Building a Strong Development Culture

How to upskill employees to improve retention and advance your business goals

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Introduction

With baby boomers retiring in droves and millennials becoming the largest generation in the workforce, today's talent landscape is in flux. And as senior employees prepare their exit strategies, younger generations are eager for development opportunities that put them on the path to filling these soon-to-be-vacant leadership positions. As a result, career mobility is becoming a key differentiator for organizations when it comes to retention. According to the 2018 Brandon Hall Group Career Development Study, 87 percent of workers say development is important to them and 57 percent insist that a clear career path would compel them to stay longer at an organization, saving companies from the costs of recruiting and training new hires.

Development impacts more than just retention, though. The digital revolution has introduced new technology to the workforce, such as highly automated, AI-powered software and hardware. More than 50 percent of all jobs today already involve new tech requirements, according to CareerBuilder, leaving many of today's workers in need of upskilling. What's more, as automation plays a growing role in the world of work, employees have to sharpen the soft skills that make them uniquely human: clear communication abilities, empathy and critical thinking. While it's partly up to employees to show initiative in seeking out the skills they lack or simply need to strengthen, organizations and L&D teams must provide the resources—learning content, digital courses and social sharing capabilities—that learners need.

In this guidebook, you'll learn how to develop talent and, in doing so, gain a competitive advantage. After all, empowering development that grooms leaders, boosts employee retention and closes skill gaps will not only advance your workers' careers, but also help achieve your organization's business goals by ensuring that your employees are producing quality work. With eight articles covering everything from thriving in the skills economy to creating cultures and content that foster learning, our featured pieces will help you continuously empower your people and enhance their employee experience.

HR, it's time to improve your employee retention strategy

By Mike Bollinger

Always top of mind these days, employee turnover is a critical and costly issue for companies across the U.S. The demographic pressures and the tsunami of retirements are high-level barometers of more to come. The number of people changing jobs has increased dramatically over the last few years, sneaking past pre-recession levels of more than 3 million "quits" as of January 2019.

Although constantly recruiting and training new employees is expensive, it is the ancillary effects on productivity, customer satisfaction, manager effectiveness and engagement metrics that truly impact the overall business operations. It is simply in everyone's best interest to make employee retention a top priority in our newfound "sellers market." Here are five ways HR can start improving employee retention today.

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1 Make Visibility a Priority

For employees to stay with a company, they need to feel like they have room to grow. "The best incentive to retain top talent is to give them challenging work (not more work), ongoing personal and professional development such as training or coaching, or a new role," says Josh Kuehler, an employee analytics specialist for business advisory firm FMG Leading.

"**Your organization may have internal growth opportunities, but if employees can't see them, they won't know those opportunities are available.**"

According to Cornerstone's Career Trends Report, 75 percent of high performing organizations identify high-potential talent, yet only 29 percent clearly communicate this fact to their target audience.

Your organization may have internal growth opportunities, but if employees can't see them, they won't know those opportunities are available. Be transparent and open with employees about current and future needs, and make sure you have systems in place to actively guide employees to those new opportunities. Personal growth in role is at top of mind for your employees.

2 Establish Formal Career Pathing

Encourage and help employees create formal career paths for themselves so both employees and their managers have a concrete understanding of each other's goals and expectations.

"When employees feel stranded, they leave. When employees have expectations that aren't being met, they leave," says James Pollard, a specialist in financial advisor retention at TheAdvisorCoach.com. "One of the best incentives for retaining top talent is a strong support system."

Among employees surveyed in Cornerstone's Career Trends Report, 74 percent actively monitor the trajectory of their career by setting goals. If managers encourage and participate in this process, they'll be well equipped to help employees achieve those goals by staying with the company.

"Create a culture where hiring managers think about career mobility in talent review and succession meetings, and look first at your employee pool rather than simply defaulting to external recruiting."

3 Reward Managers for Developing Employees

All employees are motivated by personal incentives, including managers. If managers have more incentive to keep top performers on their own teams rather than moving them up through the company, then employee retention can suffer.

Cornerstone's Career Trends Report found that nearly two-thirds of high-performing organizations invest in coaching to accelerate employee growth. Actively train and support managers in developing coaching and mentoring skills, and offer them rewards for building and sharing talent pools.

