

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM VICTORIA'S  
SECRET:  
ENSURING THE "PULL" IN PERFORMANCE-BASED E-LEARNING**

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Presented at the Fall 2004 Performance-Based  
Instructional Systems Design (ISD) Conference of the International Society for Performance Improvement,  
Chicago, IL

*Supplemental Materials*

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# Lessons Learned From Victoria's Secret

## Ensuring the "Pull" in Performance-Based E-Learning



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## Wouldn't It Be Nice?

### ■ If our customers:

- Came to us because they wanted to, not because they *had* to?
- Involved us in early project decisions, rather than calling us after all the decisions had already been made?
- Awaited the roll-out of our latest initiatives with the same anticipatory "buzz" that accompanies the newest Victoria's Secret catalog?

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## Victoria's Secret Factoids

- **Limited Brands (founded 1963).**
  - **Victoria's Secret (purchased 1982).**
  - **Express.**
  - **Bath & Body Works.**
  - **The White Barn Candle Company.**
  - **Henri Bendel.**
  - **The Limited.**
- **Fortune 2003 most-admired specialty retailer.**
- **Victoria's: \$28M sales in a single day.**

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## Objectives

- ✓ **Define “push” and “pull.”**
- **Describe six characteristics of performance-based solutions. Then compare:**
  - **What we typically do.**
  - **What Victoria's does to create “pull.”**
  - **What we should do—and provide some examples.**
- **Describe lessons learned.**

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## **“Push” versus “Pull” in HPT/ISD**

### **■ Push**

- **Providing a supply of known solutions, in response to perceived customer needs that may or may not correspond to business drivers.**

### **■ Pull**

- **Creating demand by meeting customer needs in ways that close gaps or seize opportunities that are consistent with business drivers.**

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## **Victoria’s Secret Goal (1995)**

**“... build brands that require a thorough understanding of our customers’ needs. A great brand is like a great movie. It has a ‘wow!’ It elicits an emotional response from each person that sees ... [it].... The image and quality of the brand, that ‘wow’ factor, is sustainable over time.”**

**-- Wexner, 2000**

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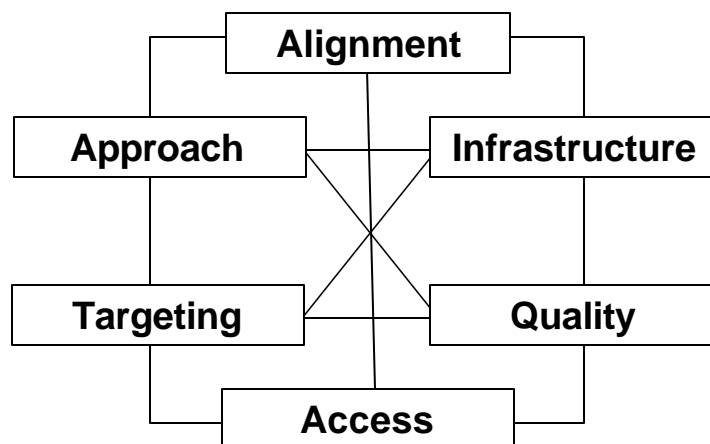
## Objectives

- ✓ Define “push” and “pull.”
- ✓ Describe six characteristics of performance-based solutions. Then compare:
  - What we typically do.
  - What Victoria’s does to create “pull.”
  - What we should do.
  - HPT/ISD examples.
- Describe lessons learned.

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## Performance-Based Characteristics



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## Alignment What We Typically Do

**Solutions misaligned with business drivers, devoid of customer input, and reflecting the solution de jour, lead to accidental or low impact on customer satisfaction and organizational performance.**



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## Alignment What Victoria's Does

**Align the organization using strategic planning and leadership to produce results.**

- **“Building brands, talent, and capabilities.”**
- **“Insight” program.**
- **“PAR” operating strategy.**
- **“Access” project.**



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## Alignment What We Should Do

**Solutions closely aligned with business drivers and objectives lead to measurable, significant impact on both customer satisfaction and organizational performance.**



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## Alignment HPT/ISD Examples

