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How do Global Organizations Create a Culture of Learning for the Future?

Abstract

[Excerpt] The future of work will be more nimble, complex, digital and collaborative than ever before. This is especially true given today's workforce expects businesses to prepare them for the newest industrial wave. Therefore, organizations must take ownership of their employees' development to remain competitive. Most recently, we have seen the learning and development (L&D) function utilize typical delivery methods such as instructor-led classroom and online sessions, self-paced online learning, and instructor-led remote video call-ins. However, with internal business practices adopting a customer-centric model, it is imperative that the learning community also approach learner engagement outside of the traditional scope to establish a culture of learning that excites and motivates employees to prepare for the future. This summary will outline key considerations for motivating employees to engage in learning and highlight innovative methods that organizations can add to their learning portfolio.

Keywords

Human Resources, leadership, leadership development, global organizations, globalization, multinational firm, future of work, culture, learning, learning and development, HR, learner engagement

Comments

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Executive Summary

Research Question

How do global organizations need to approach learner engagement differently to create a culture of learning that prepares employees for the future? Additionally, what evidence exists around approaches specifically geared towards HR?

Introduction

The future of work will be more nimble, complex, digital and collaborative than ever before.² This is especially true given today's workforce expects businesses to prepare them for the newest industrial wave.⁶ Therefore, organizations must take ownership of their employees' development to remain competitive. Most recently, we have seen the learning and development (L&D) function utilize typical delivery methods such as instructor-led classroom and online sessions, self-paced online learning, and instructor-led remote video call-ins.² However, with internal business practices adopting a customer-centric model,⁷ it is imperative that the learning community also approach learner engagement outside of the traditional scope to establish a culture of learning that excites and motivates employees to prepare for the future. This summary will outline key considerations for motivating employees to engage in learning and highlight innovative methods that organizations can add to their learning portfolio.

Factors Influencing Learner Engagement

1. Learning Styles

While L&D professionals may believe that adapting delivery of learning to participants' learning styles (App. 1) would optimize both learning outcomes and learner engagement, the empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Instead, learners will exhibit a preference for the mode in which they receive information, impacting their initial engagement, but tailoring the mode of delivery to these preferences does not lead to optimal learning outcomes.⁹

2. Learner Motivation

Employees' motivation to learn is influenced by the following factors⁵: valence - perceived value associated with learning (.54 correlation); anxiety - fear of failure (-.35 correlation); self-efficacy - self-belief in success (.29 correlation); age (-.13 correlation). Focusing on HR professionals, who are currently being asked to re/upskill in a time of rapid technology advancement,⁴ a factor to be mindful of is anxiety, or fear of failing to learn the capabilities needed to participate as a future HR professional. To overcome these feelings and motivate workers to engage in learning, organizations should focus on a positive climate, supervisor support, and peer support.⁵

Designing and Delivering Learning

The most common approaches for delivering learning in an organizational setting have included (App. 2):

1. Instructor-led classroom - 54.28% (+5.50% YoY)
2. Self-paced online - 23.29% (+1.06% YoY)
3. Instructor-led online - 8.88% (-2.25% YoY)

Building on these, organizations that are implementing innovative internal processes have the opportunity to increase their organization's competitive advantage by providing a meaningful differentiation to their employees.¹ Patterns of best practices from ATD's BEST Winners 2018 that distinguish an organization's learning and development offering, broadly include:³

1. Culture of learning and sharing
2. Embrace creative training methodologies
3. Shift to virtual/blended learning

Organizations that have successfully implemented practices like those elucidated above are:

IBM's shift to virtual/blended learning is evident in its comprehensive training program to upskill 400 sales reps in cloud and AI solutions. A key feature of this program includes testing through a responsive digital "Try It!" elevator pitches. Within these video pitches, learners operate without fear of failure as they have "lifelines" to call on. IBM also depends upon a digital badge program to incentivize learning engagement. The organization validates skills obtained by employees by making these badges easily shareable on internal and external professional networks. IBM reported 87% of users were more engaged because of the digital badge program. It has also created a transparent collective skills registry where employee learning could be tracked in the larger IBM ecosystem.³

