

How to:

Maintain Momentum for Learning Programs

Training, re-skilling and upskilling define the career journeys of today's worker. Employees are now living through an age of rapid digital transformation as the pace of technological innovation is beyond exponential. This has resulted in a fast-moving, competitive landscape with a strong requirement for the most up-to-date skills and knowledge to keep pace with technological and scientific growth and cultural shifts. Workplace learning and training is hugely beneficial from both the learner and organizational perspectives.


Using corporate eLearning results in an increase of 18% in employee engagement for organizations. However one common challenge that arises among learners which affects organizations is the maintenance of momentum and engagement with learning programs. Continuous learning in theory is wonderful when achieved, but the journey to a continuous learning culture is not always the epitome of efficiency. This problem will be explored in depth in this blog series, outlining the importance of instilling a culture of learning at an organizational level, best practices before, during and after the program with role and industry specific examples.

Maintaining momentum is particularly relevant for learners and program managers during pandemic times as employees and organizations are already facing disruptions to the normal structures, which for some may mean communication barriers and lack of engagement.



94% of employers feel training and upskilling are critical, and 71% of employees feel they must continue to learn new skills to meet the demands of their role.

Before the Learning Program



Understanding your organization's learning culture is key to successfully navigating a learning program and reaching individual and organizational learning goals. For learners to thrive, a healthy culture of L&D must be pre-established within an organization. A culture of continuous learning supports the belief that a career is no longer an end product of an education, and instead runs parallel with it. Companies that successfully establish a continuous learning culture, replace the stability of the status quo with a more suitable modern-day approach to stability, by leveraging the collective knowledge, experience and creativity of all stakeholders.



The Benefits of Continuous Learning

For the learner and employee:

- 1 **Maintaining relevant skills** and knowledge ensures employees remain competent in their current role.
- 2 **Continuous learning** equips employees with the best skills and knowledge for decision making when meeting the ever-changing challenges brought about by technological advancements.
- 3 **Long-term career progression** as employees are prepared for their future roles.

In turn, continuous learning adds value at an organization level by:

- 1 **Increasing overall productivity**
- 2 **Increasing innovation**
- 3 **Improving employee retention and engagement**
- 4 **Improving agility**
- 5 **Providing competitive advantage to outperform competitors**



Management Influence on Learning

The presence of a leadership team who prioritize and encourage an environment of continuous learning is critical for building a strong organizational learning culture that can keep pace with today's technological advancements. Managers must embrace continuous learning as an integral part of a job function and facilitate their team members learning journeys. [A good manager, must work to increase their employees' engagement and productivity, which involves becoming an active agent in their learning.](#)

Understanding the learning needs and skills of the target learner based on their role and job competencies ensures the employee acquires the skillset necessary to succeed in their role.

To read our article about the tactics for creating a culture of L&D, [click here.](#)



Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning allows learners to take responsibility of their own learning journeys, diagnosing knowledge gaps, identifying learning goals, tools and resources.

Exploring the below questions will help you decipher if a culture of self-directed learning is present at your organization:

- **Does the learner understand the organization's goals so they can align with them when learning?**
- **What tools and resources are available for the learner and are they aware of them?**
- **Do learners recognize their skills and knowledge gaps?**
- **Do they have the motivation and tools to find the information they need to fill these gaps?**

Best Practices for Engagement when Starting a Learning Program

Making learning a priority from day one at the onboarding stage, sets the precedent for employee engagement with learning for the rest of their tenure. There are several elements of learning programs that companies need to set out and inform learners upon beginning:

- 1 Learning Objectives:** Managers should outline exactly what they want their learners to achieve from this program. This should be in line with skills and knowledge that the employee will need to become successful in their role.
- 2 Learning Expectations/Goals:** Setting learning targets and goals with employees is a beneficial strategy to track and encourage engagement. The SMART goals acronym is particularly useful as it provides a framework for the design of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound goals.
- 3 Purpose:** Aligning trainings to the employee's specific responsibilities highlights the relevance of the learning for their role. Linking trainings to the employee's progression in the company will positively impact engagement as an added factor for engagement is added.
- 4 Business Impact:** Align program lessons with their business impact, employees at all levels are more likely motivated by real life business impact than theoretical knowledge. This can be achieved using real-life specific case studies, application of trainings to work projects and aligning training to the employee's specific role and responsibilities at the organization. Aligning trainings to the company's needs and objectives allows the learner to visualize how their role impacts the organization's operations and growth.

Personalization

Relevance is critical for learner engagement and trainings should be aligned with the learner's specific context. It is beneficial to conduct a skills gap assessment at the beginning/pre-boarding stages to determine any inconsistencies that exist between the employee's current skills and the skills required for the role and for the organization to reach its future goals. A skills gap assessment will ensure a more tailored training and learning experience, and this is imperative to yield maximized engagement, trainings should be role specific and non-generic. Leverage line managers to design a tailored training program specific to the role.

