



## Talking Learning, Leadership, and Results with AMA's Manny Avramidis

### Leading Learning Podcast Transcript for Episode 376

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:00:00] Most institutions think that their people, the people helping the institution succeed, is amongst if not the most important resource that they have to offer. Yet 57 percent in the U.S., 57 percent of the 24 or so million people classified as managers receive zero training. Zero formal training.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:00:24] I'm Celisa Steele.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:00:25] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:00:33] Soft skills training is a different beast than technical training, and Manny Avramidis, president and CEO of the American Management Association, knows this well. AMA provides management development and educational services to individuals and organizations in over 100 countries, with a primary focus on soft skills. In this episode, number 376, Manny talks with Jeff about how the market for professional development and education has changed and matured during his quarter century working at AMA, how AMA places emphasis on the application of the skills and knowledge it teaches, and how it can say that a very impressive 98 percent of people who have taken AMA training confirm that they apply what they've learned. Manny also touches on his belief that a leader's success should be measured by the intelligence of their team, the value of leveraging partnerships, and why AMA and Tagoras (the parent company of Leading Learning) formed a partnership to allow membership organizations to get their learners access to AMA's library of 70+ e-learning modules. For leaders of learning businesses and aspiring leaders, there's lots to glean from this conversation. Jeff and Manny spoke in August 2023.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:02:01] Can you tell us a bit more about the American Management Association as an organization, what the organization really is focused on doing, and a little bit more about the work that you do there?

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**Manny Avramidis:** [00:02:13] Sure. I'll give you the long version first and, thereafter, the shorter version. The long version is we've been headquartered in New York City as an association, of course, for 100 years. So we're celebrating our centennial this year. And we do business—I'd say 75 percent of our revenue comes from the U.S., about 25 percent from abroad. We have 14 offices throughout the world that enable us to service over 100 countries. And our primary product is soft skill training, and it comes in many forms. As far as our core business, it's multi-day seminars, two to three days of immersive training. We also offer on-site training, where we go to our client sites, and that's an important point in that. Some of our more sophisticated clients—so we service 92 percent of the Fortune 1000, and we educate approximately a million people a year around the world, and some of them like to receive training that's locally, culturally sensitive in 40 to 50 countries at once, and we're positioned in a good way to do that. We'll get into this a little later, I'm sure, but our capabilities enable us to meet customers where they need to be met, from the most sophisticated custom solution to off-the-shelf asynchronous or e-learning solutions. And the short version of that is we've worked, as an institution, very hard for 100 years to perfect training that enables individuals and organizations to realize their potential. That's what we do on a daily basis.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:03:44] And you're interesting, at least to me, as an association because most associations will have a continuing education/professional development arm. They're offering some training, some education in their field or industry, but it's usually not their main focus. It's not the core of their business. But that really is the core of your business, to be that professional development and education provider.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:04:06] It is. And, as a professional education provider—so continuing ed, if you will—I say we service 92 percent of the Fortune 1000, but we also service many small businesses, many government entities. We do quite a bit of business with the government, not as much with associations as I'd like for us to be doing—and I'm sure we'll talk about that a little later. But we try to spend a lot of time taking the complex and simplifying it so that our client base can consume in a manner that enables them to improve their capabilities. So that's a whole lot of words to say many associations have a high level of expertise in whatever it is that association focuses on. Let's just say, for example, it's the medical field or science or HR, project management, whatever it is. But, when it comes to the soft skills side, there is a lot of room for improvement. In our case, we focus on the soft side. That's what we do. We not only do it for ourselves, but we do it for our client base. And that's all we focus on. There is no technical aspect except for the technicalities of building training that works, that sticks, that is able to be applied and make a difference, and so on.

