

Why Practice Is the *Missing Layer*

The question every L&D leader is asking

Your organization has invested in self-awareness. Insights Discovery® gives people an accurate, memorable picture of how they prefer to work, communicate, and decide. The question most L&D leaders ask next is a fair one: **what makes that investment hold six months from now?** Research on that question is consistent, and it points to a specific answer.

What the research shows

Self-awareness and self-leadership predict performance.

Two independent meta-analyses establish the individual-level case. Harari, Williams, Castro, and Brant (2021), synthesizing 101 studies, found self-leadership consistently associated with stronger job performance, self-efficacy, and job attitudes.¹ Knotts and colleagues (2022), across 16,493 observations, confirmed the pattern and extended it to creativity and innovation.² The evidence also runs at the team level. In a study of 515 teams, Dierdorff, Fisher, and Rubin (2019) found that teams whose members held accurate views of their own contributions coordinated better, stayed more cohesive, and performed better, and that the path from team self-awareness to team performance ran through how the team handled conflict.³ Eurich's research program adds the reason this work is needed at all: while about 95% of people believe they are self-aware, her team estimates only 10 to 15% actually meet the criteria.⁴

One-time events rarely transfer on their own.

Beer, Finnström, and Schrader (2016) examined why so much of the roughly \$356 billion organizations spend on training each year fails to change behavior: people return to environments that never ask them to practice what they learned.⁵ Smither, London, and Reilly (2005), reviewing 24 longitudinal studies, found that assessment and feedback events alone produce only small improvement, and that improvement rises when people set goals, receive follow-up, and work the material over time.⁶ This is a property of every development event, whatever the tool. Awareness is the foundation. Practice is what gets built on it.

Sustained, spaced, supported practice is the remedy.

Cepeda and colleagues (2006), synthesizing 317 experiments, established that learning revisited at spaced intervals is retained far better than learning delivered once.⁷ Blume, Ford, Baldwin, and Huang (2010), in a meta-analysis of training transfer, found supervisor support among the strongest predictors of whether learning gets applied on the job.⁸ Gallup's research attributes about 70% of the variance in team engagement to the manager.⁹ The pattern across all three is the same: behavior change follows when practice is spaced over time, reinforced by the team leader, and applied where the team actually works.

What this means for your Insights Discovery® investment

KNOW Online is designed to complement and extend the Insights Discovery® experience by supplying the layer the research describes. Learners build the practice through short, spaced courses built on the KNOW Model©: **Knowing, Naming, Observing, Willing**. Team Guides keep the language alive between formal engagements. Practitioners deliver ready-to-run team working sessions that move the work from individual insight to team practice. Each element maps to a condition the transfer research identifies: spacing, leader reinforcement, and team-level application.

How you'll see it working

No platform can promise outcomes, and you should be skeptical of any that does. What KNOW Online provides is an evidence-backed mechanism and the data to watch it: seat activation, course progress, and sustained engagement serve as **leading indicators**, paired with the measures you already own, such as engagement survey movement, 360 results, and retention on participating teams.

Where to start

If your teams already work with an Insights Discovery® Licensed Practitioner, start the conversation there. They can build KNOW Online into the journey they are guiding. Otherwise, visit knowviam.com to learn how organizations bring the practice in.

SOURCES

- 1 Harari, M. B., Williams, E. A., Castro, S. L., & Brant, K. K. (2021). Self-leadership: A meta-analysis of over two decades of research. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 94(4), 890–923.
- 2 Knotts, K., Houghton, J. D., Pearce, C. L., Chen, H., Stewart, G. L., & Manz, C. C. (2022). Leading from the inside out: A meta-analysis of how, when, and why self-leadership affects individual outcomes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 31(2), 273–291.
- 3 Dierdorff, E. C., Fisher, D. M., & Rubin, R. S. (2019). The power of percipience: Consequences of self-awareness in teams on team-level functioning and performance. *Journal of Management*, 45(7), 2891–2919.
- 4 Eurich, T. (2018, January 4). What self-awareness really is (and how to cultivate it). *Harvard Business Review*.
- 5 Beer, M., Finnström, M., & Schrader, D. (2016). Why leadership training fails—and what to do about it. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(10), 50–57.
- 6 Smither, J. W., London, M., & Reilly, R. R. (2005). Does performance improve following multisource feedback? A theoretical model, meta-analysis, and review of empirical findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 58(1), 33–66.
- 7 Cepeda, N. J., Pashler, H., Vul, E., Wixted, J. T., & Rohrer, D. (2006). Distributed practice in verbal recall tasks: A review and quantitative synthesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(3), 354–380.
- 8 Blume, B. D., Ford, J. K., Baldwin, T. T., & Huang, J. L. (2010). Transfer of training: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 1065–1105.
- 9 Gallup (2015). *State of the American Manager: Analytics and Advice for Leaders*.