4 Create Opportunities for Career Mobility

Managers know that hiring internally generally costs less and results in better performance that recruiting externally, yet our report showed only 37 percent of positions were filled with internal candidates in the last 24 months.

The commitment to providing employees with career mobility needs to come from the top as a clearly communicated policy. Create a culture where hiring managers think about career mobility in talent review

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and succession meetings, and look first at your employee pool rather than simply defaulting to external recruiting.

5 Invest in Learning and Development

In order to create a culture where employees can grow, thrive and rise within a company, there should be clear understanding among leadership that learning and development are priority investments.

In Cornerstone's Career Trends Report, only 38 percent of respondents said their employer provides training and career development. Yet companies whose leaders made talent a focus of their culture saw 2.7x higher revenue growth. Start by quantifying the benefits of learning and development to your business strategy to earn the commitment of senior leadership, then create clear and actionable development plans.

"Many companies think this internal promotion is enough, but it's important to take it one step further by giving employees the tools they need to get there," says Evan Harris, co-founder and CEO of SD Equity Partners. "By offering your employees resources to increase their knowledge and develop their skills, they'll be more likely to stay."

Research shows us two things: 1) Managers can spend up to 50% of their time working with new hires and 2) the at-risk period for employees is the first year of their employment. Putting these simple techniques into place will have true impact in a targeted fashion. ●

In the resume of the future, skills (not degrees) will be paramount

By Rebecca Leung

Say goodbye to the typical "education" section on the resume. According to a recent study from Deloitte Research, recent college graduates today enjoy a salary premium as a result of their degree—but that might change in the near future.

"In a tightening labor market," the researchers wrote, "smart employers should carefully catalog the skills required for the occupations they hire and screen for those skills rather than accepting a bachelor's degree as a proxy for them."

What's more, the rapid pace of technological change is forcing employees to evolve their skills beyond their degrees. A B.A. in computer science doesn't necessarily prove a candidate is up-to-date on the latest programming languages. And in some cases, candidates need to acquire skills for entirely new roles and titles, from machine learning engineer to UX writer to brand activation manager.

To prove they have the right skills for any given role in the future, workers will need a new kind of resume, one that includes more specific demonstrations of their abilities. The resume of the future might include a list of their specific coursework over holistic degrees, short-term project work instead of company tenure and peer ratings to substantiate soft skills.

Evolving the Resume to Reflect Continuous Learning

Employee credentials have to keep pace with the rapid changes taking place in the workforce—and according to research from PwC, post-college courses have the potential to close that gap.

"What any hiring manager is looking for is: Can you do the job?" says Kapeesh Saraf, director of product management at the online education startup Coursera.

"Usually, in the past, the best signal was your work experience and degree. The skills that people need on the job are changing rapidly, so people need alternative ways to demonstrate those skills."

"The number of individuals engaging in coursework outside of major degree programs is on the rise."

Saraf envisions employers and human resources managers in the future will have access to information about the classes their employees have taken and how they've performed across a variety of skills. For instance, the HR manager could see which programmers performed particularly well in Drupal, and make decisions on what projects to assign that person based on this granular data.

Already, the number of individuals engaging in coursework outside of major degree programs is on the rise. In 2017, Saraf said the number of paid learners using MOOCs (massive online open courses) grew 70 percent on Coursera, and Udacity reported 50,000 paid students in its Nanodegree programs. And companies are beginning to take these programs seriously: One interview.io survey found the most reliable predictor of success on a technical score in an interview was whether a candidate had completed a Udacity or Coursera course.

Incorporating a Soft Skills Section

In addition to more up-to-date, more granular representations of hard skills, companies need ways to identify a candidate's soft skills. Rather than rely on tenure at one company as an indicator, peer reviews might act as more detailed indicators of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

Saraf says consulting companies such as Accenture and Mphasis are already using peer review data for internal hiring. Colleagues rate their coworkers in terms of specific criterion, such as who's a team player and who shows leadership skills. In turn, HR gathers workers into temporary teams for one-off projects.

"They feed that into their systems to determine not just who's easy to work with or not, but what are the right teams to form," Saraf says.