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**Jeff Cobb:** [00:05:16] AMA has been around for 100 years, which is remarkable. There are not a lot of organizations that can say that. So congratulations on that.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:05:22] Thank you.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:05:23] Yes. And you, yourself, have been there for more than two decades, and you've served a number of roles before the current role. I'd love to hear what are some key ways in which you've seen the market for professional development and education change over that time period.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:05:41] Oh, gosh. It's changed, and it's changed a lot. I remember way back when, when I first started at AMA or when I graduated school—which was probably at this point 30 years ago—there were very few institutions that were known for best-in-class training happening on their premises. And I'm not talking about training institutions like us; I'm talking about Fortune 50, Fortune 500 companies, and so on. If you were seeking a profession in our space, to become either a training and development professional, organization development professional, and so on, it was hard to find schools that taught that sort of thing or issued those sorts of degrees. So the audience that we served back then, for lack of a better phrase, was not as sophisticated as it is today. The level of sophistication has changed significantly, and not just from a technology standpoint but from a know-how standpoint and how to build training that makes a difference. Today you'll see many leading institutions have full divisions and spend millions—tens of millions in some cases—of dollars on perfecting soft skill development. That was not the case in the past. It simply was not.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:06:49] On a positive note, I think that the industry has become more sophisticated, and the level of product offering has become a lot better. On the flip side, the industry has become saturated. The barriers to entry have disappeared. Where it used to be you would learn from experts, whether it be in an academic setting or a professional development setting like what AMA provides. Now some people think Google is good enough. Imagine most institutions think that their people, the people helping the institution succeed, is amongst if not the most important resource that they have to offer. Yet 57 percent in the U.S., 57 percent of the 24 or so million people classified as managers receive zero training. Zero formal training. Imagine you're a technical expert, which means you do your job pretty well, and you get promoted—or it doesn't mean. You probably do your job pretty well, you get promoted into a manager rank, and now your job is to get things done through others. And people just hope because you're a good technical expert, individual contributor, that's all going to happen on its own. Well, that happens even today. So today what happens?

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**Manny Avramidis:** [00:08:04] They can go out there and learn on their own, whether it's Google, YouTube, or some of the other ways you can receive information. And, in their minds, it's good enough. And that good enough, unfortunately, translates into chaos sometimes at the job, not only for the person in the organization but for the people they work with. So that's kind of catching the tiger by the tail in our industry, and that's where the importance of AMA spending 100 years perfecting or building a brand that individuals can trust has become a significant differentiator. Our best consumer's an educated consumer who know the difference between training that works and information sharing or information gathering that, perhaps, is not classified as training or training that, perhaps, does not work. I'll share with you, Jeff, and I'll pause after this.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:08:53] I have three children that are in their early 20s—23, 21, and 19, I should say. They often come to me, and they say, "Hey, Dad, did you know such and such?" I said, "Well, how did you find that out?" They said, "Well, I read it on the Internet." They're fairly smart children. I said, "Well, who wrote the article?" And it's just a pause. They have no idea. No idea at all. So they could be learning something that could be totally wrong, applying it in their life or on their job, and they have no idea that there are institutions out there that curate this information—such as you do and we do—and pretty much bring it to the level where it can be trusted. It's not even on their agenda. It's not even on their radar. All of that has permeated into our industry as well. It's almost as if it's the Wild West. But there are some gems out there, and, of course, I speak highly of AMA, but it's not just AMA. There are many gems out there that can be relied on, and that—I'll focus on the advancement—is a lot more than where we were a quarter century ago when I started in this profession.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:09:58] I see that same challenge you're talking about around information and trust. I've got two kids as well, and I've had similar scenarios with both of them. But, unfortunately, I also see it very much in the professional world, where people are citing things and using information that's outdated, was never correct in the first place, but it's still out there. It's a big challenge.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:10:23] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection services. If you're looking for a partner to help your learning business achieve greater reach, revenue, and impact, learn more at [tagoras.com/services](http://tagoras.com/services).

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**Jeff Cobb:** [00:10:58] How is AMA working to meet that challenge, to cut through the noise, be seen as that trusted source? And what other challenges are you seeing—because of how, particularly, technology has changed the landscape—that you’re really having to wrestle with and rise to these days?

