Facing change in the workplace: why a learning culture is the answer

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The pace and scale of change in business today is unprecedented – and there are no signs of it slowing down.

Roughly 3.5 billion people today own a smartphone[1] and the number of internet users around the world has grown by over 1.9 billion people in the last five years alone (that's more than 75% growth)[2].

It's predicted that machines could displace 75 million jobs across the globe by 2022, while 133 million new roles could emerge from the evolving division of labour between humans and computers[3].

Probably for the first time in history, we are seeing **five generations in the workplace at the same time[4].** Each of those generations have different expectations of society and companies, as well as different ways of working.

In this context, it's clear that globalisation, accelerating technology changes and the cocktail of new generations in the workforce, are disrupting the workplace and transforming the nature of work.

The answer? It lies in reshaping the way we think about learning, and developing a culture of learning within the business. Not just any learning culture; the kind of culture that focuses on empowering employees and helping businesses adapt to change; a necessity to succeed today and in the future.

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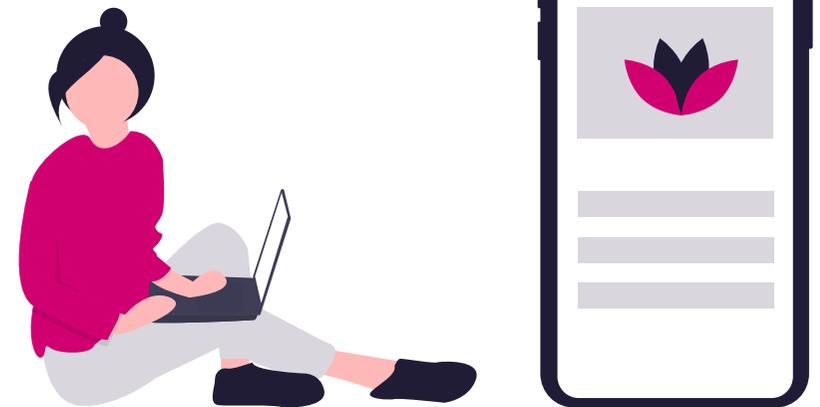
Understanding the challenge: Identifying the skills gaps

Mind the (skills) gap

79% of employers believe there is a skill gap in their company[5]

54% of all employees will need reskilling by 2022[3]

80% of employers say soft skills are increasingly important[6]

57% struggle to assess soft skills accurately[4]

10% of employers feel ready to face the skill shortage[7]

The digital era has opened up a lot of new doors for businesses: in just the last thirty years, technological advances have helped almost double global productivity3. But it also puts incredible pressure on organisations and employees.

Keeping up with the rate of constant digital change can be difficult, particularly given the recent rise of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and machine learning, which bring with them the need for new jobs with technical skills.

A recent PWC report found **79%** of employers believe there is a skill gap in their company today[1], while according to the World Economic Forum **54%** of all employees will need reskilling by 2022[2].

And in a world dominated by technology, soft skills such as creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management are also becoming a challenge for employers: despite **80%** of employers saying that soft skills are increasingly important[3]; **57%** struggle to assess soft skills accurately in their organisation[4] and **89%** state that bad hires typically lack soft skills[5].

Not only there is a skills gap, there is a new fast skills obsolescence – a skill learned today will be about half as valuable in just five years – or if technical, even less. While **86%** of employers, aware of the high costs of recruitment and challenges of finding the right talent, find learning and development highly important[7] , only **10%** of them feel ready to face the skill shortage[8].

This means one thing: employers need to build and maintain critical skills in their existing workforce if they want to keep up with the ever-changing business environment .