- **Recognize alignment is both critical and ongoing.**
- **Employ a suite of alignment tools and processes.**
  - **Critical success factors.**
  - **Baseline and delta measures.**
  - **Risk management.**
  - **Project change management.**



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## Approach What We Typically Do

**“Toy” and “snake-oil” solutions derived from non-systematic and non-systemic approaches looking for applicable problems customers may have, regardless of gaps between existing and desired performance.**



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## Approach What Victoria's Does

- **Employs systemic and systematic planning to build brands, talents, capabilities.**
- **Listens to its customers.**
- **Reports the approaches it employs to its stockholders and the investing public.**
- **Employs focus groups, using “lots of testing to create the world’s best-fitting pants.”**



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## Approach What We Should Do

**Solving customers' problems with applicable and measurable solutions derived from systematic and systemic approaches that close significant gaps between existing and desired needs.**



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## Approach HPT/ISD Examples

- **Listen to the customer.**
- **Adopt a systematic and systemic approach to meet the needs of customers.**

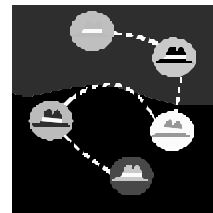


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## Infrastructure What We Typically Do

Haphazard internal processes supplemented by tribal lore lead to “death marches” becoming a way of life.



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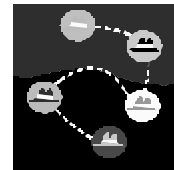
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## Infrastructure What Victoria's Does

“Pure and simple, it's about making life easier for customers by making life easier for all of us who serve customers.”

*--Len Schlesinger, COO*

- Implement PeopleSoft.
- Improve backroom organization.
- Provide reference guides.
- Provide in-store computer modeling capabilities.

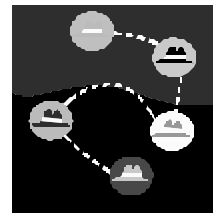


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## Infrastructure What We Should Do

**Finely tuned responsibilities, processes,  
metrics, tools, resources, and culture.**



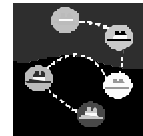
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## Infrastructure HPT/ISD Examples

**Create reusable, systematic, enterprise-wide  
infrastructure for:**

- **Specifying responsibilities and lines of accountability.**
- **Formulating end-to-end processes.**
- **Identifying metrics for measuring process efficiencies and customer impact.**
- **Providing tools and resources to expedite the processes**
- **Shaping a culture and environment where the processes can thrive.**



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## Targeting What We Typically Do

**Solutions aimed at the masses in a “one-size-fits-all” approach synonymous with “sheep dipping.”**



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## Targeting What Victoria's Does

- **In addition to Victoria's, Limited Brands also owns Abercrombie & Fitch.**
- **Employs cross-functional teamwork across the enterprise to support vision of a “full-line beauty destination.”**
- **Employs a variety of branding and marketing approaches aimed at specific target audiences.**



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## Targeting What We Should Do

**Solutions aimed at various target populations (market segments) and development costs (price points) using multi-pronged marketing approaches that meet customer needs and actual cost tolerances.**



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## Targeting HPT/ISD Examples

- **Prototype to address characteristics of the solutions.**
- **Work with opinion leaders.**
- **Employ change management to win hearts and minds.**
- **Market and brand your solutions.**



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## Quality What We Typically Do

**Failure to uncover the real business needs results in “fast, cheap, and out-of-control” solutions.**



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## Quality What Victoria's Does

- **Lives or dies by the customer's experience.**



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## Quality What We Should Do

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- The “right” quality solutions that:
  - Meet business drivers.
  - Seize opportunities to improve performance.
  - Meet customer needs in ways that improve the bottom line.



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## Quality HPT/ISD Examples

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- Use 4th-generation ISD models, such as RAPRO, to:
  - Ascertain business drivers.
  - Specify customer needs.
  - Involve customers.
  - Speed time to market.
  - Decrease development costs.
  - Ensure quality.