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:11:16] There’s a lot to unpack there. It’s a great question. As far as how we’re meeting the challenges with technology, we’re leveraging technology. It’s enabling us to reach places that otherwise we would not have been able to reach in an effective manner, whether it’s asynchronous or synchronous training. And not only enabling us to reach, but enabling our clients to reach their constituencies, whether it’s associations with members, organizations with employees, and so on. Technology has been leveraged in a great way from an e-learning standpoint and asynchronous live online, LMSes, LXPs, and so on. From the perspective of how we’re wrestling with trying to make a difference and engaging people in training that makes sense for them and that’s proven to work, and so on, so, first, when we curate our content, it’s not just what we do within AMA. We have over 1,000 faculty globally and many more subject matter experts that we leverage. We also leverage our client base, so when you’re able to engage and service very sophisticated organizations, we play a role, but we also learn together. We learn together on how to solve challenges. Some of what we do is we’ll go into an organization, and they’ll tell us, “We’re not sure of what we need.” We need an assessment, and that assessment should generate some level of guidance.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:12:30] And then we’ll talk about what makes sense to implement. Literally, we start from scratch. And you learn when you do that. Once you learn from doing that, you create solutions that work across many, many industries. You start to perfect that and then offer something similar to the general public via our 150 seminars that we have. So there’s a lot that we’re able to do in making sure that what we offer is representative of a brand. I will share with you—and we’re very, very proud of this—98 percent of the people that engage in our training have confirmed that they apply what they’ve learned. Also, think about that for a second because we’ve all engaged in a lot of training. If I asked you if you applied what you learned, in some cases, you don’t even remember what you learned. Well, the way we develop our programs, we ensure that there’s application in real time and that you’re able to apply it on the job. And then we ask you, “Are you able to apply it on the job? We saw it in the class, but can you do it on the job?” And the 98 percent that say that they’ve applied it is because they were enabled to apply it. The vast majority of the two percent that did not, come back and say to us, “Oh, I could, but my boss simply doesn’t allow for me to.”

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**Manny Avramidis:** [00:13:39] It's a new system they learned, or whatever it might be. So we find some comfort in that but wish they were able to. And, as far as our value proposition is concerned, we put our money where our mouth is. We offer a 100-percent money-back guarantee for any participant who's attended one of our programs and feels that they did not learn what they came to learn, and they're not able to apply it. And, not to turn this into a commercial, but, I will tell you, another source of great pride is a good portion of those participants do not want to come to us for training. They're sent by their bosses, whether they're not able to do their jobs effectively as a manager or as an individual contributor or a leader, and they're sent to AMA for remediation, and they show up, and their arms are folded, and they really don't want to be there. Well, when they leave, more often than not, much more often than not, they tell us we helped change their lives and save their careers. So it's a feel-good situation when you know that you're working for an institution, that you play a small role in making that happen.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:14:39] Right. That is something I really love about AMA, and it's there front and center on your Web site, that you say your content is proven, that you ensure results. You were just talking about that, and it's surprising to me most training and education providers do not do that. You don't see a guarantee. You don't see anything about ensuring results. And, increasingly, the learners, the employers are expecting that. We ask them about that, and they say, "Yes, if I'm going to pay money for something in particular, I want to know it actually did something for me." So it sounds like you're tracking application, which is fantastic, and that's a great number, 98 percent. Are there other ways that you're able to ensure that you know that you've achieved what you aim to achieve with the offerings that you have?

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:15:22] As far as training is concerned, there are institutions that share information, and then you have your subject matter mastery. You have your application stage and then return on investment, which is difficult. Proving out a return on investment is sometimes not worth the effort, to be very honest with you. There are too many external factors that often impact that. The other way we track is, some of the people who come to our training voluntarily come (or many of them), others are sent, others as part of a program, and so on. Obviously, we would ask for the individuals to give us feedback, and that feedback that we receive from individuals is very strong. Equally important, we go to their institution—the people who are paying the bill, if you will—and we ask them, "Did we achieve what we sought out to achieve?" And that's direct feedback from the customer and the participant, who's not always the only customer, and that's also confirmation that we're achieving what it is that we set out to achieve. Those are the two main factors. But the application is, I would say, most important of all.

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**Jeff Cobb:** [00:16:21] Great. And I want to ask this because you referenced earlier that there are so many people who get into management positions who really have zero training for it. They have to figure it out as they go along. For those who do get training, traditionally it's been the MBA, the master's in business administration. That's the degree you get if you're going to be in management, but a lot of people don't have that, and we're seeing growing demand for other types of credentialing—certification, certificates, microcredentials, that sort of thing. I know you offer a certification in professional management as part of your library of offerings. How big of a part of your business is that, and are you seeing that increase in demand for certification or other types of credentialing in the management world?