Saraf imagines the rating system of the future could look something like that of Airbnb's for hosts. A number of areas on Airbnb—cleanliness, responsiveness, etc.—are given number ratings instead of just one overarching number for the host's quality. This granular data gives visitors a much clearer picture of what they're getting before booking a night's stay. The same could be said of hiring a candidate.

> "The growth of project-based and gig work will likely increase the relevance of this skills-based approach to the resume in the future."

"Skills that will be important to consider are those like leadership, organization and dependability," adds Elvis Ha, manager of product management at Cornerstone. "This will be a drastic change from the generally positive peer reviews we see on places like LinkedIn that only tell one side of the candidate's story."

The Road Ahead for New Credentials

The growth of project-based and gig work will likely increase the relevance of this skills-based approach to the resume in the future. In the meantime, there are still a host of questions to be answered about how candidates' skills will be accurately represented on the resume of the future through coursework, peer reviews and project work. Tech human capital consultant Babette Ten Haken, for example, expressed concern that peer review ratings might oversimplify a worker's skills.

"I'm not a great believer in standalone numbers," Ten Haken said. "They have no understanding of the complexity of the organization: Was the project complex or simple, or a horrible team?"

Saraf acknowledges that it might also become more difficult for people to get a fresh start if peer ratings follow us around throughout our careers. But he's hopeful that the opposite is true regarding the rise of relevant coursework.

In his view, online coursework can allow people from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic circumstances to seize jobs that weren't available to them before. In its 2017 Learner Outcomes Survey, Coursera found that 38 percent of candidates who took courses to advance their careers felt they were in a better position to apply for jobs. Eighteen percent said the online coursework helped them kickstart a new career.

"It creates opportunities for anyone willing to work hard," Saraf says. "In the future, as things get more quantifiable, it means that even if someone didn't go to a top school they will have access to the same opportunity, whether they went to community college or Stanford—and that's really exciting." ●

5 ways managers can guide the talent development process

By Carol Anderson

When a young Marine officer becomes a company commanding officer, it is his first experience with leadership. Being responsible for the lives of more than 200 Marines in times of peace and, more importantly, during war is a heavy weight to bear. The consequences of failure are staggering. That's why a young Marine officer's most crucial task is ensuring that those under his command have the knowledge, skills and behaviors needed to succeed.

This resonates with me and my role as a learning professional. I understand the critical importance of learning as it relates to knowledge, skills and behaviors, and I see the value in having a safe environment in which to practice these skills. But today, many companies are missing a key element of leadership—taking responsibility for the development of employees both as individuals, and as members of a team.

Talent development is a new buzz word, and we talk about it all the time. What's unclear is who is responsible for developing employees? Is it the Learning and Development department? Is it HR? Or might it be the manager of the team or department? I am inclined to go with the latter. After all, the leader is closest to the team, has a thorough understanding of the capability and capacity of team members and always has skin in the game.

But this scenario doesn't make the learning and development department obsolete. L&D professionals are subject matter experts on how adults learn, and managers are subject matter experts on the missions of their respective teams. Working together, they can develop scenarios, plan activities, identify competencies, build motivation and deliver learning content in the most expedient and lasting ways. To maximize this partnership, the managers should follow this five-step approach as part of the talent development process.

"After gaining insight into the context of a learning experience, employees will likely be more attentive and be able to better relate learning content to their jobs."

1 Provide Context

Team leaders know which skills will be crucial to the success of the team, and talent development process. For example, a team focused on receiving and classifying new inventory has to work together to achieve accuracy and efficiency—this task requires key organizational skills, and managers should make it clear why organization is essential for team success.

With this context, team leaders can motivate their employees to learn. They can also help them connect the dots between a newly learned skill, and the increased success of the team. After gaining insight into the context of a learning experience, employees will likely be more attentive and be able to better relate learning content to their jobs.

2 Prepare the Learner

Team leaders can prepare their employees for a learning experience, whether formal or informal. Before diving into the learning experience, set it up. Explaining what to expect and how the new knowledge or skill will benefit the team and the employee creates interest and curiosity. By generating curiosity, the manager says, "This is important— here's why you should pay attention and learn."

3 Monitor Learning

As the learner embarks on a journey to gain new knowledge, check in regularly. Answer questions and ask questions to ensure that the process is working. Track progress using your Learning Management System as well as regular evaluations related to the new knowledge and skills they are learning.

