

Project Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a pedagogic model where students are instructed to engage in complex and challenging "real-life" problems in a collaborative environment.

As a network systems analyst, I am part of a small band of technology experts that work collectively on team related projects. This often presents issues for me in terms of submitting "industry proven" suggestions only to have them shot down by peers and or management due to a number of varying factors (i.e. dated policies, technical ignorance, competitive opposition, lack of interest, et al.). For me personally, this is quite discouraging, given the fact that I like to believe that my locus of control leans more toward the "high internal" side. Outside of work, I feel very much in control and believe that many of the events that happen in my life are results that stem from my actions and behaviors. On the job I feel like the decisions I make as a project member have recurring repercussions that are often bureaucratic in nature, leading to a very dissatisfying PBL experience.

On the flip side, I find that my duties as my company's corporate trainer is far more satisfying. While certain aspects of the training session must be approved by my department head, I rarely run into issues with regard to my proposed pedagogic approach. The development and implementation process is "project-based", requiring me to collaborate with other department heads throughout the process. Sadly, I feel that I have much more latitude and freedom (high level of locus of control) as an instructor than I do as an analyst. What I gain from this form of PBL exposure is the opportunity to work with other individuals (outside the limited scope of my IT department), who see value in my contribution as a facilitator of knowledge and not just your garden variety problem solver.

Tonight's activities were very beneficial in reinforcing my basic understanding of PBL. It helped me to look at my collaboration with my peers and other department heads as a form of project-based learning. As I've realized, there are subtle advantages and blatant disadvantages that appear to be based on the contrast of cultures inside and outside my IT department. I believe a possible PBL consideration would be to move the "nerds" outside the server walls and into a

more relaxing environment where the exchange of ideas are more informal and less restrictive. I believe this would set a much milder tone for discussing projects while establishing a foundation for team building.