The “new economy” is rapidly expanding with sophisticated devices, software, processes, business models and global connectivity. Are we keeping up?

Every day, Normandale shares in this very same conversation. “We regularly talk with businesses and learners to identify changing needs and expectations,” said Brenda Dickinson, Dean of Continuing Education and Customized Training. “Our goal is to create learning solutions that develop the skills and insights needed to manage in a world of constant change.”

New Competencies

Reading, writing, and arithmetic haven’t been enough to get the job done for a long time—but just how high employers’ expectations have risen might astound you, according to Jeff Hudson, Director. “You can’t just be an accountant anymore,” said Hudson. “In all size organizations, the business environment is sophisticated. You can no longer succeed as a person who only knows how to do one thing, no matter how well you do it.”

Employers now expect you to possess three core skills, according to Hudson: the ability to work with and adapt to change; the ability to work effectively with data; and the ability to be a team player who can work across disciplines, as well as management levels.

Toward that end, Normandale is developing new courses and programs, repurposing old ones, and working with experts and partners to see that learners and clients are up to speed in these new core competencies.

One of the new offerings is a two-day seminar provided by change management experts H. Terry Smith and Lisa Zweber-Smith, founding partners of The Implementation Institute. “Many of our participants have received positions of greater responsibility by better understanding the components and impacts of change on people and the business,” said Smith. Normandale students who take the seminar may also earn Change Agent Certification through additional work prior to and after the seminar, according to Hudson.
Hybrid Programs

Other marketplace changes include the emergence of so-called hybrid skill sets that combine high-level training in two fields, such as information technology and healthcare to create new fields like Healthcare Information Technology. Many employers are having trouble filling their job openings, according to Associate Dean Sunny Ainley. “In many cases, there aren’t enough workers out there who have the experience and the skill sets that employers want.”

To help fill the void, Normandale is turning more and more to what Ainley calls “an applied learning space in-between industry and the workforce:” the practicum.

One such practicum for the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) has resulted in outcomes that are impressive. “We were trying to figure out how to develop specific tools to effectively create electronic measures of healthcare quality,” said Becky Schierman, associate director for quality at AAN. “We were able to work with Normandale to design a practicum geared to our unique goals,” said Schierman. “It’s a win-win situation. We get the deliverable we need, and at the same time, we help train the workforce by educating employees for new kinds of skill-sets and jobs.”

Adaptive Learning Solutions

“Normandale is very cognizant of and adaptive to what the workplace needs,” says Dan Olson, co-founder of the STAR Collaborative, one of the fastest growing consulting and staffing firms in the Twin Cities. “For example, they’re way ahead of the curve when it comes to delivering programs like Scrum. Which are designed to support new agile management approaches.” Olson continues, “I don’t know how they do it but they’ve clearly demonstrated that they’re willing to develop curriculum quickly to match up with workplace needs. I find that rare in the educational world.”

With a shared interest in helping companies learn to compete and innovate in new ways, Normandale and STAR Collaborative are creating a partnership built on growing the core skills and talents needed by today’s professionals.

“At the end of the day, we’re here to help businesses and individuals reach their goals by providing learning experiences that offer those new insights and needed skills,” said Dickinson. “It’s our job to bring the best resources and expertise to our clients so that they can find better ways to lead, compete and succeed.”

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