"Everyone needs practice to improve and perfect a skill. Feedback is important here, and doesn't necessarily mean a critique."

4 Follow Up

A simple yet effective question managers should pose after an employee has gained new knowledge is, "What did you learn, and how will that help you to do your job more effectively or efficiently?" With that question, the manager emphasizes the relevance and importance of the learning content.

If the leader cannot connect the dots back to the employee's work, it may be time to question the need for the learning experience.

5 Evaluate Progress

Everyone needs practice to improve and perfect a skill. Feedback is important here, and doesn't necessarily mean a critique. Rather, it means discussing the employee's confidence level, identifying ways to increase confidence and coming up with different scenarios that might challenge the employee in the future.

Keep the dialogue going until both you and the employee believe that the appropriate confidence level has been reached. ●

To make leadership development effective, tell the truth

By Jeffrey Pfeffer

Social science isn't as alluring as most feel-good leadership talk. Recently, a large public accounting firm where I delivered a presentation on influence and power told me that their head of human resources wanted a more "inspirational" presentation on leadership than what I was preparing. Material based on the facts of organizational life and relevant social science research wouldn't be uplifting enough for their new cohort of leaders, the head of HR said.

Many leadership development (LD) events feature speakers telling compelling life stories about overcoming various physical or economic challenges. Others feature engaging speakers relaying examples of leaders who claim modesty, authenticity, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

But this pervasive feel-good approach to LD may explain why leadership is a largely failing enterprise:

A 2018 survey co-sponsored by Ultimate Software reported that 80 percent of employees said they could do their jobs without their managers and only 53 percent thought their managers cared about their well-being. A recent report by PR-firm Edelman found that 63 percent of respondents don't consider CEOs to be credible. And a Brandon Hall Group study reported that 75 percent of people said that their leadership development programs lacked effectiveness.

> **"Measurements that offer people feedback about what they should be doing and how well they are meeting their objectives is a potent way of accomplishing behavioral change. Inspiration—not so much."**

All of these feel-good LD initiatives do just that: they make us feel good, but they develop neither the knowledge nor the skills that help people be more effective in getting things done—a critical component of leadership. It's time to do things differently.

Inspiration Doesn't Equate to Lasting Change

Inspiration, a goal of many LD initiatives, is a poor method to achieve lasting change. The temporary motivational high soon wears off.

So, how do we affect real change? We know from decades of research in social psychology that social environments drive behavior. As Keith Ferrazzi wrote in the Harvard Business Review in 2014, changing behavior, be it in a 12-step abstinence program or any other effort, requires altering the people in one's social network. Moreover, changing the physical cues and prompts that influence behavior is another important intervention. The measurements that provide people feedback about what they should be doing and how well they are meeting their objectives is a third potent way of accomplishing behavioral change. Inspiration—not so much.

At a minimum, LD efforts should stop measuring how much people enjoyed an event—a process

which reinforces edu-tainment—and instead assess LD programs against important objectives such as increased engagement, decreased turnover and a sufficient number of leaders.

Most Leaders Don't Walk the Walk

The qualities that leadership programs relentlessly advocate, albeit wonderful, are frequently absent in today's political and corporate leaders.

> "L&D programs would be well-served to change the emphasis from aspirational qualities that are not only rare, but also often not helpful, to a focus on pragmatic skills."

For instance, modesty and many contemporary business leaders—Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, Larry Ellison, even Howard Schultz—don't seem to go together. Research shows that narcissism, not modesty, is correlated with being hired, being promoted, receiving job tenure, and even participating in group performance. The disconnect between what LD programs advocate and what people see, often in their immediate environments from their own senior leaders, produces a high degree of cynicism and a reluctance to accept the lessons being proffered.

Therefore, L&D programs would be well-served to change the emphasis from aspirational qualities that are not only rare, but also often not helpful to a focus on pragmatic skills, such as the ability to exude presence, build useful networks, create valuable resources and tolerate not being liked, all of which are associated with measures of success.

"Leadership" as a Term Is Ambiguous

"Leadership" and what we mean by effective leadership remains too ambiguous. There are many dimensions to leadership effectiveness: employee engagement, employee health and well-being, productivity, ethical compliance—the list goes on. But these aspects are far from perfectly correlated with each other, and LD initiatives would benefit greatly from more

focus. Companies need to decide what are the most important aspects of leadership, and recognize the realities of trade-offs.

As Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote decades ago, "power is the organization's last dirty secret, but it is also the secret to individual and organizational success."

Leaders: Master Organizational Politics

An important focus of leadership development efforts needs to be teaching people in leadership roles how to understand and use the principles of power and influence that are invariably essential for making things happen.

Gerald Ferris, a Florida State University professor who co-authored Political Skill at Work, has developed a political skills inventory and conducted numerous studies showing how political skill is associated with career success and leadership effectiveness. Leaders who don't master organizational politics don't stay in their roles very long, he found, and many career derailments occur when people reach organizational levels where jobs entail much more interdependence that requires being able to influence others.

Power and influence concepts do a much better job of helping people understand what they see in the organizational world around them and become more effective at making things happen. Far from Jack Nicholson's famous line in the movie, A Few Good Men, not only can people handle the truth, educational efforts that are rooted in the hard truths of leadership, even if occasionally challenging or unpleasant, are much more likely to produce lasting increases in leader effectiveness. ●

Four corporate learning experts discuss today's top L&D content trends

By Charles Coy

The race for talent is getting tougher as recruiters struggle to find candidates with the skills needed to perform today's jobs. Proficiency in artificial intelligence-powered technology, for example, was a critical requirement for six out of the top 15 emerging jobs highlighted in LinkedIn's recent Emerging Jobs report. Yet, it's a skill many job seekers still lack, according to the report.

Even as HR teams consider internal candidates that can step up to the plate and fill knowledge gaps as they arise, challenges abound. Employees often don't have enough time to devote to learning, development and upskilling. Moreover, their expectations for learning content are greater than ever, says Summer Salomonsen, head of Content Studios at Cornerstone OnDemand.

"Microlearning is designed in a very specific way to teach learners something in a short amount of time. You can't just take a short clip of a longer course and call it microlearning"

"I'm seeing a lot of pressure put on organizations and leaders to source, build, provide and distribute content in a very up-market type of way to retain the attention of their employees," she explains.

The onus is on L&D teams to create and curate materials that engage and inspire seasoned employees and new hires alike. What will it take to deliver this high-level learning content? We asked four experts to weigh in with their perspectives on today's biggest learning content trends, and offer recommendations for experimenting with them at your organization.

Microlearning Is Powerful, But It Isn't For Everything

Short and highly-targeted, microlearning content can convey information to learners without taking up a significant amount of time. But not everything can—or should—be condensed into this format.

"Microlearning is designed in a very specific way to teach learners something in a short amount of time. You can't just take a short clip of a longer course and call it microlearning. To be effective, the topic has to be appropriate for microlearning, versus a much deeper concept, around which learning would need to be designed differently."
— *Akanksha Garg, General Manager, CyberU, Inc.*

"To be called microlearning, content has to be three things. First, it needs to be single concept, meaning it covers just one thing. Second, microlearning must use a unique delivery mechanism including audio and visual elements to build on a single concept. And finally, to be most effective, microlearning shouldn't be something that happens outside of work—it should happen during work."
—*Summer Salomonsen*

Video Can Be Highly Engaging—When It's Done Right

Video is a captivating way to present learning materials, but not all videos are created equal. Unless executed thoughtfully, video can fall flat and get lost in a noisy space.

"One time I asked an L&D professional: 'Why do you choose TED [videos] for your learners?' They responded: 'Because TED speakers talk from the heart.' Companies shouldn't shy away from this! Bringing human-centered stories and examples to the table helps drive home key points, reinforces the bigger 'why?' behind the learning, and makes learning more lasting and memorable."
— *Kaylen Nalven, TED*

"Video can be an incredibly powerful tool, and it's easier and more affordable than ever, but organizations need to spend time drilling down what is most critical and earn the learner's attention. We can't just prop up a talking head in front of a cool green screen and people will listen."
—*Summer Salomonsen*

Use Cases For VR- and AR-Based Learning Are Emerging

Virtual reality and augmented reality are no longer gimmicky tools—they have useful applications from a learning standpoint across industries.

