

Congratulations ISA's 2020 Award Winners!

Each year, ISA honors a select few for their leadership, dedication to the association, and contributions to the learning industry at large. Meet our 2020 honorees.



Broomfield Award – Spirit of ISA
Mary McGlynn
President, Power Speaking

My name *Mary McGlynn*

childhood ambition: *To be a nun. Sister Mary Theresa, anyone?*

first job: *At 13, I became a live-in maid to cook, clean, iron, waitress (for cocktail parties) for a very wealthy family. (6 days/week @ \$17/week)*

Inspiration: *Rick Gilbert (husband): He's "retired" yet is involved in community, a men's group, two photography groups, five one-man shows, blogs, interviews, and assists with a 91-year-old blind friend every week. May I be as involved!*

fondest memory *Giving birth to our daughter at almost 42 years of age.*

favorite books *Can't pick one: Becoming (Obama); Where the Crawdads Sing (Owens); Educating (Westover); All The Light We Cannot See (Doerr); The Giver of Stars (Moyes)*

indulgence: *Reading People Magazine on a weekend.*

proudest moment: *I pinch myself: Company of the Year, being on the ISA Board...and the ultimate, Spirit of ISA.*

perfect day: *Sitting in a café having a conversation with a new-world friend and seeking understanding and friendship.*

My life: *It's a surprise! 3 of 10 kids, a rural farm environment, and, with an education, I've had extraordinary adventures.*

My profession provides a daily opportunity to live a passionate life.

Mary McGlynn



Outstanding Contribution Award
Kevin Cope
CEO, Acumen Learning

My name *Kevin Cope*

childhood ambition: *To teach high school woodshop or be a forest ranger*

first job: *Clearing up a construction site at age 7*

inspiration: *God, my inner voice, my wife, my children, good books, good friends, and beach sunsets*

fondest memory: *Easter Day 1998, with my wife and kids in a small raft on the Sea of Cortez surrounded by a pod of dolphins.*

favorite movie or book: *Book: Scripture. Movie: "About Time"*

indulgence: *Movies*

proudest moment: *When someone tells me that my kids are genuinely kind people.*

perfect day: *When I feel really present and connected to those around me.*

My life: *Beautiful, challenging, blessed, and a work in process.*

My profession: *Building an awesome team that runs a great business, and positively impacts each other and the world.*

K. Cope



Thought Leader Award
Josh Bersin
Founder, Bersin & Associates
Dean, Bersin Academy

My name *Josh Bersin*

childhood ambition: *To become a scientist or an airline pilot*

first job: *Newspaper delivery in my neighborhood*

inspiration: *discovery, nature, big ideas, coffee*

fondest memory: *beautiful countryside in so many different places*

favorite movie or book: *Movie: "It's A Wonderful Life"
Book: No favorite-I read widely and deeply and constantly*

indulgence: *A hot bath*

proudest moment: *When my 2 children were born*

perfect day: *Toss up between reading outside on a warm day or riding my bike in the hills near my house*

My life: *has been filled with tremendous good fortune*

My profession: *providing insights and professional development the HR community*

Josh Bersin



Founded in 1978, ISA remains committed to helping training, performance and talent development firms build, enhance and share their success. Our membership includes more than 80 companies that are contributing to the success of more than 100,000 clients across the Fortune 500.

Learn more at isaconnection.org

20/20 Vision— Hindsight, Insight, Foresight

ISA's first-ever virtual Annual Business Retreat helped members rethink not just how they deliver training but also what their businesses and people need to be able to thrive in these extraordinary times—and into the future.

BY MARLA LEPORE

What do you do when your biggest learning, networking, and inspiration-sparking event of the year is interrupted by a global pandemic? It's a thought that would have seemed ridiculously far-fetched just a year ago. Now, it's one that nearly every organization, keynote speaker, and Training professional has had to grapple with.

On March 11, Pamela Schmidt, executive director of ISA—The Association of Learning Professionals, was sitting in an airport, awaiting her connecting flight to Scottsdale, AZ, where the organization's 2020 Annual Business Retreat (ABR) was set to be held in just a few days. And then the World Health Organization made it official: COVID-19 was now a global pandemic. There was no choice; the onsite event would have to be canceled.

After catching a flight back home and settling into self-quarantine, Schmidt sat at her computer and faced the big question: Now what?

The answer was obvious: The ABR must go on. For ISA members, who comprise executives, founders, and owners of leading training, performance, and talent development firms, the ABR is the premier learning and best-practice-sharing event of the year. Members gather at the Camelback Inn in Scottsdale to challenge their thinking, network with their peers, and pick up actionable tools and advice from industry thought leaders so they can position their businesses for success and deliver greater value and innovation for their clients. With the one-two punch of a global pandemic and a worldwide economic shutdown, the strategies, connections, and support offered by the ABR were now more critical ever. And the ABR's theme, "20/20 Vision—Hindsight, Insight, Foresight," seemed tailor-made for the moment.