# 02

Continuous learning: the way of the future

Valuable lessons learned

94% of employees say they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their learning and development[8]

20% of employees believe 'the inability to learn and grow' would make them look for another job[9]

19% of employees consider the 'opportunity to learn and grow' as the top reason that inspires them, makes them happy and want to work harder[9]

47% of employees are less likely to be stressed at work if they learn more than 5 hours a week[9]
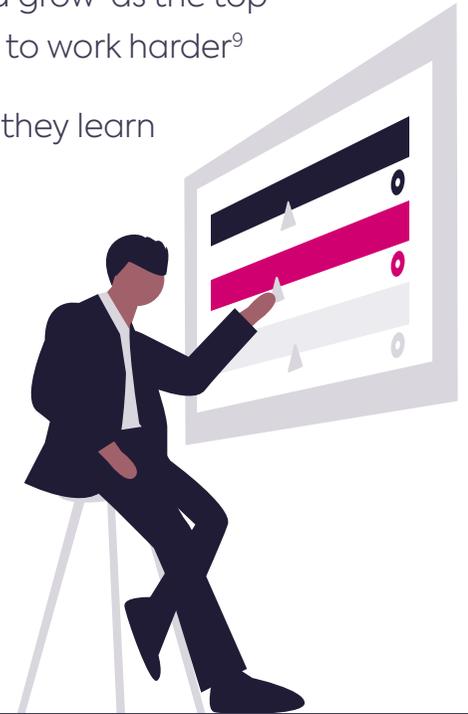
In this rapidly changing digital world, not only is learning key to organisations and employers but it is also increasingly important to employees. Learning opportunities are among the largest drivers of employee engagement and a strong workplace culture – 94% of employees say they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their learning and development[6].

Learning is as much a driver for inspiration, happiness and engagement at work as it is a reason for employees to leave acompany that doesn't provide learning opportunities – while **19%** of employees consider the 'opportunity to learn and grow' as the top reason that inspires them, makes them happy and want to work harder[3], **20%** of employees believe 'the inability to learn and grow' would make them look for another job[7].

Happy, engaged employees are better workers, and the links between happiness and learning are clear – **47%** of employees are less likely to be stressed at work if they learn more than 5 hours a week[9]. Engaged employees are more fulfilled, more likely to increase customer satisfaction levels, and more likely to be innovative and productive.

Nowadays, successful companies are those who learn fast, learn well, and learn all the time. Put simply, learning directly affects the bottom line. According to a recent Deloitte study[10], highperforming learning organisations are:

46% more likely to be first to market

37% more productive

92% more likely to innovate

58% more likely to meet future demand

In fact, learning at work is not just a 'nice to have' for employees, it has become central to their employee experience the way they feel, the way they engage and ultimately the way they perform. And that's a win-win situation.

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## Employees in the driver's seat: learning on their terms

Make it personal and give control

94% of employees want to choose where and when they are taking training[11]

74% of employees want to learn during spare time at work[12]

68% of employees say they would pick up skills faster if they had more direct control over the pace of Workplace learning[11]

38% of employees from all generations want fully self-directed and independent learning[12]
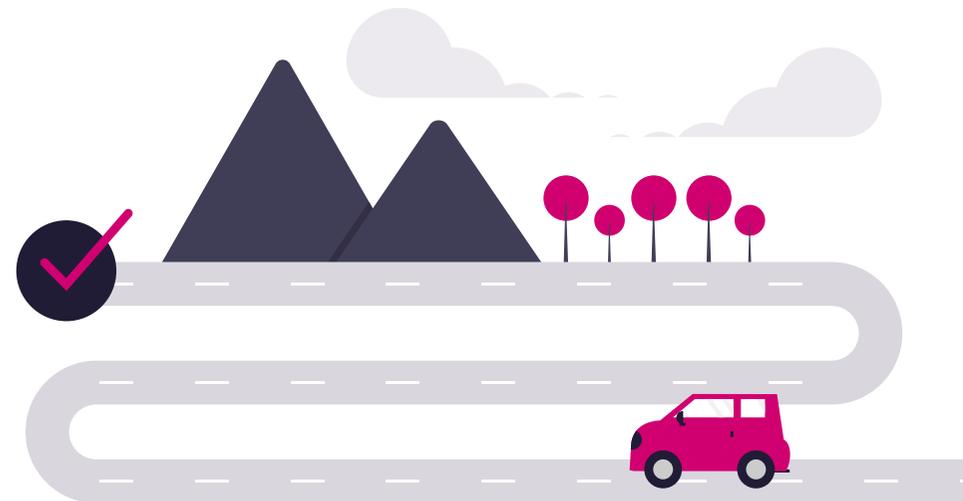
While a culture of continuous learning is crucial for the success of organisations and for the engagement of the people within those walls, it's not a one-size-fits-all for employees.