"I recently saw a demo of VR content used to train someone in hospitality. An employee would put on a headset that showed a virtual situation in which they were greeting customers. The virtual reality offered different interaction options, things to grab and things to show the customer."
—*Akanksha Garg*

"Walmart famously used AR/VR- based training to prepare its employees for Black Friday. They needed to get their store associates ready for surging hordes of people and create that emotional experience for workers so that they could be prepared. A lot of

hospitals and teaching universities are also using AR and VR to simulate challenges in dealing with patients. The biggest challenges are that these experiences are often costly, and not all learning lends itself to scenario-based cognition."
—*Summer Salomonsen*

"**An AI-based learning platform can recommend content based on the preferences of similar users, the learning interests that users demonstrate or their desired career paths. That's what's next for this promising technology.**""

AI Can Play Multiple Roles in Learning Content Strategy

AI can create more tailored learning opportunities for employees and provide managers with insight on what types of content are effective.

"An AI-based learning platform can recommend content based on the preferences of similar users, the learning interests that users demonstrate or their desired career paths. That's what's next for this promising technology—it's going to be a way for people to self-develop."
— *Akanksha Garg*

"There's a wealth of data that AI can provide on a learning platform. What content are people engaging with? Are they watching full videos? What's the participation rate? Eventually, AI will be able to monitor facial expressions while learners are watching content and will help determine their level of engagement. There's a lot that's still untapped."
—*Ira Wolfe, President of Success Performance Solutions*

Learners Come For Required Courses, But Stay For Self-Improvement

Beyond compliance, learning content should empower employees to challenge themselves and grow professionally.

"Courses on project management, time management and office productivity, as well as more personal topics such as health and wellness or morale boosting, are important. Having that balance of content in any learning strategy is key because it shows that you're invested in your employees, and your learner's development isn't just about checking the box of compliance."
—Akanksha Garg

"My research with hundreds of L&D professionals validated one well-cited trend: the importance of human or soft skills—namely the focus on nurturing leadership, communication, collaboration, creative problem-solving and emotional intelligence in the workplace—is undeniable." ●
—Kaylen Nalven

How a learning culture breeds employee development

By Summer Salomonsen

Have you noticed that over the past year, conversations around major incidents of unconscious bias and sexual harassment have almost always included learning as part of the solution?

It's more important than ever to create a culture of learning within our workplaces, because only through a culture of learning can we adopt new mindsets, behaviors and skills that make workplaces inclusive for everyone. And who better than learning practitioners to lead this charge within their organizations?

There have been countless articles reporting the same thing: employees expect learning as part of their daily jobs. And as learning practitioners, we need to embrace this opportunity and truly elevate ourselves into a strategic position within the company.

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Embracing this opportunity, however, can be challenging. I get it. I've been in your shoes. I've previously been an L&D practitioner, a learning consultant and have built and delivered courses for global organizations.

"Learning programs shouldn't focus on the theory of learning, but the practical implementations for employees."

Whatever challenges you have with creating a culture of learning, I've likely had them, too. Here's what I've learned along the way:

Get Out of Your Own Way

Sometimes we, as L&D practitioners, can be our own worst enemy. Historically, learning practitioners have rooted our value-add in the complex learning programs we've built for our organizations. Yet those programs are often misguided—we over-architect and over complicate them, which alienates our employees and complicates our ability to gain strategic buy-in. Instead, we need to focus on creating intuitive and simple learning programs.

Learning programs shouldn't focus on the theory of learning, but the practical implementations for employees. Remember, learning builds trust among employees, so build programs with your employees in mind and focus on their needs. As much as we'd like to think that people are motivated to learn because they are told to, or even expect it as part of their jobs, we still need to make content relevant to them. The content within our learning programs should allow every employee to find meaning and tie the ideas presented to pre-existing knowledge, which will drive natural behavioral change.

At the end of the day, to truly create a learning culture, we need to get out of our own way and focus on simple learning. We need to realize that our value-add isn't creating programs; it's enabling people to achieve business goals.

> # "One way to help ensure you're creating modern content is to use a modern process."

Think practically about what works, and what drives business goals: This is ruthless relevance. Let it be your north star as you build programs to support the organization. In business, we don't have the luxury of learning for the sake of learning. We learn to grow and be agile.