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## Access What We Typically Do

**Solutions part of an existing supply that is forced on customers as scheduled, based on the notion “it is good for you” and “more is better.”**



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## Access What Victoria's Does



**Over the last few years, limited has worked on improving its ability to “...satisfy customers in ways in which they deserve to be satisfied. It’s being able to guarantee a customer when he or she comes into any of our stores, calls any of our call centers, or interacts with any of our websites, that they can get access to whatever product they want, whenever they want it, in the size they want it.”**

***--Len Schlesinger, COO***

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## Access What We Should Do

**Customers obtain on-demand access to what they need, in the form they need it.**



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## Access HPT/ISD Examples

**Provide multiple access points to learning, advice, information, and tools available via:**

- Desktop/laptop.
- Wearable computers.
- Fax.
- PDAs.
- Classrooms.
- Mentors.
- Signage.
- Other.



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## Objectives

- ✓ Define “push” and “pull.”
- ✓ Describe six characteristics of performance-based solutions. Then compare:
  - ✓ What we typically do.
  - ✓ What Victoria’s does to create “pull.”
  - ✓ What we should do.
  - ✓ HPT/ISD examples.
- ✓ Describe lessons learned.

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## Alignment Lessons Learned

- Recognize that most organizations remained unaligned.
- Recognize that alignment produces results.
- Align and re-align with existing business needs to seize competitive opportunities.

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## Approach Lessons Learned

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- **Adopt a systematic and systemic approach to meet the needs of our customers.**
- **Continually focus on customer needs and seize opportunities shaped by business drivers.**

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## Processes Lessons Learned

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**Clean house” on an ongoing basis to capture and leverage internal expertise, intellectual capital, and best practices by attending to the infrastructure that supports your approach.**

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## Targeting Lessons Learned

- **Expand market vertically and horizontally.**
- **Work with customers to identify the target populations and their needs.**
- **Build characteristics into solutions that make customers want to adopt them.**
- **Win hearts and minds by meeting customer's needs for education and communications, addressing their levels of concern and stages of use.**
- **Market and brand what you create.**

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## Quality Lessons Learned

- **Focus on the customer.**
- **Align their needs with business drivers.**
- **Formulate acceptable designs to meet the needs.**
- **Seize opportunities at the right price point.**
- **Decrease time to market.**
- **Meet or exceed expectations.**

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## Access Lessons Learned

**Provide access to learning and job support  
using a variety of mechanisms.**

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## Questions and Comments

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# JOB AID 1: FACTORS INFLUENCING PERFORMANCE-BASED SOLUTIONS

<b>Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions</b>	<b>What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective</b>	<b>What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”</b>	<b>What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective</b>	<b>ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”</b>	<b>Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret</b>
<p><b>Alignment</b> <i>The act of bringing and keeping customer needs, and the solutions that meet them, in line with business drivers.</i></p>	<p>Solutions misaligned with business drivers, devoid of customer input, and reflecting the solution de jour, lead to accidental or low impact on customer satisfaction and organizational performance.</p>	<p>Align the organization using strategic planning and leadership to produce results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ “Building brands, talent, and capabilities.”</li> <li>➤ “Insight” program.</li> <li>➤ “PAR” operating strategy.</li> <li>➤ “Access” project.</li> </ul>	<p>Solutions closely aligned with business drivers and objectives lead to measurable, significant impact on both customer satisfaction and organizational performance.</p>	<p>Recognize alignment is both critical and ongoing.</p> <p>Employ a suite of alignment tools and processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Critical success factors.</li> <li>➤ Baseline and delta measures.</li> <li>➤ Risk management.</li> <li>➤ Project change management.</li> </ul>	<p>Recognize that most organizations remained unaligned.</p> <p>Recognize that alignment produces results.</p> <p>Align and re-align with existing business needs to seize competitive opportunities.</p>

