

## Reflections on ISPI's First Recipient of the Geary Rummler Award for the Advancement of Performance Improvement

This award was established in honor of Geary Rummler, a lifetime member, significant supporter, and valued contributor to ISPI and the profession. It is awarded to individuals or organizations that have demonstrated and reflect the work and life of Geary. The award honors his legacy and advancement of both HPT and ISPI's principles and practices. This year, ISPI is proud to recognize **Klaus Wittkuhn, CPT**.



Klaus has been an active thought leader and practitioner of HPT for more than 15 years. During this time, he has worked on countless HPT projects around the globe; however, there are two accomplishments that are key contributions to the field and that Geary Rummler mentored and valued:

- The Performance System Optimizer, Mapper, Supporter, a toolkit that shows the steps to be taken, the questions to be asked, and the results to aim for, given any organization's constraints and potential. His recent work introducing and adapting the methodology of HPT to countries in the Eastern European and Caucasus area

Klaus has been actively involved with ISPI since 1996, bringing a combination of management and systems thinking to the performance community. In 2007, he was awarded ISPI's highest honor, Honorary Life Member. He has a special blend of insight and experience with HPT that enhances international recognition for our field. In 2006, Klaus was awarded an HPT project, through a competitive bid for World Learning for Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD), in the Republic of Macedonia. The project consisted of an assessment and intervention package for the State Education Inspectorate. As part of the contract, the employees of World Learning Macedonia were trained in the HPT methodology. With his toolkits and methodology that firmly rest on Rummler's developments and his experience in other organizations, Klaus began work in a country that had limited resources and plenty of political interference from the country's top officials. Most assumptions from working in industrialized countries had to be questioned and reframed. The basic HPT methodology, though, was as useful there as anywhere. The project proved a success, Geary's ideas began to spread in new and different contexts, and many other HICD projects followed with World Learning in Macedonia and in other countries.

Currently, Klaus is working on training and coaching HPT consultants in the Republic of Georgia. The adaptation of HPT principles to completely different cultural and economic conditions, as well as toolkits that allow organizations fast and structured applications of HPT principles, is his most innovative and unique contribution to HPT.

### Find out what Klaus' colleagues had to say

#### **Roger M. Addison, CPT, EdD, Past ISPI and IFTDO President and Board member**

Klaus Wittkuhn received the 2011 Geary Rummler Award. The purpose of this award is for the advancement of Performance Improvement. Over the last several years Klaus has presented to standing room only his models and practical applications to improving organizations, processes and individuals. I have had the privilege of seeing many of these sessions from conception to final presentation. He ability connecting Performance Improvement thinking to practice and application is outstanding. We have all marveled at his ability linking Performance Improvement theories to history.

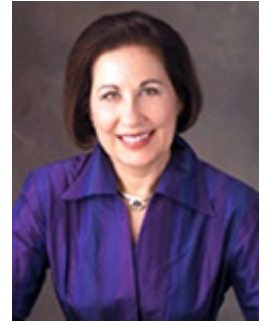


For several years Klaus, Geary and I lead the "Making the Transition to Performance Improvement" workshop. It was exciting to see Geary and Klaus working together, compare ideas and share their latest thinking with their participants. Also notable, Lynn Kearny was able to capture their thinking in a series of wonderful graphics.

I met Klaus at an ISPI meeting more than 15 years ago. Since that time on we have been colleagues and friends. When we meet for the ISPI 50th anniversary in Toronto Canada take the opportunity to meet Klaus and find out his latest thinking to advance Performance Improvement in the workplace.

### **Clare Carey, CPT, EdD, Past ISPI President and Board member**

Klaus Wittkuhn – Leader, Mentor, Friend. Once in awhile, there are magical moments when you meet someone for the first time. Such was my initial encounter with Klaus Wittkuhn. Amidst the cacophony of the hectic hotel lobby, Klaus posed a calm and confident presence. There was something about him that captured one's attention. You just wanted to absorb his every word. He had a way of harnessing HPT that challenged traditional applications. You knew he would push boundaries and find solutions to impossible challenges. You just knew he would make a difference to our Society and our profession.



