



Leading Learning Podcast Episode 277

Rob Brinkerhoff (00:00):

Too many valuable babies get thrown out in the bathwater of statistical reporting. We want to be sure that we understand, when it did work, why did it work? And, when it didn't work, why didn't it work? Because that's the real leverageable information that we can do something useful with.

Jeff Cobb (00:19):

I'm Jeff Cobb.

Celisa Steele (00:20):

I'm Celisa Steele, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb (00:28):

Welcome to episode 277 of the Leading Learning Podcast. This is the sixth installment in our seven-part series on learning science's role in a learning business, and this episode focuses on evaluation. Learning science is all about proof and evidence, and evaluation is a critically important part of understanding and quantifying the impact of your offerings. To help us dig into evaluation, we spoke with Robert Brinkerhoff and Daniela Schroeter, co-directors of the Brinkerhoff Evaluation Institute. At BEI, they combine their know-how of learning and development with best practices and scholarship in evaluation. Dr. Robert O. Brinkerhoff is an internationally recognized expert in evaluation and learning effectiveness and the creator of the Success Case Method, a highly regarded and carefully crafted impact evaluation approach to determining how well educational and training programs work. Over his 40-year career, Rob has consulted with dozens of multinational organizations and has written *The Success Case Method*, *Telling Training's Story*, and other books.

Jeff Cobb (01:36):

Dr. Daniela Schroeter was born and raised in Eastern Germany and came to the US to complete a PhD in interdisciplinary evaluation. Over the last 15 years, she has provided evaluation and capacity building to a wide range of private, public, and nonprofit organizations around the globe. In addition to co-directing the Brinkerhoff Evaluation Institute, Daniela is an associate professor at Western Michigan University. Celisa spoke with Rob and Daniela in May 2021.

Celisa Steele (02:13):

I know that you've done a lot of work to make evaluation very actionable and practical, both in terms of conducting evaluation and then in terms of taking action based on what comes from evaluation. So I'm just curious to know what you see as the primary flaws or shortcomings of traditional typical evaluation methods.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode277.*

Daniela Schroeter (02:32):

Currently, there's a lot of emphasis on evidence-based practice. So there's a lot of emphasis on quantitative outcome data and sophisticated methodologies. And those are challenging because they're often not practical and don't allow you to adapt an intervention or a learning intervention while you're still implementing it. There's too much emphasis on comparison groups and singular outcomes rather than looking at the intervention as a whole and the unique environments that each individual learner is working in.

Celisa Steele (03:09):

I think that makes a lot of sense to me this idea that, if you're going to wait until the end of a program to evaluate it, that can be a serious shortcoming because it does limit what you can do with what comes from your evaluation.

Rob Brinkerhoff (03:21):

Too much time spent looking in the rearview mirror is not good. We need to look back and see what worked and what didn't. So what are we going to do next? And how are we going to make it better next time? And that's where evaluation really needs to focus.

Daniela Schroeter (03:35):

Right. There's often too much of an emphasis on evaluation as an end point. So, okay, once the program is done, we have the evaluation. And so the evaluation ends up not getting used because it's too late to actually use the findings. So we really promote using the evaluation from the beginning on to continuously improve the program, the impacts from the program, and to leverage learning and maximize outcomes from learning.

Celisa Steele (04:03):

So I know that then as part of addressing the flaws of these other evaluation methods, Rob, you developed the Success Case Method, and, Daniela, you lead the Brinkerhoff Evaluation Institute that applies that approach now. And so I'm thinking it would be a great point now for listeners who aren't already familiar with it, would you briefly introduce the Success Case Method?

Rob Brinkerhoff (04:24):

I'd be happy to do that. Way back in the early 1970s, I worked as a graduate student on a large contracted evaluation project. I'd like to tell you a little story that came from that work because I think it captures so well the birth of Success Case Method and the reason for its birth. This was a federally sponsored program in inner-city schools to upgrade reading skills for lower-income students. The evaluation design was a typical one, like Daniela has referred to, the problems—assign teachers at random to use a new innovation method, have a control group that's doing things the same old way, and measure all the kids' reading assessment scores on an annual district-wide assessment. Then measure them again after a year, and see if they did better than a control group.