<b>Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions</b>	<b>What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective</b>	<b>What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”</b>	<b>What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective</b>	<b>ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”</b>	<b>Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret</b>
<p><b>Approach</b></p> <p><i>The employment of a methodology to create performance-based solutions.</i></p>	<p>“Toy” and “snake-oil” solutions derived from non-systematic and non-systemic approaches looking for applicable problems customers may have, regardless of gaps between existing and desired performance.</p>	<p>Employs systemic and systematic planning to build brands, talents, and capabilities.</p> <p>Listens to its customers.</p> <p>Reports the approaches it employs to its stockholders and the investing public.</p> <p>Employs focus groups, using “lots of testing to create the world’s best-fitting pants.”</p>	<p>Solving customers’ problems with applicable and measurable solutions derived from systematic and systemic approaches that close significant gaps between existing and desired needs.</p>	<p>Listen to the customer.</p> <p>Adopt a systematic and systemic approach to meet the needs of customers.</p>	<p>Adopt a systematic and systemic approach to meet the needs of our customers.</p> <p>Continually focus on customer needs and seize opportunities shaped by business drivers.</p>

Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions	What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective	What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”	What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective	ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”	Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret
<p>Infrastructure</p> <p><i>The responsibilities, processes, metrics, tools, resources, and culture employed to execute the approach.</i></p>	<p>Haphazard internal processes supplemented by tribal lore lead to “death marches” becoming a way of life.</p>	<p>Len Schlesinger, COO— “Pure and simple, it’s about making life easier for customers by making life easier for all of us who serve customers.”</p> <p>Implement PeopleSoft.</p> <p>Improve backroom organization to be able to respond to customer questions with the right style and the right size.</p> <p>Provide reference guides in the backrooms to expedite ordering, shipping, and display of store goods to improve efficiency.</p> <p>Provide computer-modeling capabilities to stores, so they can estimate their traffic patterns and plan resource staffing to reduce the ratio between employees and customers.</p>	<p>Finely tuned responsibilities, processes, metrics, tools, resources, and culture.</p>	<p>Create reusable, systematic, enterprise-wide infrastructure for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Specifying responsibilities and lines of accountability.</li> <li>➤ Formulating end-to-end processes.</li> <li>➤ Identifying metrics for measuring process efficiencies and customer impact.</li> <li>➤ Providing tools and resources to expedite the processes</li> <li>➤ Shaping a culture and environment where the processes can thrive.</li> </ul>	<p>“Clean house” on an ongoing basis to capture and leverage internal expertise, intellectual capital, and best practices by attending to the infrastructure that supports your approach.</p>

<b>Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions</b>	<b>What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective</b>	<b>What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”</b>	<b>What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective</b>	<b>ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”</b>	<b>Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret</b>
<p><b>Targeting</b></p> <p><i>The extent to which the solutions meet the needs of identified populations and groups.</i></p>	<p>Solutions aimed at the masses in a “one-size-fits-all” approach synonymous with “sheep dipping.”</p>	<p>In addition to Victoria’s, Limited Brands also owns Abercrombie &amp; Fitch.</p> <p>Employs cross-functional teamwork across the enterprise to support vision of a “full-line beauty destination.”</p> <p>Employs a variety of branding and marketing approaches aimed at specific target audiences.</p>	<p>Solutions aimed at various target populations (market segments) and development costs (price points) using multi-pronged marketing approaches that meet customer needs and actual cost tolerances.</p>	<p>Prototype to address characteristics of the solutions.</p> <p>Work with opinion leaders.</p> <p>Employ change management to win hearts and minds.</p> <p>Market and brand your solutions.</p>	<p>Expand market vertically and horizontally.</p> <p>Work with customers to identify the target populations and their needs.</p> <p>Build characteristics into solutions that make customers want to adopt them.</p> <p>Win hearts and minds by meeting customer’s needs for education and communications, addressing their levels of concern and stages of use.</p> <p>Market and brand what you create.</p>

