

Recognizing Excellence.

Each year, WorkforceChicago recognizes leading Chicagoland companies demonstrating exemplary learning and development practices with its Annual WorkforceChicago Award Event.

Held each summer, Chicago business, government and economic development leaders gather to honor regional companies whose dedication to and successful implementation of the **Nine Best Practices** in learning & development serve as an example to companies across the Chicago region.

Recipients are presented their awards by the Honorable Richard M. Daley, mayor of the City of Chicago, and are profiled in WorkforceChicago's annual winners' monograph.



2009



A Company of Learners

In 1917, Antonio Pasin, had a dream to “bring joy to every boy and every girl” with his classic model of wagons and play toys. Pasin gave flight to the red wagon’s brand Radio Flyer, named after two of the most captivating innovations of the era: radio and airplanes, at the 1933 World’s Fair in Chicago, using faith and a bit of financing with his 45-foot tall “Coaster Boy.” The exhibit of the wagon-riding boy became an icon to the 1933 World’s Fair and is today a legendary iconic toy around the world.



Ninety-two years later, Robert Pasin, Chief Wagon Officer (CWO) of Radio Flyer in Chicago, is carrying out the dream that his grandfather started. Since 1917, the rapidly increasing buyer demands, industry modernization, and the outsourcing of manufacturing has required Radio Flyer to develop a strategy that was not packaged into the grandfather’s dream.

A few years ago, Radio Flyer created a cafeteria forum to serve as a magnet for workplace thoughts and ideas, introducing the new Little Red Rule: "Every time we touch people's lives, they'll feel great about Radio Flyer." Each of the 103 members of the Radio Flyer Team in Chicago and worldwide applies this Little Red Rule with every interaction with customers, retailers, and manufactures—and with each other.

Today, Radio Flyer is the leading producer of wagons, tricycles, and spring horses in the United States. This accomplishment could not have been possible without CWO Robert Pasin's commitment to the learning and development of their workforce. It is his personal commitment to learning and development that is driving much of what the corporation is doing. "The investment we've made in learning, development and cultural evolution over the past five years has been one of the key ingredients to our success," says Pasin.

Nine Exemplary Practices

- 1. Leadership vision and commitment drive learning.**
The CEO and senior management are the driving forces in elevating the importance of learning and development.
- 2. Employee learning is aligned with business goals.**
Top leadership adopts clear goals and communicates them throughout the organization and ensures that learning and development activities are aligned with the goals.
- 3. Learning and development leader is strategically positioned within senior management team.**
Human Resources Leader or the Chief Learning Officer is part of the executive management team.
- 4. Leadership development is emphasized at all levels of the organization.**
Management recognizes that leadership skills are essential for employees at all levels and efforts are made to develop talent from within the organization.
- 5. Organization is committed to expanding knowledge beyond job-related or technical skills.**
Investments are made to develop well-rounded, versatile employees through tuition assistance programs, customized on-site training, and personal development options.
- 6. Informal learning opportunities are prevalent throughout the workplace.**
Investments are made to intentionally integrate work and learning through team projects, cross training, rotational assignments, and problem-solving exercises.
- 7. Technology is used strategically to meet learning objectives.**
Innovative technologies are used to support and reinforce learning and to manage the organization's education and training offerings.
- 8. Alliances within educational institutions are central to learning strategy.**
Customized degree, certificate and non-credit programs are developed collaboratively to meet business and employee needs.
- 9. Assessment of impact is measured.**
A mixture of measurement strategies is used to assess the impact of training and development investments.