Learning Systems

During uncertain times additional guidance and support are needed for users to know how to find resources from a remote setting. It is important that a robust learning management system is implemented, which provides the user options for mobile-ready, learn-at-your-own-pace, on-demand content.



Best Practices

During the Learning Program

Designing a learning program with a solid communicative aspect is essential for engagement and knowledge transfer. Establishing good communication and collaboration structures between learners, team members and management will contribute to building a self-directed learning culture as the learner can easily look outside themselves for guidance or resources.

Social Effects on Learning

Leveraging the power of human interaction by creating networking opportunities for employees to learn from and collaborate with other employees is an excellent way to encourage learning engagement. The social aspect of learning is effective in increasing motivation, leading to a smoother transfer of knowledge. Creating a sense of shared experience among employees who are learning together is an effective manner of promoting engagement. Integrating a social aspect to your learning program is particularly helpful for remote working employees, as this can create a much-needed outlet for newcomers to communicate with peers and build social links within the company.

Examples of social structures to promote engagement are:

1

'Buddy' Program: There are several pairing approaches that are effective in motivating learners eg. Paring an engaged employee with a learner, pairing a more seasoned employee with a new hire, creating 'learning champions' and pairing them with new hires/ learners or pairing learners together so they can motivate and collaborate on their learning journey.

2

Lunch-and-Learn: This format for training can be effective in engaging learners by offering a less informal opportunity to learn and the chance to participate in a different and less typical format of learning.

3

Chat groups: These groups can engage learners in the program by instilling a feeling of belonging within a group and bring a social and more informal aspect to the learning program.

4

Meetings: Meetings facilitate a more formal opportunity for the learner and manager, mentor, or organization to communicate guidance, progress, and feedback to keep the learner engaged with the program.

5

Forums: Forums can provide an effective channel for learners and trainers to answer questions learners might have in an accessible, quick, and informal manner.

6

Networking Events: These events allow learners to socialize and meet with other learners, colleagues, and business associates in a professional environment. This gives them the opportunity to engage with the company, often meeting more senior people on similar career journeys which may inspire them to continue their learning journey as part of their career progression.

7

Competitions: Motivate learners to gain knowledge or improve awareness of your learning resources through scoreboards or badging systems that reward learners for studying.



Best Practices

During the Learning Program (Continued...)



Interactivity & Blended Learning

There has been a huge shift to virtual learning in the past year, and while it brings many advantages like better reach and scalability of learning, it also poses problems. In a virtual classroom, it is harder to interact with users to keep them engaged, so interaction with participants should still occur on a regular basis, as frequently as every 3-5 minutes. Avoid cognitive overload by leveraging the spacing effect. This effect advises that material delivered over spaced intervals, trumps material delivered in a once off or massed presentation.

Learning programs should be structurally designed to keep the learner engaged at every step. Successful learning programs are typically defined by offering a [diverse blend of learning channels](#) and formats. Establishing this learning ecosystem facilitates the employees learning style, physical location and learning context.

It is especially important to implement technology-enabled engagement strategies to your learning program, to supplement face-to-face interactions, avoid learners multi-tasking during the sessions to reduce screen fatigue. Examples of interactive elements to add to your course are:

- Quizzes
- Games/Break-Out Rooms
- Videos
- Polls
- Shared Whiteboards/Content

Tracking Progress

Integrating a progress tracking element to your learning program is an effective way of encouraging engagement. Link progress to the specific goals set in the initial stage of the program.

Example

One strategy for maximizing engagement with learning would be to incorporate online learning progress into an employee's performance review or their ability to apply for a promotion. This highlights to the employee that the organization is prioritizing learning while also ensuring that learning becomes a self-directed, employee-driven experience.





Best Practices to Maintain Engagement After the End of the Program

The timeline for effective learning is not limited to the training period, as the true process for learning, upskilling and consolidation of knowledge continues long after the program ends. There are many strategies for maximizing knowledge retention and engagement after the program.



Business Impact

Creating opportunities for learners to practice their new learnings on real-life problems in the workplace. In addition, linking learnings to business impact shows the learner the importance of such programs for their role productivity and progression.



Feedback

Post-training feedback provides a communication link between the learner and management, giving the learner the opportunity to reflect upon their learnings which helps further consolidate learnings, while keeping the learner engaged. Collecting feedback from learners about their experiences and insights from the learning program is also extremely useful intel and can be used by management as a strategy for improving the engagement and effectiveness of the next program.



Timing/Seasonal Campaigns

It is important to position your learning program at a point during the year when employees have the time and motivation for learning. From a motivation perspective, strategically position your learning program for a time when employees will have the most motivation to engage with it eg. before a performance review.



Reward & Recognition

Recognition is a powerful tool for building morale and driving performance and engagement. Recognize employees' commitment to learning by thanking them for their engagement. Rewards do not have to cost a lot, and often intrinsic rewards such as feeling appreciated can be equally motivating. Generation Z are particularly responsive to recognition and reward tactics, as this is akin to the learning culture they have been raised and educated in.