<b>Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions</b>	<b>What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective</b>	<b>What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”</b>	<b>What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective</b>	<b>ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”</b>	<b>Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret</b>
<p><b>Quality</b></p> <p><i>The extent to which solutions meet or exceed customer expectations.</i></p>	<p>Failure to uncover the real business needs results in “fast, cheap, and out-of-control” solutions.</p>	<p>Lives or dies by the customer’s experience.</p>	<p>The “right” quality solutions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Meet business drivers.</li> <li>➤ Seize opportunities to improve performance.</li> <li>➤ Meet customer needs in ways that improve the bottom line.</li> </ul>	<p>Use 4<sup>th</sup>-generation ISD models, such as RAPRO, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ascertain business drivers.</li> <li>➤ Specify customer needs.</li> <li>➤ Involve customers.</li> <li>➤ Speed time to market.</li> <li>➤ Decrease development costs.</li> <li>➤ Ensure quality.</li> </ul>	<p>Focus on the customer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Align their needs with business drivers.</li> <li>➤ Formulate acceptable designs to meet the needs.</li> <li>➤ Seize opportunities at the right price point.</li> <li>➤ Decrease time to market.</li> <li>➤ Meet or exceed expectations.</li> </ul>

Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions	What We Typically Do: The “Push” Perspective	What Victoria’s Does to Create “Pull”	What We Should Do: The “Pull” Perspective	ISD/HPT Examples that Create “Pull”	Lessons Learned from Victoria’s Secret
<p>Access</p> <p><i>The ways in which customers can display and user learning and other job support resources at the moment of need.</i></p>	<p>Solutions part of an existing supply that is forced on customers as scheduled, based on the notion “it is good for you” and “more is better.”</p>	<p>Len Schlesinger, COO— Over the last few years, Limited Brands has worked on improving its ability to “...satisfy customers in ways in which they deserve to be satisfied. It’s being able to guarantee a customer when he or she comes into any of our stores, calls any of our call centers, or interacts with any of our websites, that they can get access to whatever product they want, whenever they want it, in the size they want it.”</p>	<p>Customers obtain on-demand access to what they need, in the form they need it.</p>	<p>Provide multiple access points to learning, advice, information, and tools available via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Desktop/laptop.</li> <li>➤ Wearable computers.</li> <li>➤ Fax.</li> <li>➤ PDAs.</li> <li>➤ Classrooms.</li> <li>➤ Mentors.</li> <li>➤ Signage.</li> <li>➤ Other.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide access to learning and job support using a variety of mechanisms.</p>



# Lessons Learned From Victoria's Secret: Ensuring the "Pull" in Performance Improvement

by Deborah L. Stone, CPT and Steven W. Villachica, PhD, CPT

For a more in-depth look at the Lessons Learned from Victoria's Secret, attend ISPI's 2004 Performance-Based Instructional Systems Design Conference from September 30–October 2, in Chicago, Illinois, where Deborah Stone is a featured Masters Series presenter.

Wouldn't it be nice if the users for whom performance improvement and training departments create performance improvement solutions—

- Came to us because they wanted to, not because they *had* to?
- Involved us early in project decisions, rather than calling us after all the decisions had already been made?
- Awaited the roll-out of our latest initiatives with the same anticipatory "buzz" that accompanies the newest Victoria's Secret catalog?

Let's be honest. This vision is definitely better than "nice." It's marvelous! And all we really needed to know about achieving this vision we learned from Victoria's Secret. And at the risk of any jokes linking the cancellation of this year's televised fashion show to Janet Jackson's Super Bowl exposure, we are very serious about this Victoria's Secret thing. It's not just us; *Fortune* magazine recently ranked Victoria's parent company, Limited Brands, as its third most admired specialty retailer (Hjelt, 2004).

Think about it. We all knew what lingerie was long before Victoria's Secret opened its doors. It is just that Victoria's Secret provides quality products targeted at multiple audiences. It does a great job of branding and marketing its products. Every buyer gets a catalog containing products ranging from bedroom wear to business apparel. Those products meet customer desires and have multiple price points. People sign up for email offers that drive sales at local stores. Others folks shop online. And still others take time out of their busy schedules to watch the fashion shows on television or the Internet.

## "Pull" Versus "Push"

Victoria's customer-centered focus is not accidental. It is engineered, systematic, and systemic. Les Wexner, the founder, chair, and CEO of Limited Brands, launched a major initiative in 1995 to create a large, complex, enterprise. The goal was to—

- ... build brands that require a thorough understanding of our customers' needs. A great brand is like a great movie. It has a 'wow!' It elicits an emotional response from each person.... The image and quality of the brand, that "wow" factor, is sustainable over time (Wexner, 2000).