I remember introducing Klaus to other ISPI members that day at conference. Their reactions were similar. "He's cool." Word spread quickly and Klaus' sessions soon became standing room only. When we re-ignited the closing keynote feature for the 2007 conference, Klaus was my first and only consideration. He surpassed all expectations with his creative presentation entitled, "Process – A Concept that Changed the World." His clever blending of history, art, music and performance engineering remains one of the most memorable ever. In typical fashion, Klaus opened new horizons for all of us.

Klaus is a leader, a mentor, and a friend. We are lucky to share in his brilliance. We are blessed to benefit from his counsel. And we are better for having such a colleague.

### **Carol Haig, CPT, Past ISPI Board Member**

How fortunate that ISPI has Klaus as a member, and that he is able to consistently raise the performance bar for his colleagues. Klaus' unique contributions to ISPI conferences — who can forget his presentation at our Closing Event in New York in 2008? As with all Wittkuhn presentations, it kept our minds humming with ideas for days afterward. And how about the charming café at the Dallas conference where participants from all over stopped in to chat with their German hosts and make new connections?



I have been privileged to see many of Klaus' written contributions to various publications as they evolve to their final form. I admire how this man thinks and how he develops models and tools that are both elegant and accessible. Klaus is a teacher and mentor to many, and I value the quality of his work, the results he produces for his clients, and the generosity with which he shares his efforts with all of us.

### **Judith Hale, CPT, PhD, ISPI President**

Klaus exemplifies – brings to life – what ISPI represents. He can be summed up as visionary, competent, evidence-based, and results driven. He's also accessible, willing to engage with new and old members alike to talk about how to make the HPT real. ISPI is proud to have him as a member and the larger community of practitioners should be honored by how he represents them.



### **Martin Hartmann, PhD & Ruediger Funk**

We know Klaus since our times at the university – some 35 years ago. We have been business partners with him ever since the very beginning.

Already during our studies Klaus was well known for exploring new paths. We admired him for the depth of his thoughts and his never-ending creativity.

Together with his friends Klaus was an artist, a creator of books and calendars, a traveler on new journeys of intellectual examination. His home was open for anyone who wanted to take part and construct new ideas.



And this has remained ever since, on Klaus' way from being a trainer to a consultant for qualification to an HPT expert, a pathfinder, an Organizational Development Pro, who is requested for of developmental projects of different kinds. Sometimes he has left us behind with his speed, but our friendship remained. This tells a lot about Klaus as a friend: His search for friends he can trust, his loyalty and his strong connection to people he trusts. In general: His ability to build friendships.

The same type of friendship Klaus shared with Geary, in addition to his related mindset. It was a pleasure to experience how the two of them harmonized and inspired each other. Together they were a strong team. We are quite sure: Geary would have not wanted anybody else as the first Rummel Award recipient.



Congratulations old friend!

### **Lynn Kearny, CPT, Past ISPI Board Member**

Klaus is my intellectual mentor in HPT. While our field focuses on results, and Klaus focuses on results, he is also a deep thinker. He brings perspectives from science and philosophy, and often communicates them with rich metaphors. He challenges many things I previously accepted on a “well, of course” level without thinking too deeply – and has improved both my understanding and work thereby. For example, he frames culture as an emergent property of a system, not as a concrete factor that can be directly acted upon. This is hugely more useful for thinking about, and attempting to influence, an organization’s culture.



Klaus has awakened me to the danger inherent in our models. He taught me that what a model ignores is as important as what it reveals. I now look at an analysis or construct I have created using one of our models and ask myself, “What is left out of this picture? What should I be looking at that this frame blinds me to?” I try to triangulate with models just as we triangulate with data sources. At least one of those models must be from a different field, such as a business model or an OD model. For many years I’ve managed myself with a personal metaphor of “avoid painting a scene on the inside of a bucket, putting the bucket on my head, and running around complaining about why can’t everyone see what I see.” Triangulating models, or even using two very different models, helps me avoid putting my head in a bucket.