Rob Brinkerhoff (05:10):

So I made a visit to the school to observe some teachers to familiarize myself with this reading program. The innovative reading program being tested happened to use materials that came in a large sturdy box. The importance of this will be obvious in a minute. I went into my first classroom to watch the teacher using it, and she was doing a superb job. According to my

checklist, she was using all the materials correctly, and kids were responding great. She was just doing a wonderful job.

Rob Brinkerhoff (05:37):

So I went on to the second teacher to observe that person using it, and I found out that this teacher was not using the new method at all. There were no sign of any box of materials anywhere, any materials. So I asked him afterward where his box was. He didn't know about any such materials, but he did say that the teacher next door, back on the first of school, asked if she could use a large box that he found in his classroom when school started. So, not having any idea what the box was for, he gave it to her. When I visited the third teacher, the mystery of the box was solved. That teacher, like the second one, made no use whatsoever of the innovative program she was supposed to be using, but she had taken her box and the donated box and stacked them together and was using that as a table to hold the classroom fish tank aquarium. That creative teacher noted to me that there was no money in the budget for classroom furniture.

Rob Brinkerhoff (06:32):

So the Success Case Method was born then and there. I realized the absurdity of the typical experimental design evaluation approach. A few classroom teachers were indeed using the materials and having great success. Kids were learning how to read much better. The materials clearly worked—but only when they were used. But many were not using the materials, ignoring the training they received for other reasons, who knows why, and using their regular methods instead. So the evaluation method used to assess this program was to average test scores across all students and teachers. So the good these few were doing would be statistically washed out by the numerical mean. So what we needed was an evaluation method that would focus on the success and answer the question, “When the training was used, what good did it do? Not on average, how did it go?” The average always underestimates the good.

Rob Brinkerhoff (07:26):

So, in a nutshell, Success Case Method identifies the most successful users of any initiative being evaluated and also people not doing so well, the two ends of the distribution. And then we ask, “When it works, what good does it do? How often does it work? When it works, why? What factors drive success? When it doesn't work, why?” And then the payoff question, “What needs to be done to make more people perform as well as the few best people?” That's just, in a nutshell, how a Success Case Method works. And again educators and trainers who are trying to innovate and working hard to support change, they need a method that would help them succeed, not quash their efforts. So that's kind of the history and the ongoing story of the Success Case Method.

Celisa Steele (08:13):

Would you talk a little bit about some of the purposes that the Success Case Method can be used for? And I'm thinking just how versatile it is—it can drive a marketing campaign; it can help estimate return on investment; it can help make decisions about whether to continue a program or not.

Daniela Schroeter (08:31):

So one of the primary purposes is to use the method for improving learning interventions to maximize outcomes from the learning for those people who participate in the learning. This can be done by reaching out, learning what works for which subgroups, and then tweaking the

interventions to maximize learning and use of learning for each individual. Then another purpose is piloting programs to find out what works well for whom. The third is, of course, marketing to downstream audiences. Once we know what is working and for whom it is working, we can leverage that information to really push our learning to audiences.

Daniela Schroeter (09:14):

The fourth point is helping program deliverers to tell the story. Oftentimes, learning providers want to tell what outcomes or what impacts are the results of the learning. And the success case story provides information that can be shared and that is useful for others who want to learn about the method. And then finally it's about teaching participants as well as their supervisors about the value of the learning that they're participating in. So, once I know what worked well and did not work well, I actually reinforce learning through evaluation, which is very valuable with an organizational context but also for individual learners who understand their shortcomings and can leverage and go back to the materials and can maximize their learning. Rob, would you like to add to that?

Rob Brinkerhoff (10:10):

Well, you've done a great job, I think, of summarizing them. It is flexible and will drive all those purposes. And you mentioned telling the story. I love that one. And, in fact, the title of our second book about this method is calling *Telling Training's Story*. Too many times we've seen evaluation studies that are hard to interpret, hard to understand. They use a lot of statistics and a lot of jargon. And what really compels people is stories. If you can tell a story of, let me tell you about how Daniela participated in this training six months ago. Let me tell you what she's doing now and how this training made a difference in her work and her life. That sort of evidence really compels action and drives emotional response and buy-in.