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:17:07] Yes, definitely seeing an increase in credentialing. As far as what we call our Certified Professional Manager, or AMA-CPM, it was recently launched, actually launched during COVID. And we have thousands of people engaged. I want to say we probably have, give or take, over a thousand who have sat for an exam and have been certified. It's a serious certification. But let's go back a little bit and talk about why we developed a certification. Because most of what we do hones in on a specific skill for managers—a better delegator, better critical thinking, successfully managing people, successfully leading people, very narrowly focused, two-, three-day immersive training that perfects that skill. This was more of a pull than a push. We started to hear, from our members of our association and our clients beyond that, there was a need for some level of standardization for management. And knowing what we know about management, that's like asking someone to boil the ocean. There is a lot that goes into that. That is not an easy lift. And there were many, many strategic discussions and senior-level sleepless nights, and we decided to take this on. And when we took it on, the primary reason was we reached out to, I want to say, about 11,000 to 12,000 people who would have an interest in this sort of thing.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:18:26] And almost 90 percent of them confirmed that there is a need for standardization and management. So we said, "Okay, we're going to do this." We set out to boil the ocean, and we did. We have our MBOK, I should say, or our management body of knowledge, and it has been going extremely well for those who are engaging. It is designed to provide a manager with—I'm going to say all, but you can never get to all—almost all of the necessary knowledge that they need to be an effective manager. It doesn't quite get to application, though, so you can arguably study or prepare, test, pass, and have never been a successful manager. But you're book smart, if you will. So it is that application stage where we talk a little bit, and we try to do our best to ensure that, if you've taught the person as best you can, the chances are they will be in a better position to apply. This is something that I think can

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become a much bigger part of our business. And individuals seek out this credential for many reasons: for promotional reasons, to learn how to do the job better in where they are. Organizations seek it out for an extreme amount of reasons; they realize that there is a significant need in the management ranks for some level of standardization.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:19:39] Now, to not get into too much detail, the reality is the organization, its culture, its willingness are all critical to a manager's success. It's not just the education side. So all of that has met together, and we have put together this exam. It's about a three-hour exam, about 150 to 170 multiple-choice questions, very similar to what you see in other credentials. And we think it's going to make a difference. We're seeing quite a bit of interest, by the way, abroad. We just had quite a few people in the Middle East, places like Australia, Asia, Europe certainly, show a lot of interest and want to sign up, but we initially launched it in the U.S., and it's got quite a bit of traction, but it's fairly new for us. To put things into perspective for you, when I say thousands of people, we educate about a million people a year, and we offer about 10,000 live instructor-led sessions throughout the world a year, and that's not even talking about licensing our content and e-learning libraries and all that sort of stuff. So we deal with very, very large numbers.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:20:38] Well, I know we're going to have a lot of listeners who are interested in standing up a credential of some sort. Hearing your story around that, I think, is incredibly helpful. And it sounds like you really did recognize a market need there, validated that market need, and came out with something that's been quite successful, and I can definitely understand why that sort of certification has—a lot of U.S. certifications, in fact, do—have resonance internationally, and that seems to be proving out for you.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:21:12] One thing we're really interested in—and, when I say we, I mean Tagoras and then the extended work we do through Leading Learning—is opportunities for collaboration across what we characterize as the learning business landscape, which has a variety of different organizations in it. Associations are a big one. And, with that in mind, we've recently partnered with you to create a collaboration by making the AMA's e-learning library available to other associations to offer to their members more than 70 modules focusing on core management, business, leadership-type topics. Organizations can license that, put it onto their own learning management system, and rapidly expand their online catalog with high-quality content. I'd love to get your perspective on why AMA decided to make the e-learning library available in this way and how you think about working with other associations.

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**Manny Avramidis:** [00:22:10] Sure. The e-learning library is one of the arrows in our quiver, and the question was, “How do you ensure that an e-learning asset is going to be aligned with the brand that promises to deliver behavior change?” I will share with you and, obviously, your audience, the starting point of how e-learning is derived as critical. I know a lot about how e-learning is created and a lot about many leading institutions. And the reality is some of them do a fantastic job, but some of them create it based on an article or a thought. Our e-learning originates from our best products—training seminars that have worked and worked very well. What we did was challenged our internal staff and said, “Can we deliver 20-minute e-learning assets that take a portion of these multi-day seminars and teach only that portion? Get us to the point of subject matter mastery, where they’re engaging, and there’s a quiz that everyone passes because it keeps on regurgitating if you get the question wrong, and so on.” And we did that. One of the things, to be quite open with you, that’s always challenged me is, we serve so many people in the world; we don’t serve enough associations. And I challenged our executive team and said, “How are we going to reach out to associations, and how are we going to provide a library that’s meaningful, a library of educational assets that’s not only meaningful but at an affordable price point?” Because we are expensive.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:23:39] And, in partnering with you, Jeff, the reality is, you’re the conduit to reaching out to a lot of these associations. When we talk—we’ll talk business for a second, and we’ll talk about the numbers and what we would be offering this at—the numbers don’t make sense because it’s a 90-percent discount off of what we sell to the public or the corporate world. But this is special for associations. It’s aligned with our mission of educating people and helping them realize their potential. I realize—and I’m a member of boards and so on, and I engage with associations quite a bit—usually, when I speak with association leadership, there is a degree of excellence that’s unmatched in their specific profession, but there is a need for soft skill development. I think that we can fulfill that need. Together, we can help meet the needs, not only for the association and their own personnel but, more importantly or equally important, for the membership of those associations. That’s what this program is meant to do. I think that we’re on to something, and I think we’re going to help a whole lot of people get better within their roles.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:24:36] You just covered a lot of this in a way, but I’ll try to encapsulate it here. If I am the director of learning, the VP of learning, whatever that position is at an association, I see this content. I’m thinking, “Yes, this is a good idea. It’s going to help us rapidly expand our library with high-quality content.” But I’ve got to go convince the CEO. I’ve got to go convince the board to do this. You are a CEO. You sit on boards. What are the arguments that person

