HOW TO BUILD A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Not long ago, earning a certificate, diploma or degree was enough to land people the job they wanted and keep them there. After graduating, they would enter the workforce where the skills they learned would be enough to support their career. It was not uncommon for someone to do the same job the same way for years, if not decades.

However, times have changed. We live in a fast-changing world now. Many jobs have become obsolete, while a rash of new ones has appeared seemingly out of nowhere. And the ones who have been here all along are approached differently, using new technology. The 24-hour access to information, social media, a global economy and multinational conglomerates have all led workers to upskill and reskill quickly and often.

Why do upskilling and reskilling matter?

 recent report by Harvard Business Publishing found that 54% of the workforce will need upskilling or reskilling by 2025. In the same report, 85% of employees said they know where they have skills gaps, but only 41% believed their managers understood their gaps. According to a Gartner survey, only 20% of workers are confident they have the necessary skills for the future. And the PWC 22nd Annual Global CEO Survey reported that CEOs say skills shortages threaten their companies' growth. These shortages are stunting innovation, hurting quality and limiting the pursuit of market opportunities.

A culture of learning

The first step to developing a learning culture would be to understand that the way people learn has changed. Learning has become much more learner-driven and there are now many more avenues for learning than in the past.

1. Personalize the learning experience

Access to information in a wide variety of mediums has allowed people to learn new things in a way and at a pace they choose. Turning to YouTube to learn how to repair a broken lamp or Googling lessons on how to play chess are commonplace. People have become accustomed to learning what they need, when they need it and in a way that works for them.

2. Make learning a habit

Learning is an integral and ongoing aspect of all jobs. Technology changes rapidly, and workers need to be able to adapt and keep up. In order for organizations to stay ahead of the game, employee learning needs to be proactive, not reactive.

The best way to do this is to make learning a habit. And the easiest way to do that is to make learning easy, accessible and meaningful. Gently remind employees about learning opportunities through daily feeds, allow people to see what their peers are learning and recommend and set goals and deadlines for training.

3. Socialize learning

From the time we first begin to learn, there is a social aspect to it. At school, we learn to work in groups and share ideas, resources and information. At work, we do the same. In our personal time, we learn new things by joining clubs or online groups. Whether we know it or not, we also use observation, interaction and imitation as means of learning. So, it's critical that organizations invest in creating systems that enhance the learning experience through social learning opportunities.

4. Create learner-driven experiences

The good news is that research shows employees want to learn. Leaders can leverage this by creating learning opportunities that align with employees' unique personal goals and matching these goals to the needs of the organization. The ultimate mix is curating materials that offer good variety in terms of length, depth and complexity for employees but are also on track for filling their skills gaps and helping them achieve their goals.

5. Measure progress

The best way to assess a skills gap in your organization is through data analysis. Looking at the difference between how employees rate their skills versus how managers rate them can help identify where more learning resources are required.

To maximize engagement in the training, check in with employees on the type of learning materials they prefer. More masterclasses? Videos? Podcasts? Also, track social engagement data related to learning. How much social interaction is there? How many employees share content? You can get helpful insight into employee engagement and how valuable they find the material provided by tracking these metrics.

Despite concern expressed by both CEOs and employees about skills gaps, hope can be found in that people seem to be learning more than ever. Self-driven learning is at an all-time high. Employees are reading blogs, listening to podcasts, watching videos, attending conferences, taking online courses just because they want to. Leaders must recognize, encourage and support this interest.

LIVEWORKSHEETS