Celisa Steele (10:56):

I like that emphasis on story because it can be so compelling, and it is then grounded, of course, in the individual and the particulars, but then there can be those indications then, based on that individual's success, what might help others succeed.

Rob Brinkerhoff (11:13):

Yeah, and let me stress this, stories, there's a lot of fictional stories. Ours would not be fictional. They're always evidence-based stories. They're stories that would stand up in court. So that's important. I mean, we look for the truth of a program. If there are no stories to tell, then there are no stories to tell. But almost always, always there are successes, and it's important to leverage those.

Celisa Steele (11:46):

I really appreciate both the past and future focus of the Success Case Method, how it can help understand the results of a learning initiative that was rolled out but also, by ferreting out key barriers and what supports are helpful when applying the learning, it can also improve future offerings. I'm curious, at kind of a high-level, philosophical viewpoint, do you think impact evaluation should always have a future-facing aspect, something where you're looking to improve? Or do you sometimes see value in a purely historical look at, say, a particular courses impact in the past?

Rob Brinkerhoff (12:27):

Yes, there's certainly value in sort of summative evaluation, to be able to provide evidence that, look, whoever is paying for this, whoever's supporting this program, we want you to see that it is working, and there's evidence that it's making a difference. So that sort of summative, endpoint evaluation is worthwhile. And, of course, from a historical perspective, we can learn a lot from history. Being able to read about or learn about programs that didn't work and why didn't they work is valued. But, for all of those, there's still some sort of a future orientation as well. Why do I want it? Why do I want to defend my budget? It's because I want to continue doing good work. There's always got to be a purpose for doing the evaluation beyond just filing a report so we can say we did it.

Daniela Schroeter (13:14):

Yes, and, of course, we can consider it in terms of learning whenever we do descriptive type of evaluation, whether it's someone evaluates the war strategies of Napoleon—that stuff is still being used way into the future. So I think all evaluation should be used for learning at one point or another. While our method directly tries to focus on current learning and what we can learn now for future learning interventions, future learning journeys, there's also a longer-term effect and doing historical evaluation because, without looking back at the past, we cannot innovate in the future.

Celisa Steele (13:56):

One of the aspects I really appreciate about the Success Case Method is that it does broaden the focus beyond just that course, that education or training event. It really seems to recognize learning as a process; performance is integral with learning. There's this virtuous cycle, where learning drives performance; performance drives learning. How do you respond to people who get tripped up on trying to show the direct causation between a training or an educational offering and specific results?

Rob Brinkerhoff (14:27):

The reality is that the training or learning is never a sole cause for anything other than paying the bill for having participated in it. Any change in human performance, human behavior, is driven by a nexus of causes and a complexity of them. So it's important—what we want to try to show is that, no, the training is not the sole cause of something, but I want to be able to show that if Daniela participated in this program, that it made a worthy contribution and a necessary contribution to her success. Was it the only contribution? Of course not. But we want to show that it was an important catalyst, and, without it, she wouldn't have had as great a success as she did have.

Daniela Schroeter (15:15):

In that sense, we are, as a methodology, we're away from looking at the average. Whenever we're looking at causation, we're looking at the average. One thing that sets the Success Case Method apart is that we're looking at outliers. What's the best an intervention can do if it works well? As well as why does it not work for the people at the very bottom? Rather than just understanding the average performance, we learn more about the true inhibitors that allow us to bring the person at the very bottom to the middle, to become the average, as well as to know what impact you can possibly have if you get three or four more people to the very top.

Rob Brinkerhoff (16:04):

That's such a good point. Too many valuable babies get thrown out in the bathwater of statistical reporting. We want to be sure that we understand, when it did work, why did it

work? And, when it didn't work, why didn't it work? Because that's the real leverageable information that we can do something useful with.