Google's culture of learning and sharing is apparent in its "Google-to-Googler" program. This program is set on the premise that learning activities within the organization are the responsibility of the entire organization. 80% of all tracked trainings within Google are run through an employee-to-employee network where volunteers provide 1:1 mentoring and design learning materials for courses ranging from technical to professional to managerial skills. This program emphasizes self-ownership of one's learning and development, which is the foundation to the company's learning culture. This method taps into the organization's knowledge base and effectively captures and retains internal knowledge, leaving L&D teams to focus on enabling this process.¹¹

Verizon has embraced creative training methodologies through their 3-day Instructional Design Hackathon that was conducted in a *shark-tank* style environment. 75 internal trainers, instructional designers, project managers, retail leaders and HR business partners presented their proposals to develop a retail sales leadership program. The steering committee included Verizon's top leadership who evaluated the proposals' business impact and conducted an ROI analysis. This internal event utilized collective intelligence of cross-functional teams to promote ingenious problem-solving for people challenges. The cross-functionality of this program provided Verizon's HR team an opportunity to learn and develop through ideation with the broader business.³

Conclusion

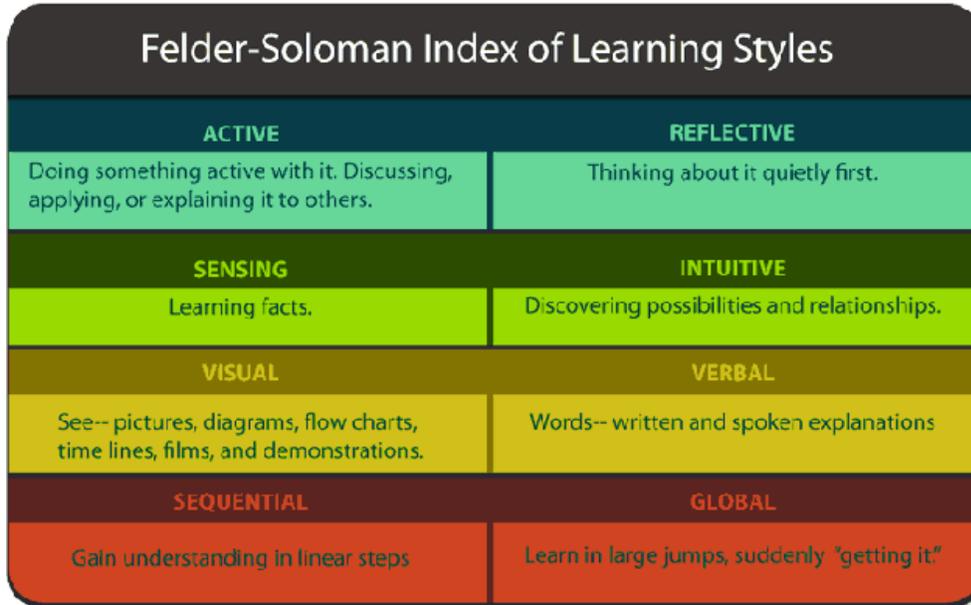
As the changing nature of work continues to impact organizations, the learning function should explore avenues to evolve with the demands of the workplace. While traditional approaches to organizational learning will always have an important role, it is imperative that the learning community approach learner engagement with a customer-centric mindset to ensure that they are motivating employees to engage in learning.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Felder-Soloman Index of Learning Styles



Source: Framework for e-Learning Recommendation Based on Index of Learning Styles Model - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Felder-Soloman-Index-of-Learning-Styles-16_fig2_301223422 [accessed 7 Oct, 2019]

Appendix 2 - Learning Modes of Delivery Usage

Currently Leveraged Learning Techniques and Modes of Delivery		
Technique or Mode	Current Usage Rate	Year over Year Trend
Instructor-led Classroom	54.28%	+5.50%
Instructor-led Online	8.88%	-2.25%
Instructor-led Remote	4.33%	-1.02%
Self-paced Online	23.29%	+1.06
Self-paced Non-networked Computer (e.g CD-ROM)	1.76%	-1.57%
Mobile Technology	1.98%	+1.59%
Non-computer technology (e.g. DVD, Audio CD)	1.03%	-3.57%
Self-paced Print	3.23%	+ .80%

Source: Association for Talent Development. 2018 State Of The Industry. Association For Talent Development, 2018, <https://www.td.org/soir2018>. Accessed 7 Oct 2019.