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needs to make, the bullets they need to walk in with to say, “This is something we need to do right now as a member benefit for our organization”?

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:25:09] Well, the first is, if, in fact, the association chooses to do this, they’re going to affiliate with a brand that’s fairly well known within the space. At the value proposition, not only the learning itself but the price point is very likely to be unmatched. And, finally, I would say, is there a need? It all comes down to how will the members benefit. What I would say to an association is, first, confirm that there’s a need with your membership base, and, if that membership base confirms the need, I think the pathway to success is fairly easy to implement these assets that can make a meaningful difference in people’s lives. And I have to tell you, Jeff—full disclosure; we’ve had conversations outside of this podcast—I don’t know if I’ve ever told you this, but my introduction to AMA was pre-AMA. In my first job, I was sent to an AMA training program, and we’re going way back now. It changed my life, and I cannot emphasize enough, at that time, what a difference it made. And then I was sent to another program, and it changed my life even more. I didn’t stumble across AMA until, back in those days, I saw on *The Sunday Times* that they were offering a job, and I decided to apply for it. I’m also a product of AMA training, if you will. I believe that this library can do the same for many people. We, as AMA, just haven’t done a good enough job reaching out to the associations and their members as we could have. I think we’re on to something now, though.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:26:33] I’m so glad we got that story. I was not aware of that. You are the poster child for AMA in so many ways and for the education and training that you offer. Now, associations are one place for collaboration out there in this broader learning business landscape. We’ll definitely provide information in the show notes to this episode about how you can learn more about the e-learning library, talk with us, license it (if you want to), and make that available to your members.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:26:58] Another area we’ve been looking at, though, that I’d love to ask you, at least, a little bit about before we wrap up today is the academic world. I feel like there’s so much opportunity for collaboration between associations and academia, and we don’t feel like we see enough of it or enough innovation in how associations and academia are interacting with each other. I know you do have partnerships in the higher education community. Can you talk a little bit about how AMA partners with colleges and universities?

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:27:28] Sure. The way we go to market today is primarily public seminars that can be delivered—we’re talking \$2,800 to \$3,000 price points—they can be delivered at our premises, or it could be private for you. We also license content, so the content of those

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seminars. If you have a well-built institution where you have training capabilities, we train your trainers to train our seminars for your constituency. We meet many universities there, where they have the professors, if you will. We ensure that they have practitioner experience because that's part of our value proposition, and we train those trainers to train our programs, whether it be for their grad students or mostly for their continuing ed arm. So they license, and they train within their own environment. We also have quite a few institutions, and these institutions vary anywhere from what you would classify as a top ten in the world to a community school, which also serves a different kind of purpose. We help their own administration, where they license or engage us to train their own people to become better at what they do. And they also resell our programs within that environment to their constituency, their client base. So we're talking alumni, we're talking grad students, and so on.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:28:43] Those are the primary ways that we engage. But I will tell you that there are some cases, where I'm just thinking of some regional agreements that we have, where there is a bundle of schools that have access to our digital assets, and there's a three-year license where they gain that access, and, usually, our price points are much different for the academic world than it would be for the corporate world, for many reasons. There are quite a few ways, I would say, that from an academic standpoint, the academic world serves an extremely important role in our society. I think we all know that. Where AMA meets the academic world is once people graduate, many schools have these continuing ed arms. But those continuing ed arms, in some cases, are phenomenal. They're fantastic. We all know of them. In other cases, they're not strong enough. Those folks usually come to us to bolster that continuing ed arm. Those who have well developed, the Harvards of the world and so on, they don't need us to help them with their continuing ed arm. They're just fine. But the many other universities in between leverage us quite a bit and pretty much leverage our content. That's what they do.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:29:50] I could see how that would be very valuable, and I think it's probably an opportunity many associations are not taking advantage of right now.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:29:57] Now, switching gears a bit as we wrap up, we always like to ask guests about their own approach to lifelong learning, given that we're a show that's focused on learning. And, because you're in a top leadership position, I'd like to frame the question a bit differently than I normally would. Namely, how have you gone about learning to be a leader, and what advice would you give to aspiring leaders? What should they do when it comes to developing their leadership skills and knowledge?