Modern Content for a Modern Workforce

Learning content isn't what it used to be. While I cannot say that the days of cheesy content are fully gone, modern learning approaches are quickly becoming the norm.

From a quick Google search to watching a three-minute YouTube video to attending a webinar, there is learning content everywhere. According to Google, there are 500 million views of learning-related content and one million learning videos shared on YouTube every day. We must act as curators in addition to content creators. We must help our people by sourcing the best content that aligns to our goals. This means ensuring that the content we invest in is high-quality, engaging, insightful and easily consumed. We are serving a sophisticated population of content consumers.

One way to help ensure you're creating modern content is to use a modern process. Implement an agile framework that has been tested and validated. Rather than over-architecting another learning program, create short-form content that can be adjusted after deployment. The goal here is speed. Identify a viable product, deploy it and build in feedback loops as well as review cycles to improve it on the fly.

Give People the Learning They Crave

Keep in mind, high viewership of virtual content isn't a threat to formal L&D—it's a call to action and a model we should understand and utilize to build engaging content and foster a learning culture.

Employees want an opportunity to learn. This is our chance to help them thrive and grow. So, let's focus on creating a learning culture that fosters a growth mindset.

Why L&D can make or break your business

By Rita Trehan

There's no safer bet in the business world than this: As soon as you've planned and refined a strategy, something in the market will change. Constant advances in technology ensure this type of disruption, and the rise of consumerism means that those who are not meeting the needs of clients faster, better and with more focus and attention than their competitors might very well not be around tomorrow.

"By the time you've put together classroom lessons or crafted, tested and released an online module, you've got to move onto the next thing."

A business's ability to react and shift in accordance with company strategy relies heavily on corporate readiness. In other words, you need the right talent in the right roles with the skills to shift gears and either react to changing market conditions or get ahead of them entirely. Your company's relevance is entirely reliant upon this level of corporate flexibility. You've got to get the information and react to it. Fast.

It's Time for a New L&D Model

This need for rapid response is what makes the old standard models of learning and development entirely antiquated. By the time you've put together classroom lessons or crafted, tested and released an online module, you've got to move onto the next thing. Old-school L&D can make or break a business in these circumstances, and it's not just because the company is using older tools: The whole corporate world is moving and changing faster than ever.

Baby boomers are leaving the workforce as millennials are entering it in large numbers, and that creates a dearth of qualified leaders. With technological advances, the skill mix that will be needed for the future isn't changing in the next five years—it's more like the next six months to a year. Employees want to be challenged and free to follow their passion instead of a classic management progression career path. Lack of learning and development affects talent acquisition, retention and profitability.

It means that it's time for a new model: continuous learning.

The Case for Continuous Learning

A compelling case can be made for a holistic learning experience platform where learning isn't merely created but curated for the organization and tailored to the individual. Self-maintained but following certain

corporate directives, a holistic learning platform allows employees to acquire a variety of skills germane to their current position but with options to explore courses that they can curate themselves based on their passion and skill interests.

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Business skills, leadership, technology and other vital current and future skills are available for individuals, and the whole experience is created in partnership with the organization's L&D team. I think it's the future of corporate leadership development and a powerful way to harness technological disruptions for internal growth and corporate profitability.

In the end, the ability to remain relevant and agile means having the right individuals with the right skills able to perform the right tasks at the right time. This underscores the importance of corporate readiness, and if continuous learning and development can be incorporated into an employee's daily work experience, there's a much greater chance of creating that essential corporate capacity. It's a path to relevance and a brighter, profitable future for the design and execution of the business of tomorrow. Let us embrace it now. ●

3 ways to build a top-down learning culture

By Jeff Miller

This article was originally published under Jeff Miller's column "The Science of Workplace Motivation" on Inc.com.

Modern technology enables employees to access information anytime and anywhere to get jobs done. But access to information does not always equate to "learning" at work. If your organization wants employees to continue stretching and growing, you don't just need a curriculum—you need a culture of learning.

Executives often pin the responsibility of creating this culture on human resources. After all, if human resources manages the training and development program, shouldn't they manage the culture, too?

Not quite. While human resources is certainly a contributing force, they can't succeed in a silo. A recent Deloitte study found the gap between the importance of learning and development in organizations and the ability to act on it has grown by more than 200 percent.