Schmidt and her team, along with an agile group of presenters, quickly shifted the onsite ABR to ISA's first-ever "vABR"—a weeklong virtual learning experience that members and guests were able to participate in from their home offices. Speaker-led sessions were interspersed with virtual networking breakouts that extended the opportunity for members to connect and share concerns, ideas, and lessons learned.

"It was so important to be able to deliver the program we promised," says Elaine Biech, chair of the ABR 2020 Planning Committee Team. "This is exactly the time when you need fresh thinking and practical advice, as well as the courage to take bold steps. Fortunately, our speakers enthusiastically embraced the pivot, adapting their content to the circumstances and the format."

With sessions covering topics such as "unlearning for the future," strategic disruption, unleashing creative talent, "taming your advice monster," the neuroscience of learning, and courage at work, vABR presenters offered members a wealth of strategies for harnessing the opportunities within today's challenges to deliver even more value to their businesses, clients, and learners.

The Power of Unlearning

Barry O'Reilly, author of the bestseller, "Unlearn: Let Go of Past Success to Achieve Extraordinary Results," kicked things off by highlighting the fact that, while this is an extraordinary time, the need to adapt to change is a perennial issue. And when it comes to change, "it's not businesses that get disrupted; it's people."

Even in the best of times, people will get stuck in their existing, often linear, patterns of thinking and behaving, which prevent them from adapting to new situational realities—until it's too late. Although the pandemic is forcing everyone outside their comfort zones, most of us still tend to look at past successes as a blueprint for the future. That's simply not a winning formula when change is happening faster and in exponential ways.

"The problem with transformation is never a lack of ideas," O'Reilly explained. "It's a lack of a change in behavior."

That's why we need to help people "unlearn"—by recognizing when to move away from the once-useful mindsets and behaviors that are now limiting their success. Just like we continuously innovate our products and services as the market changes, humans have to continuously adapt their behavior.

Unlearning doesn't mean encouraging your learners to discard all their knowledge and experience. Instead, we need to help them consciously let go of outdated information and own what's not working. Only then will they have the space to relearn—to take in new data and input that challenges their mental models of the world. The information and insights that come out of this continuous cycle of unlearning and relearning will lead to new breakthroughs.

O'Reilly noted that you can't just tell people to think differently and then expect them to act differently. Instead, the way to get people to think differently is to first empower them to act differently. That experience is what ultimately will change their mindsets.

His advice: Equip people to think big, start small, and learn fast. "When you're working in high chaos, it's about responding and taking small actions, repeatedly," he said. "We can't pause and freeze, and hope. But by taking small steps, we learn what works and what doesn't. We have to empower our people to do that."

The Skills and Mindsets to Create the Future

O'Reilly pointed out that much of the disruption organizations are experiencing in terms of technology and digital transformation was already happening. The pandemic was simply an accelerant. Disruption strategist Shawn Kanungo urged ISAers to recognize the opportunity that lies within this accelerated environment.

"Technology has proven that even when we're at home, we can still be learning and gaining value from others," he said. "We have an opportunity to create a new paradigm of what learning means for our organizations, to reevaluate, rethink, and reimagine work and careers."

If you're wondering whether your organization has the skills to take advantage of this moment, Kanungo argued that it does. As advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning fast-track the move toward automation, the skills we'll need in the future are uniquely human ones: imagination, creativity, empathy, intuition, emotional intelligence, communication, improvisation, and human intelligence. The people and organizations that will

20/20 Vision—Hindsight, Insight, Foresight

win in the future will be those that double-down on these skills by adopting a learning mindset, encouraging collaboration, and embracing the collision of people and ideas.

“Technology is not going to eliminate jobs,” Kanungo said. “It’s going to elevate jobs. Automation will make work more human. The more organizations adopt automation, the more we can focus on the things that really matter.”

First, though, we need to retrain executives’ mindsets about AI and data. Data isn’t the answer to everything, Kanungo noted. Its purpose is efficiency. Put another way, machine learning is about optimizing the past, while innovation is about creating the future. AI should be like electricity—powering things so humans can innovate.

The more we innovate, though, the more those innovations will change us—because any time we get a taste of something that’s

The Mindsets of Innovation Leaders

In his session on unleashing an organization’s creative talent, ISAer and ExperiencePoint Co-Founder Greg Warman explored the leadership mindsets to support those doing innovative work:

- **Relentless Optimism:** Confidence that “much better” can exist and is worth pursuing despite challenges and uncertainty inherent in innovation work.
- **Empowerment:** Setting the stage, checking in at key moments, contributing as an equal, and trusting others to do incredible work.
- **User Centricity:** Insisting on and creating opportunities for connecting with users to both surface opportunities and refine solutions.
- **Learning Focus:** Minimizing speculation based on the past or whim, and encouraging multiple prototypes and experiments that help reveal what a winning solution looks like through trying.
- **Discipline and Excellence:** Enforcing accountability for commitments and deadlines, and demanding excellent work throughout.