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**Manny Avramidis:** [00:30:29] I'll talk personally about how I approach learning. My advice would be surround yourself with smart people, always smarter than you are in their given profession. Always be willing to learn, and always put people in a position to teach. As a CEO, when I enter a room, I can suck all the oxygen out, or I can create a whole lot of oxygen in conversation. Where I learn most is when I engage with a peer group—and I actually engage with this group twice a year—of non-competing entities. And there's a big difference between going to a non-competing entity conference or gathering versus sitting in a room with all of the people who are trying to go after the same business you are. You're much, much more closed and closer to the vest when you know your competitor's in the room. When I've engaged with people from outside of our industry, that's where some of the most innovative thinking comes out, innovative thinking that we can apply back here at AMA. I'll give you a very quick example. I sit in the CEO group (that we run, actually), and the CEO of a prominent airline also is part of this group. I tell you, we schedule 10,000 meetings a year globally.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:31:35] What they use to schedule their flights that are subject to weather and other type of changes, empty or overbooked planes and so on, it was a platform that we were able to leverage and be more innovative in the way we schedule here at AMA. Now, if you said to me, "Manny, why don't you think about that?" I just didn't know what I didn't know, and I would have never talked to this person had I not engaged in that environment. The other thing I would say is measure the success of a CEO or a leader by the intelligence of his or her people. Most important thing of all, if the person were to leave tomorrow, is the institution going to be okay? I spend a lot of time thinking about that, and I ensure that the institution will be okay. And I'll leave you with one final thought. I'm going to take you backwards now in thinking. We all have these smart devices, these iPhones, and the whole world is in our hands if we want it to be. The reality is, with a lot of this technology, algorithms are created, and you're fed information or stories that the system, if you will, thinks that you want to be fed. So AI, machine learning, technology enables the system to produce what they think you want to read.

**Manny Avramidis:** [00:32:43] The challenge with that is you only have so much time in the day, and you become very narrow when you're reading, even when you have digital subscriptions. I can tell you that the one thing I've done recently—and this is based on feedback that I've received from a mentor of mine, who's the CEO of a much larger company—is actually buy the paper once in a while. The actual newspaper—*The New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*. And the reality is, as I flip through the pages—and here in New York City, you can find them on the street on your way to the office—I come across stories that I read that make me smarter and better at what I do. I would have never read these stories if I didn't turn to the paper. I just wouldn't have been exposed to them, and I didn't have the time to go find

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them. I'm not disciplined enough to flip through everything on my iPhone that's about six inches. So that's something from a learning perspective, that I would warn people to not become too narrowly focused and make sure that they explore beyond what's fed to them on a daily basis.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:33:44] Manny Avramidis is president and CEO of the American Management Association. In the show notes for this episode at [leadinglearning.com/episode376](http://leadinglearning.com/episode376), you'll find a link to the AMA Web site, where—what a rarity in this day and age—you can find a phone number that will be answered by a human being during regular business hours.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:34:05] If you represent a membership organization, and you're interested in learning more about how to add AMA's e-learning library of 70+ e-learning modules to your catalog, go to [leadinglearning.com/ama](http://leadinglearning.com/ama). There you can get more details and submit a request for us to follow up with you.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:34:21] Jeff and I would be grateful if you would rate the Leading Learning Podcast on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you find the show valuable, because ratings help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:34:34] And please spread the word about Leading Learning, whether in a one-on-one conversation with a colleague, a personal e-mail, or on social media. In the show notes at [leadinglearning.com/episode376](http://leadinglearning.com/episode376), you'll find links to connect with us on X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and Facebook.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:34:52] Thanks for listening, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

*[music for this episode by DanoSongs, [www.danosongs.com](http://www.danosongs.com)]*

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