Daniela Schroeter (16:24):

And without knowing anything about how do people want to use the findings, the causation question is really a question for knowledge generation, if we want to build a research base. And that's very, very important. We need that as well, and that's what academia does. But, as a learning provider, my primary interest is probably how I can leverage my intervention and make it better or adapt it to make it better for the people that are using the learning rather than generating academic contributions.

Rob Brinkerhoff (16:58):

Something I'd want to add to that, and I think it's important to understand, is there's a good bit of the conceptual input to the creation of the Success Case Method was thinking about it in a judicial context. It's like when we decide to send a person to prison or not send them to a prison, we don't look at all the causes. We basically try to say, "What is the weight of the evidence? And is there compelling evidence to believe that the training truly was a contributor to the success?" And so when we say "evidence that would stand up in court," we mean that literally we use testimony, and it has to be testimony that can be corroborated with evidence.

Jeff Cobb (17:41):

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Celisa Steele (18:49):

I know that, in *Telling Training's Story*, you define success as "the achievement of a positive impact on the organization through the application of some skill or knowledge acquired in training." And in the case of corporate learning and development, I think that definition of success works very well. In the case of learning businesses, which is our primary audience here—and those learners usually aren't coming from a single organization—I'm wondering how you might define success to help with effective evaluation in that context.

Rob Brinkerhoff (19:24):

The root definition of success is for us that you learn something that makes a difference. If that difference might be made in, if we're looking at internal learning and development function, and someone has gone through training, and their job is to increase sales, then the difference for them would be increasing sales. But let's say I've taken a course—I've signed up for an Internet course from a commercial provider in how to make better use of my office technology. Well,

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again, the proof of the value is whether it did me any good. It's not whether I learned it or not; it's whether it did me any good, as to whether I could make use of it for some worthy purpose in my life, whether that's a social purpose, a work purpose, emotional purpose.

Rob Brinkerhoff (20:17):

But if it isn't making a difference to people, then it doesn't have value. So it's always about what difference is it making. And we can follow that up with—we've done plenty of impact evaluation studies with external providers—and we follow up with people who participate and say, "So, once you get out of that, what are you doing with it? What good is it doing for you?" And we can get that.

Daniela Schroeter (20:39):

One of the things we always have to look at also—a lot of the learning interventions that take place don't necessarily teach a new skill. We have our hard skills and soft skills. How many learners are in our interventions who've learned what is being presented in a learning before, in one shape or form? So the question really becomes "What is this current learning doing to reinforce, to change, to provide for greater success?"

Daniela Schroeter (21:09):

We're currently engaged in a climate change type of learning intervention, where the provider teaches certain skills and provides capacity around the globe around different climate change content areas, and each individual and each country may have very different contexts and experiences. A cookie-cutter evaluation approach does not work for that because the context of individuals are so different. For the learning provider to learn about what are the biggest challenges for people in very different contexts, it's very useful in terms of even contextualizing that within a training in the future to maximize the impact for everyone. But it will also allow people who are asked to sign up for a certain learning intervention to make a good decision about what works for me and why is this good for me. And why does that work for me as someone who was not doing this as part of a bigger professional development in a singular organization.

Rob Brinkerhoff (22:12):

I would say this may be one exception to this, is people who sign up for a course, and they don't expect it to have any instrumental value. They sign up for a course only so that they can get a certificate that they completed that course. Well, in our view, that's not a good candidate for a success case study if the only motivation for people is "I just need to show that I participated. I don't care if I ever use it. In fact, it's probably worthless, and that's okay with me. I just need to show that I took it."

Daniela Schroeter (22:41):

Yeah. And there's lots of that type of learning as well. But, as you say, it's probably not the best candidate because you don't even expect any change out of the learning. It's just an administrative task in that case.

Rob Brinkerhoff (22:53):

And even though Daniela and I do evaluation as a business, we would not accept that one. We would say, "No, no, no. You don't need this method. It's not going to do you any good. So let's forget it."