Similarly to the way they interact with technology in their personal life, employees have the same expectations at work. They want to have more control over their learning – **71%** of employees want to choose where and when they are taking training8 and **74%** want to learn during spare time at work[9].

So what does that mean? In a nutshell, they want to decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn and how they want to learn - **68%** of employees say they would pick up skills faster if they had more direct control over the pace of workplace learning[11].

And contradictory as it may seem, on top of self-selected experiences, they want guided learning where curated content will help them learn what's relevant for their working experience; **38%** of employees from all generations want fully self-directed and independent learning[12].

Life is busy, and employees want to fit learning around their life. Personalising learning means making learning genuinely easy to access, available in a variety of formats from video to text, and suited to all devices. Successful implementation of a continuous learning culture doesn't just rest on makinglearning available; **learning must be made available how, when and where employees want, and in a way that is personal to their experience.**

04

Learning culture: improving the employee experience

Think mobile, think social

74% of employees access resources from their smartphones to do their jobs[12]

57% of employees prefer accessing learning modules on the go[12]

>50% of employees value the ability to collaboratewith instructors and/or other learners[12]
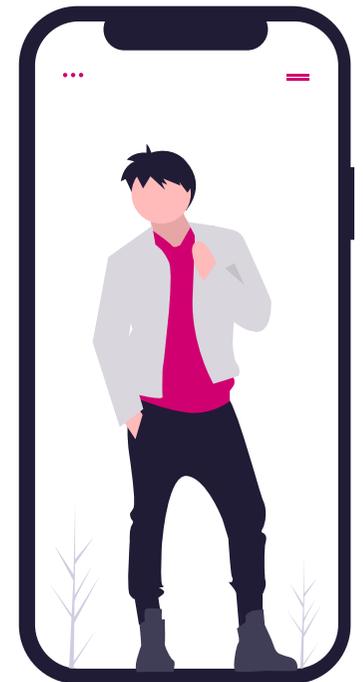
Changing technologies and digital behaviours aren't just drivers of the need to shift our thinking about workplace learning; they're also central to the solution.

Today, employees are challenging their organisations to leverage technology and improve the employee experience. In our current 'always on the go', 'always connected' and hypersocial Smartphone world, employees expect their workplace to deliver the same kind of experience – **57%** of employees prefer accessing learning modules on the go[11] and **74%** access resources from their smartphones to do their jobs[10].

Reshaping your organisation to being one that's learningcentric means adapting to the needs and wants of employees. And in today's digital world, social learning is a key requirement from employees; more than half of employees value the ability to collaborate with instructors and/or other learners[12].

Social and mobile experiences aren't just for cat videos and funny gifs. They have become critical to how employees consume information, interact with one another and learn.