In order to bridge this gap, creating a learning culture needs to be a communal effort—and this effort starts from the top down. The actions, values and language of company leaders shape how everyone in an organization operates, and can make or break a learning program.

After nearly three decades in both classroom and corporate learning, here are a few things I've learned about how leaders can help shape learning.

1 **Have the Mentality of a Professor**

I always tell company leaders to "be the professor" in their organizations. Perhaps this is a leftover symptom from my years as an educator, but I've found that it

> **"A culture of learning is one in which every person is dedicated to improving themselves and others."**

can make a profound difference in how employees approach growth and learning.

As an executive, you didn't reach your position overnight—you've worked hard, you've failed, you've learned lessons. Sharing your journey can forge stronger relationships, build trust and encourage resilience. In fact, a study from Edelman found that 68 percent of people want to hear their CEO's personal success story and 73 percent want to know about the obstacles their CEO has overcome.

2 **Don't Be Afraid to Take the Student's Seat**

A culture of learning is one in which every person is dedicated to improving themselves and others. It's important to share your knowledge, but it's also important to welcome knowledge.

At my company, Cornerstone OnDemand, we host "Development Day" -- a full day of classes taught by Cornerstone employees -- every other month. People submit to teach their coworkers about everything from coding and working remotely to baking cake pops and taking iPhone photography. Our CEO and other C-suite executives attend these workshops, ready to learn from the instructor like anyone else -- whether she's an entry-level sales rep or a senior designer.

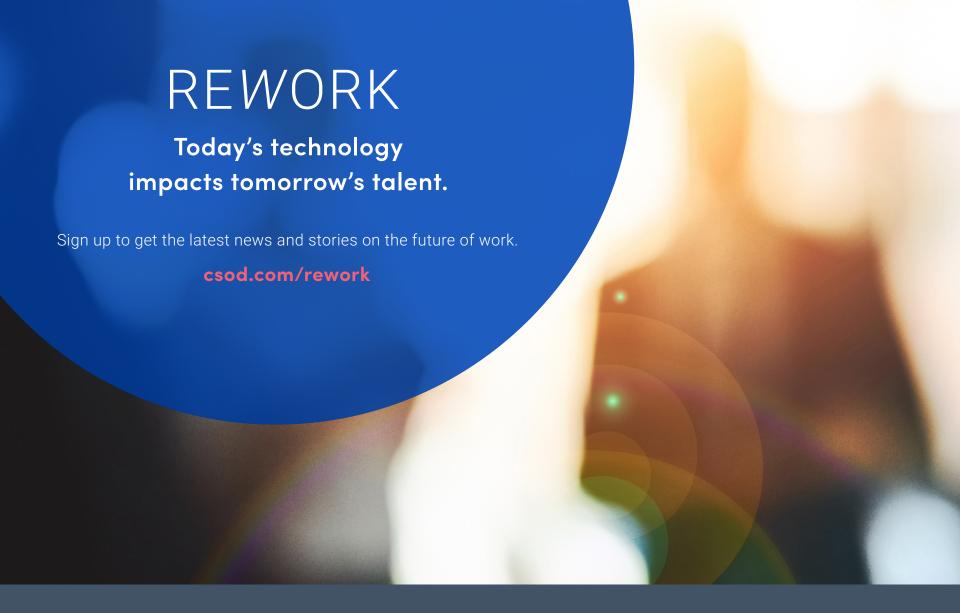> **"Leading by example, as both a teacher and a learner, can foster a culture that's open to growth."**

③ Align Learning to Business Strategy

Leading by example, as both a teacher and a learner, can foster a culture that's open to growth. But in order to solidify and sustain this culture, you need to align learning with your business goals.

Fewer than 45 percent of organizations have a written business plan for learning, according to Deloitte. Don't make the mistake of investing money in people, resources and time without a clear understanding of how these investments contribute to your bottom line.

Bring your human resources team to the table, and tell them your one-, five-, and ten-year plans for the organization. Then ask them, "How do we make this happen? And what do you need from me?"

Building a learning culture from the top down demonstrates that taking risks and stretching yourself is not only valued at an organization, but also valuable. If you demonstrate your investment as a company leader, both personally and financially, you'll create an organization where employees naturally seek and share knowledge. ●

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