Celisa Steele (23:05):

That's an excellent point. If it's that sort of continuing education requirement, and that's all that someone views it as, being able to check the box that they've now fulfilled that obligation, then they're really not necessarily interested in the application and the longer-term value of that learning. How have you seen use of evaluation practices change? I know you've both been involved in evaluation for decades. Do you think there's a better or broader understanding of effective evaluation among those doing this work now than there used to be?

Daniela Schroeter (23:36):

I think there's a lot of change and innovation going on in evaluation. There's much more interest in the practicality of the study. Depending on the funder of a learning intervention, there's right now much more need for useful information. We try to move away from lengthy reports that nobody reads, the accountability type of reports. We're looking to engage the people that implement certain interventions to really maximize the value of evaluation for the people who want a program evaluated. We look at users and users of evaluation at the center; we're trying to empower people to engage in evaluative activity so they can maximize their learning from their programs. And then, of course, academically speaking, there's a lot going on in terms of transformative evaluation methods that try to engage the marginalized groups and support more sociocultural types of developments that are more and more pertinent, more and more talked about within the academic literature. So there is a strong shift towards more transformative evaluation methods at this time.

Rob Brinkerhoff (24:53):

And I do think people are becoming more savvy consumers in general. With the advent of the Internet, you can quickly get access to pretty much anything you want, if you want to know if something's any good or not. So there's more of an interest in getting evidence and more savvy consumers. And that's always good for evaluation. And I think there's a trend, as Daniela says, toward making evaluation a bit more of a partnering activity, that you're not just hiring a third-party hired gun to evaluate the program, and you see them the day you sign the contract, and the last day you see them is when they hand you the report. But you want them working more in tandem toward a common goal of doing something good for that program and helping it be more successful. And so partnering in that way is more fulfilling for the program side and for the evaluation side.

Celisa Steele (25:43):

Are there areas of evaluation that you would love to know more about? Anything you're keeping an eye on to see how it evolves or what we learn about it in the years ahead?

Daniela Schroeter (25:54):

Yes. I'm an academic. I'm a professor at a university also. As an evaluation scholar, I'm always keeping up to date with the evaluation literature and new developments in terms of evaluation theory, methodology, and practice. So I like to, in terms of the Success Case Method in particular, I like to understand better how it works in different evaluation contexts. So there's the for-profit context; there's the nonprofit context; there's the learning and development programs in which the Success Case Method is used. But it's also used in social programs and international development programs. And so these different applications provide a lot of opportunity for learning. And while the Success Case Method, for example, traditionally has been marked as a methods-oriented approach to evaluation, I think it's really more focused as a user-oriented, consumer-oriented, and transformative type of evaluation that can engage

stakeholders. And there's a lot of learning taking place in terms of theories and methodologies and how evaluation will evolve down the road.

Rob Brinkerhoff (27:10):

From a business perspective too, since we do—Daniela though she's a professor, and I'm a retired professor—we do our evaluation work, is conducted as a business, as an external provider. So we always have to keep an eye to the competition and make sure that we maintain a competitive advantage in our approach, that we can do it better and faster and get better data then. So we're constantly looking at who's doing what in evaluation and how can we learn from them about how to do better for ourselves.

Celisa Steele (27:46):

You've mentioned transformative evaluation, and I'm realizing it may be helpful if maybe you could just explain a little bit by what you mean by that term *transformative evaluation*.

Daniela Schroeter (27:56):

So transformative evaluation approaches try to take marginalized groups more into account. We have feminist evaluation approaches; we have culturally responsive evaluation approaches; we have LGBTQ evaluation approaches. So it really brings in the perspective of those groups that are often on the edge of learning interventions or any type of interventions. And in doing so, they directly engage with those individuals and bring the issue to the center of the evaluation. So it's not just the program, but it's how we engage the learner or the marginalized group that an intervention tries to engage to also engage with the evaluation to maximize the benefits of the evaluation for disenfranchised people.