Klaus has also caused me to look deeper into “systems thinking” than the basic systems model we commonly use. His diagrams of causal loops suddenly made the analytical process more arresting, but much more complex than the relatively simple wiring diagram of our standard input-process-output model. The familiar diagram is deceptively simple – and it pays to understand what it is shorthand for. Actually, my first exposure to the plus and minus loops was terrifying. But intriguing. I am now working my way through Jamashid Gharajedaghi’s “Systems Thinking,” which covers Systems Philosophy, Systems Theories, Systems Methodology, and Systems Practice. I hope to ingest and fully understand this information before another Klaus bomb of intellectual challenge is exploded in front of me. I think Klaus is very good for all of us in HPT. He is respectfully challenging, and assumes the highest level of functioning in his audience – he never condescends. But he is not just here to comfort the afflicted; he is also here to afflict the comfortable. I think that’s very good for us.

### **Monique Müller, CPT, Past President ISPI Europe**

ISPI has worked for almost 50 years to find ways and refine means for building experts in Performance Technology. The body of theory and practice is sizeable and hotly debated. Know-how and exercise, tenacity, patience, helpful colleagues and mentors, the luck of finding work that leads to meaningful experience, and application of the methodology and the code of conduct will go a long way to forming excellent practitioners. What ingredients then have to be added to reach mastery?



One, which I found in Klaus’ work, is beauty. A consistent aim for elegance in his overall approach as well as in the details of his work. Take a look at his graphs: the colors match, the lines and shapes are in proportion, the whole drawings harmoniously balance filled in and blank space. These are not simple add-ons to presentations or texts. These are purveyors of thinking and meaning. They convey careful analysis, design and images of a desired future. Klaus’ mastery finds its condensed expression in his graphs. An expression, which is universally valid and understood beyond the barriers of different languages.

Another is courage: the courage to translate methods, which work in one context to a different one. Translation means not step-by-step copying. It means understanding the similarities and adapting to the differences. It entails a fine ear to listen to people and a sharp eye to see the pieces of the puzzle. Klaus translates PT from one industry to others and famously from one country and culture to others. Translation inherently means leaving ones own comfort zone and immersing oneself into the sea of the unknown to learn to swim anew.

### **Alan Ramias, Performance Design Lab**

Geary Rummier enjoyed intellectual give-and-take. He was always keen on pushing ideas to the next stage of clarity, and he appreciated anyone who could engage with him in pursuing ideas that he thought important. Klaus was one of Geary’s most significant intellectual comrades, equally interested in developing concepts and going in new directions. And he was one of the very few people brave enough to disagree with Geary, who — though always welcoming to contrary viewpoints — was a towering



thinker who intimidated some people without meaning to. But Klaus not only occasionally disagreed with Geary, he was capable of making Geary pause, reflect and change his mind. Klaus helps everyone around him in the same way, by engaging with them in a lively but respectful pursuit of the truth.



**Luise Schneider, CPT and ISPI Board member**

Having worked for Klaus for the last eight years obviously calls me to say many things about him. First: I think he deserves the Rummler Award, not only because of the “advancements to the field”, but also because Geary himself appreciated Klaus and his work so much. Whenever there was a gathering of experts in HPT, you could see Klaus and Geary sitting in corners in the hall, discussing their latest insights, methods, and of course – graphs. Klaus and Geary both share the passion for graphs. Geary loved Bert (his little painting of the performer) and Klaus is passionate about connecting boxes (a graph can NEVER have enough boxes – and how you connect them is KEY).



Being asked how I think Klaus contributed to the field, I could of course name his tremendous success stories in USAID projects, his multiple tools that enable line managers to do HPT without having to learn the theory or his visionary thinking that opens doors to completely new areas of implementation. Having said all this, I would argue that his biggest contribution is the fact that Klaus launched HPT as a methodology in the European market. It may not be clear for others who live abroad, but Instructional Design technically does not exist in Europe and thus there is no traditional market entry for HPT. Even though this is the case Klaus has achieved that multiple capacity development projects have been run with HPT, changing the life of hundreds of people in South-Eastern-Europe. The methodology Klaus has developed with World Learning is now a standard in HICD projects.

Beyond that (as if that wasn't enough!) Klaus has influenced my life... he has taught me one thing that I hold high: To find the gap in deficiencies of systems rather than in the person. It is impossible to explain how powerful this way of thinking is when you work in projects with high emotional involvement, traumatized clients or high-risk scenarios. Thank you, Klaus, for eight years of intense and empowering project adventures.