—ExperiencePoint Inc., Copyright © 2020

fast, efficient, and seamless, we want to adopt it. As a result, we can expect videoconferencing, virtual communities, on-demand training, and the like to grow in popularity and become part of the status quo. At the same time, the value we attribute to experiences that are meaningful, memorable, and magical will rise exponentially. From a training standpoint, this means the organizations that make learning more personalized and curated to the individual will be able to build a talent advantage.

While transformation can seem daunting, Kanungo echoed O’Reilly’s advice about the benefits of experimentation. Start with what’s possible, he suggested, because, before you know it, you’ll start to do the impossible. It’s one of the reasons he believes experimentation is a more powerful motivator than purpose. Just look at how businesses, functions, and events have pivoted over the last six months. Little experiments build up, until one day, you are disrupting your whole category.

Disrupting Your Strategy

- **Invest in human skills** such as imagination, creativity, empathy, intuition, emotional intelligence, communication, improvisation, and human intelligence.
- **Embrace new technology**, and deploy it strategically.
- **Develop your talent ecosystem**, drawing on both internal and external resources and partners.
- **Experiment relentlessly**, and make experimentation part of your culture.

The Courage to Lead in Uncertain Times

There’s no guidebook for this. As keynote speaker Shiza Shahid, co-founder and former CEO of the Malala Fund, reminded ISAers, we’re all in the same boat, trying to figure it out as we go. But, she added, “we can shape the narrative rather than being swept away by the tide.”

That takes courage. But as we continue to deal with uncertainty and a variety of personal and professional concerns, our behaviors are more likely to be directed by fear. And as ISA member and “Courage Goes to Work” author Bill Treasurer pointed out, fear is bad for business! In fact, he explained, people perform better and with higher engagement when they’re operating out of confidence, courage, and conviction than when they’re operating out of fear and anxiety. It’s why he believes courage building is just as important as teambuilding.

The good news: Courage is a skill that can be taught and learned. As children, we try and fail, fall down and get back up. Persisting through suffering is one of the earliest lessons we learn. And it’s something we can continue to build on as adults, Treasurer said.

Fortunately, this isn’t about running into a burning building or landing on the moon. It’s about what he calls “everyday courage,” something that’s available to all of us. However, everyday courage requires moving outside of our comfort zones, which isn’t something we generally like to do. In organizations, it’s up to leaders to take that first leap, and then nudge others out into their discomfort zones, too—not so much that it stokes fear but enough to activate their “courage zone.”

As other speakers noted, we need people to try new things right now. But, Treasurer emphasized, if you want people to experiment and take some risks, you first have to create safety—particularly psychological safety. You can do this by temporarily reducing the consequences of failure to give people the chance to acquire and build more skills.

We’re All Connected

The vABR proved that learning can still be interactive and collaborative, even when it takes place via technology. In fact, if there is any silver lining to all of this, it’s that more organizations now recognize that virtual technology can be a viable option for delivering training. Learning and Development (L&D) teams that have struggled to convince leaders to adopt these technologies now are finding a new willingness to give them a chance.

How to Build Courage at Work

Where are you playing it too safe? What actions can you take to activate people's courage?

Author Bill Treasurer offers three powerful things you can do to build your own courage and the courage of others:


1. **Answer the "Holy Question":** What do you want? What goal is so important to you that it will require you to activate your courage?
2. **Begin with the beginning in mind.** Consider your own courage history, those moments in your life when you did something hard and scary—and persisted.
3. **Envision a bold and courageous future for the organization, one that requires the application of everyone's courage.** Set a future that's so worthwhile and challenging that everyone's a little bit excited and a little bit afraid.

—From *"Courage Goes to Work: How to Build Backbones, Boost Performance, and Get Results,"* by Bill Treasurer, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2008

Even so, the speakers reminded ISAers that we have to rethink not just how we deliver training but also what our businesses and our people need to be able to thrive in these extraordinary times—and into the future.

As for the immediate future, Schmidt can't predict what next year will bring, but if the ABR has to go virtual again,

she's enthusiastic about the foundation she'll be able to build on from this year's experiment.

"Shiza Shahid told us, 'We have two options: We can resist or we can adapt. So let's just figure it out together.' It's a perfect summation of what ISA is all about," Schmidt says. "By figuring things out together, our organization and our members are able to take the big bold steps that will make a difference—for businesses, clients, people, and the broader global community. If anything, this experience has shown us how connected we truly are." 



Since its founding in 1978 by some of the leading minds and visionaries in training, learning, and performance consulting, ISA-The Association of Learning Providers has been guided by a single mission: to be the resource for strategic growth, expertise, and best practices for executives in the business of training and performance development.

More than 80 companies comprise the membership of ISA, representing 5,700-plus employees who serve more than 100,000 clients across the Fortune 500. From pioneers to new innovators, members all share a passion for learning; for new ideas; for better solutions; and most of all, for helping their clients develop healthy, productive, successful people and organizations.

For more information and a list of ISA member companies, visit: <https://isaconnection.org> or call 703.730.2838.

2020 winners will be announced in October!



Winners will be featured in the November/December issue of *Training*. To see a full directory of categories and winners, please visit TrainingMagNetwork.com/Awards.