Rob Brinkerhoff (28:46):

And let me give you a simple example of how that might play out in a large organization that's trying to gauge whether—let's say it's a big hospital system or health system—it's trying to engage the extent to which sexual harassment is or is not an issue. If you provide the same intervention to everybody and then measure its impact on everybody, you're going to find that the needle probably hasn't moved very much. But that could be misleading. What we would want to know is "Has the needle moved for those people in the organization who are especially vulnerable?" And let's not wash out—so there may be young, single mothers, people of color who are more likely to be suffering from some policy practice or lack of practice—and so we'd want to make sure that we focus on that group because that's where the gold is buried. That's where we need to know whether we're making a difference or not. And let's not wash out the impact on them by a broader statistic that took into account everybody who wasn't being affected by these practices anyway.

Daniela Schroeter (29:49):

Right. And it goes to engaging those people. And that's where the storytelling comes from, where it's you hear the story from the people that are being impacted rather than whitewashing that story from a methodological point of view.

Celisa Steele (30:05):

Maybe you're already answering it in this talk of transformative evaluation, but what role do you see evaluation playing in the realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Rob Brinkerhoff (30:17):

The role it should play is helping get the truth out, getting evidence and bringing it forward to people who otherwise would not be aware of it. I think it's hugely important to get the story told of the marginal groups that are being impacted by lack of diversity, lack of inclusion, so that people who don't understand their experience can learn some more about the truth of their experience. And evaluation is searching for the truth. We need to then get that truth to the people who can do something valuable with that understanding.

Daniela Schroeter (30:53):

It also means engaging the right people to ask the right questions and to use the right ways of communicating findings, for example. It goes back to this there may not be just the cookie-cutter approach to doing evaluation. We need to know what type of evidence is credible for whom. So whom we're evaluating for and what issues we are addressing with an evaluation needs to engage the right individuals to produce the right information in the right way.

Celisa Steele (31:29):

If you had to pick just one aspect of effective evaluation, what aspect do you wish was more broadly understood, more broadly implemented by those who are tasked with looking at the impact of learning programs?

Rob Brinkerhoff (31:43):

I love that question. I would say the one criterion, above all, that an evaluation should meet is actionability. If we're going to do an evaluation for a client, the client's got to be able to do something with that evaluation report that's worth doing. If you're running a learning business, and you're going to divert a dollar of your budget away from your customer audience and invest it in evaluation, then we want to be sure that you're getting more than a dollar's worth of value back, to help your program earn that back. So we want to know what's the return on investment of the evaluation. And it's got to be actionable. If you can't do anything with it, why bother doing it?

Daniela Schroeter (32:25):

I think there has to be a focus on performance. There has to be a focus on what is this learning about, and what do you want to get out of it? And is that learning actually being used? Oftentimes we get stuck at the first thing, that people liked the intervention, that they learned something. Well, yeah, but so what if people loved it, but they didn't learn anything? Or people did not love it, but they learned a lot? But if they didn't use anything either way, the question still is "What's the point in a learning?"

Celisa Steele (32:59):

How has the Success Case Method evolved over the years?

Rob Brinkerhoff (33:03):

With the introduction of technology, it's changed a lot. I mean, if you—golly, I remember a success case study we did about 30 years ago with a World Bank program, and we had to get evidence about the impact on remote villages, both in South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. We needed to conduct interviews. Well, there was no Internet, no telephone stuff, so we actually had people who were working on that evaluation riding a camel 20 miles to get to a village to interview a couple of people who had been presumed beneficiaries of this program.

So we use technology a whole lot smarter. We've been able to do evaluation studies for less money because we can just be much more efficient. Just the simple example of survey software. All our surveys used to be paper-and-pencil based. We had to mail them out and give people a self-addressed envelope to mail them back in. And all of that added cost and hassle to people. So that's certainly one way it's changed.

Rob Brinkerhoff (34:02):

And then I think, more conceptually maybe, there's more demand for value and actionable performance from evaluators. People want their report back quickly. They want to be able to do something with it. They want it to fit into their business cycle. If they have a budget hearing coming up, they want it by then. We are more adaptable than we used to be because we're less driven by methodological dicta than we are by client needs.