Characteristics of Performance-Based Solutions	“Push” Approach	“Pull” Approach
Approach	“Toy” and “snake-oil” solutions derived from non-systematic and non-systemic approaches looking for applicable problems users may have, regardless of gaps between existing and desired performance	Solving users’ problems with applicable and measurable solutions derived from systematic and systemic approaches that close significant gaps between existing and desired performance
Alignment	Solutions misaligned with business drivers and objectives lead to accidental or low impact on individual and organizational performance	Solutions closely aligned with business drivers and objectives lead to measurable, significant impact on individual and organizational performance
Targeting	Solutions aimed at the masses in a “one-size-fits-all” approach synonymous with “sheep dipping”	Solutions aimed at various target populations (market segments), with multiple media and development costs (price points) meeting various user needs and cost tolerances
Quality	Inconsistent solutions of varying quality, depending on who created the solution and the needs of the users employing it	Consistently high-quality solutions that meet both the business objectives of the organization and the performance requirements of the users
Access	Solutions part of an existing supply that is forced on users as scheduled, based on the notions that “it is good for you” and “more is better”	Solutions are chosen by user, based on desire to obtain on-demand access to what they need, in the form they need it
Development	Pre-existing solutions or ones developed based on limited instructional systems development are “pushed” toward users without their collaborative involvement	Users involved in the creation of their solutions from the outset by specifying performance gaps and their significance, specifying performance requirements, formulating and testing appropriate designs, developing and evaluating solutions

Figure 1. Characteristics of the “Push” and “Pull” Approaches.

That “wow” factor involves creating demand, a “pull” for the different products that Victoria’s and its sister companies offer. They create this “buzz” by offering customers what they can use and feel good about, thereby closing gaps between what they have and desire.

We might agree that getting the wow and creating a pull for lingerie is sexier than doing the same for performance improvement initiatives, but how much expertise and effort has your organization really put into trying? As human performance technology (HPT) practitioners, we are often guilty of trying to “push” unwanted performance interventions to the masses we serve. Figure 1 compares the characteristics of these two approaches to providing lingerie or performance-based solutions.

### Lessons Learned

Based on lessons learned from Victoria’s Secret, we suggest that HPT practitioners consider creating a similar pull for the performance-based solutions. It all comes down to the ways that we think about implementation. Are we “pushing” content out to our clients or creating a pull for our performance solutions?

Creating a pull takes time, as users naturally tend to resist solutions that will bring changes to their roles and jobs. We have learned that achieving this goal requires several elements:

- Collaborative methods such as rapid application development (Martin, 1991) that ensure end users’ needs are met while obtaining their buy-in and support (Villachica & Stone, 1998)
- Building characteristics into solutions that make users want to adopt them (Rogers, 1995)
- Winning hearts and minds by meeting end users’ needs for education and communications, addressing their levels of concern and stages of use (Hall & Hord, 1987)
- Marketing and branding the solutions to create a demand among users (Stone & Villachica, 2003b).

### Conclusion

Given these time requirements, HPT practitioners cannot afford to treat implementation as an afterthought, a “miracle” that happens after the development work is done (Stone & Villachica, 2003a). Underlying this perception is the notion of “if you build it, they will come.” Aside from those who can consistently make their field of dreams a reality, this notion simply falls short when it is used to justify a push-based approach to creating performance-based solutions.

Contrary to linear models of instructional systems development and HPT, implementation needs to begin on Day 1 of a development effort—if not before. If we want to be as successful as Victoria’s Secret, we need to be collaborating with users to create a pull for performance improvement solutions. 🌟

### More on the “Pull Principle”

The concept of “pull” comes from lean manufacturing, devised by Taiichi Ohno of Toyota following World War II. One of the principles of lean manufacturing (Womack & Jones, 1996) is to make *only* what is needed by the customer. In a manufacturing setting, “pull” means that no one upstream in a manufacturing flow should produce a good or service until a customer downstream requests it. In the HPT setting, “pull” means focusing on meeting user needs in ways that create a demand that drives the creation and implementation of performance improvement efforts.

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