Put simply, these technologies and behaviours have become fundamental to the learning experience. Without them, companies will be left behind.
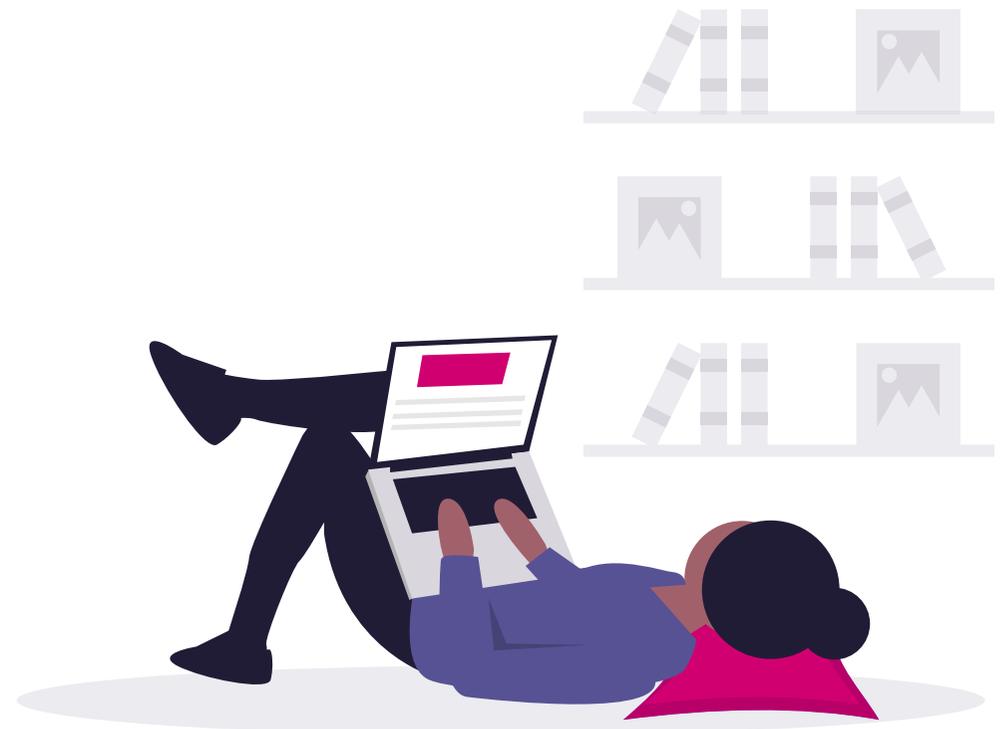
The 5 golden rules for improving a learning culture

1. Lead

Changing culture starts at the top. You needgenuine buy-in from your leadership teamnot only to support continuous learning but to advocate for it. Investment and encouragement from company leaders will generate buy-in to the initiatives from all employees.

2. Assess

Take a detailed look at the skill gaps in your organisation. Empower your managers to take a deep dive into their operational resources and abilities and analyse their responses. Encourage managers to converse with their teams, build a learning and development plan tailored to each individual employee's needs.

3. Plan

Develop well-planned programs that not only identify learning needs but

include measurements of learning outcomes. Building a timeline, setting goals and allowing your employees some time to work on them-selves, is all part of a well-constructed plan.

4. Engage

Engage with staff to participate and give feedback. Consider encouraging user generated content as part of your programs. Subject matter experts bring great engagement and typically lead to greater learning success.

5. Adapt

Remember training needs to be easy and not one-size-fits-all. Instead, adapttraditional approaches to suit a digital age. Consider online learning, the use of smart devices, apps (including offline learning) and social platforms to adapt to your employee's style of living and learning. Have enough flexibility to optimise learning and ensure positive outcomes.

Conclusion

Continuous learning: what's next?

Change is constant. The only thing that stays the same is our need to upskill to keep up with the rate of change. In this new landscape with new technologies and new digital behaviours, the key challenge for businesses today is — how to offer a complete, coherent and continuous learning experience.

The first step is, of course, understanding the skills gap within your organisation. Then, implement a culture of continuous learning with technology that empowers employees to learn on their own terms, in a personalised, adaptable experience that can be both mobile and social.

Learning matters to employees and it helps business grow. The type of learning culture you have in your business impacts every facet of your organisation — from productivity to retention, from innovation to customer service and beyond.

In this fast-accelerating world, investing in and building a strong and continuous learning culture is the difference between keeping up — or being left behind. If you'd like to start the conversation about continuous learning in your workplace,

Get in touch

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Empower your team with personalised and collaborative learning experiences

Learn more

Endnotes

1   Hootsuite Digital 2020 Report

2   Hootsuite Digital 2019 Report

3   World Economic Forum

4   Forbes, Working With Five Generations In The Workplace

5   PwC 2019

6   Global Talent Trends 2019, LinkedIn

7   2019 Global Human Capital Trends, Deloitte

8   LinkedIn Research 2019

9   LinkedIn Research 2018

10   Deloitte, Leading in Learning

11   Kineo 2019, Learning and Development Survey by City and Guilds

12   LinkedIn 2019 Workplace Learning Report

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