Daniela Schroeter (34:31):

I absolutely agree. I mean, on a very broad level, it's very much the same. You do your survey. You do your interview. You write a report. But the way everything is being done is much different these days, from the way reports are being written, the way things are being communicated, the way the surveys are implemented to turnaround times, the way the interviews are being conducted to turnaround times. So there's a lot of the way technology has impacted the message as well as the way we're communicating around the message and how we engage with each other, from the face-to-face interviews eons ago to telephone interviews, to just simply your Zoom interview or Skype interview, whatever technology people prefer. But then also how fast we can turn around reports and the quality of the reports and the way they're being conceptualized is very different. That relates to who can be involved—you can engage many more people in a much more efficient way, which impacts the way methodologies are implemented.

Rob Brinkerhoff (35:41):

And we've had to become much more savvy about virtual learning methodologies ourselves because 20 years ago any training we evaluated was always live face-to-face training. And now there's a shift toward technology-based digital platforms that are delivering learning journeys. We've had to become very savvy about how do the expectations for impact and value differ as we're getting into the virtual training world?

Daniela Schroeter (36:07):

As such, you can harvest success stories early on. You don't have to wait until something is over because as soon as you learn a snippet of the element you're supposed to learn, there's the question, "Have you applied, and how are you going to apply it? Can you create impact from using what you learned? Or not?" And so your findings are much more immediate and actionable. I mean, I think it's much better because nowadays you can produce knowledge much faster, and you can also integrate it back much faster.

Celisa Steele (36:49):

Yeah, a shorter time cycle—or potentially shorter time cycle—to go from that learning experience to actually seeing some results coming from it.

Daniela Schroeter (36:57):

Yeah, it's like rapid impact evaluation.

Celisa Steele (37:00):

Is there anything that has come to mind that you haven't had a chance to say but would like to have a chance to say before we say goodbye?

Rob Brinkerhoff (37:08):

I'd like to say that, back when I did my doctorate in evaluation, I was really leery about it and wary of it because I was afraid that it was all going to be about arcane statistics and sophisticated stuff I didn't really know anything about and didn't really care about knowing anything about. So I'd just tell people evaluation is common sense applied. Don't be afraid of it. It's not rocket science. And I'd like people to keep in mind the tagline for our work, which makes it very simple: Evaluation is for making it work. When it works, notice and nurture. When it doesn't work, notice and change. That, in a nutshell, is evaluation.

Daniela Schroeter (37:50):

That's really beautiful the way you said that. And I think it goes back to this notion of take away this evaluation anxiety. Evaluation is not about making people feel bad about themselves or making programs look bad. It's really about learning and, going into the future, innovating and being better learners, better learning programs, and better organizations in the future to come.

Jeff Cobb (38:24):

Dr. Robert O. Brinkerhoff and Dr. Daniela Schroeter, co-direct the Brinkerhoff Evaluation Institute. Rob developed the Success Case Method, an impact evaluation approach used by BEI to help to determine how well learning programs work. Daniela is also associate professor of Public Administration at Western Michigan University. And Rob currently serves as head of impact and evaluation at Promote International. You can connect with Daniela and Rob on LinkedIn.

Celisa Steele (38:55):

You'll find links to Rob and Daniela on LinkedIn at leadinglearning.com/episode277. There you'll also find a transcript of this episode and other resources, including a link to an article Rob co-wrote called "Using Evaluation to Build Organizational Performance and Learning Capability" that's available on the Promote International site.

Jeff Cobb (39:16):

In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode277, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast. To make sure you don't miss future episodes, we encourage you to subscribe. And subscribing also helps us to get some data we can use as evidence to evaluate the impact of the podcast.

Celisa Steele (39:35):

We'd be grateful if you would take a minute to rate us on Apple Podcasts. Jeff and I personally appreciate it, and reviews and ratings help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business. Go to leadinglearning.com/apple to leave a review and rating.

Jeff Cobb (39:50):

Lastly, please spread the word about Leading Learning. At leadinglearning.com/episode277, there are links to find us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode277.

Celisa Steele (40:00):

Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode277.*