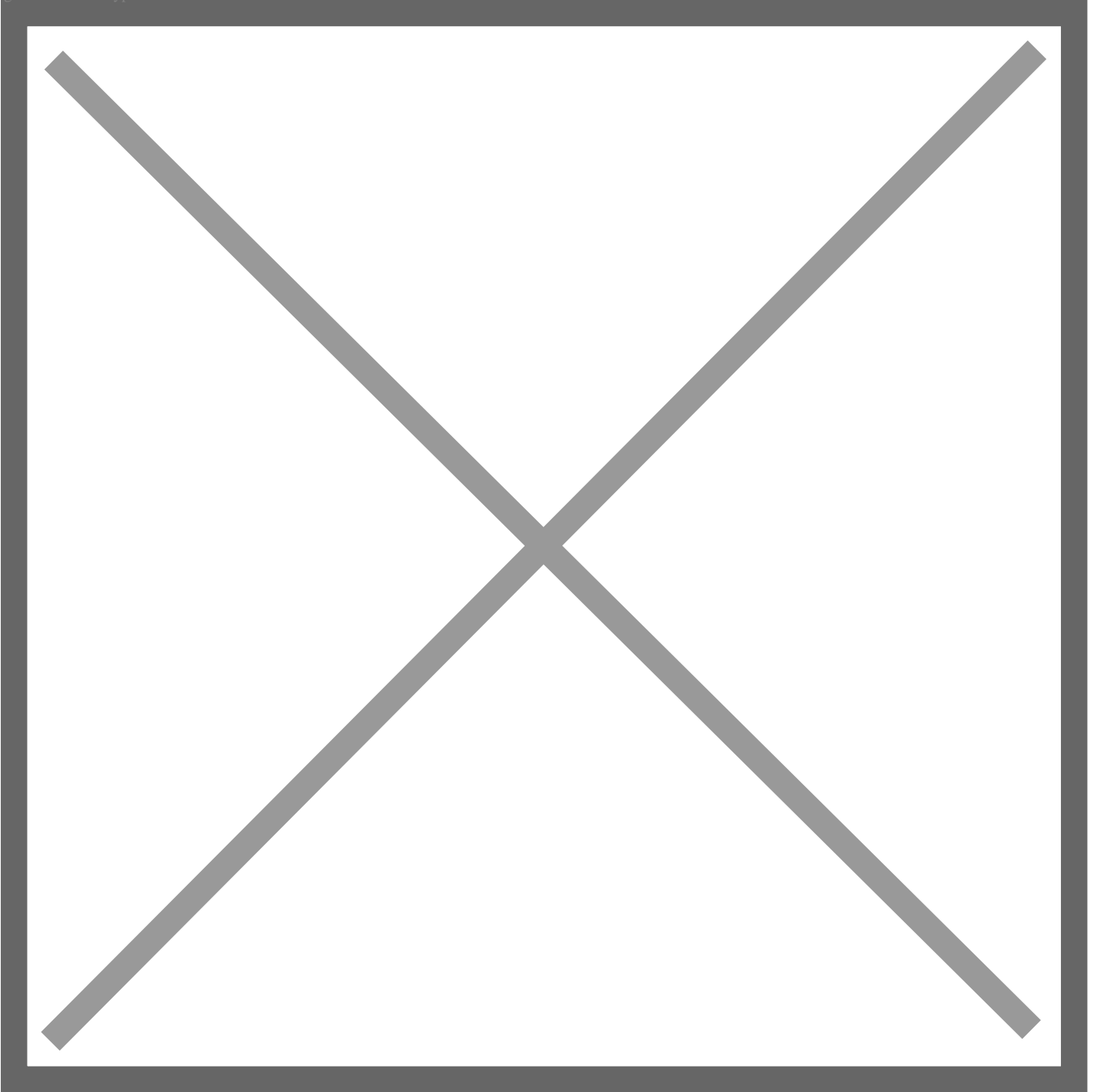


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Learning...at rest or in motion?

Description

Learning... at rest or in motion?

But first a revisit to my blog entry of October 216 titled Issue Forth. It included examples of how trite the words selected for highlighting in articles boxes can be. I found another such expression as the subheading of an article in today's Sunday paper: "Not giving a handout, we're giving a hand up." Two reasons I winced. First, how many times have we heard this line? Second, beyond ensuring the reader that this is really not subsidy, what do the words mean?

While we may think of handout as a gift—whether presumed deserved or not—the other meaning makes the term essential for helping. If we do not extend our "hand out", how can anyone make contact with us? A hand up can only happen after a hand out.

Clever readers including you have noticed one change that shifts the meaning is a space. Handout or hand out. We rarely stop to consider the difference and we cannot hear it when we listen. Watch those spaces...and the difference they make.

Now to the topic. When I work with nonprofits, I often ask if they consider themselves good learners. The answer is almost always a quick yes. When I ask what that group is doing differently based on something they have learned in the last six months, the answers come slowly. Apparently, it is just fine to say how much I have learned but how little I have changed!

So many words gain a useful edge in a Results1st framework. Learning shifts from memory retention to use of information and the insights that come from them. This is actually a return to a more original meaning of the term from education and social psychology. Learning: "a relatively enduring change in behavior."

Changing what we do is never easy. Habit, tradition, and even values give us default to do today what we did yesterday, whether at work or at home. And in organizations structures and processes are largely used to gain conformance if not compliance. By definition, a new behavior is nonconforming with an existing one. If organizations want to answer yes to the change question, they need some structures that explicitly reward trying something new.

Learning is not an armchair pursuit. At heart it is a verb not a noun.

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