

HR Insights

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Using Technology in Learning and Development

By leveraging technology in learning and development efforts, employers can help engage employees, improve the employee experience and create efficiencies in learning and development.

As organizational needs accelerate and evolve, it's important that employees also have the necessary skills to succeed. A tech-enabled learning and development strategy can also address today's talent shortages and skills gaps.

This article explores technology trends and how technology can shape and streamline learning and development initiatives.

Why It Matters

Nearly three-quarters of workers in the United States are not engaged. Engaged employees are more than just satisfied with their jobs—they are committed to the organization and its goals. They have passion, pride and energy for their work and their employer, and are willing to go the extra mile on a regular basis. Ultimately, they have the confidence and skills necessary to do their jobs. Employees who are truly engaged stay because they enjoy their work and support the company. One way for employers to help ensure employees feel supported and valued in the workplace is to offer learning and development opportunities.

Consider the following benefits of leveraging technology for workplace initiatives:

- Increased motivation and ownership
- Expanded collaboration

- Improved productivity
- Stronger sense of community and purpose
- Greater flexibility
- Enhanced accessibility

The great thing about technology is that it's scalable and customizable for an organization. It could be as sophisticated as investing in online training portal software, or it might be as simple as recording training sessions or meetings and having them accessible on a company server or intranet.

Technology-enabled learning and development initiatives help employers' efforts be more impactful regardless of physical resources, scheduling conflicts and other logistics.

Types of Technology

It doesn't matter if employees are working on-site, remotely or a mix of both. Technology can help streamline learning and bring consistency to workplace initiatives and processes. Employers are incorporating e-learning, online coaching, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and learning management systems (LMSs) to train and develop their workforce, regardless of location. Compared to other options, an LMS is a more affordable and attainable option—and the software can be used by most employers to improve efficiencies and help effectively facilitate learning and development efforts in and out of the workplace.

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LMSs can increase accessibility and ensure all employees have equal onboarding and learning opportunities. Also, schedule availability, location and learning styles won't hold back employees from growing professionally.

Skills Development

Skill training and development are essential in every organization. Employers should consider online or technology-supported training as an investment—an investment in both their employees and organization. A continued investment in and focus on training resources can keep employees engaged.

It's important to align training to the company mission and goals. Training could support a better understanding of the organization, job responsibilities and industry topics. Consider the following key types of training programs and how technology could improve the employee experience:

- **Orientation and onboarding**—An employee's initial days and weeks with an organization are not only a time for the new hire to become acquainted with a team and a workplace culture, but also the beginning of their learning and development. Investment during this time period is critical since nearly one-quarter of employee turnover happens within the first six weeks of employment. LMSs could store helpful company information and provide quizzes to determine employee knowledge gaps.
- **Product training**—Whenever new products or capabilities are introduced, training should be done to ensure employees are aware and educated. LMSs could be leveraged to store e-learning content and other helpful product information. Mobile apps often use gamification (e.g., point scoring and social connection) to facilitate friendly competition and, ultimately, increase employee engagement and motivation.
- **Technical skills training**—Instruction focused on the employees' jobs and subject matter expertise will not only help them do their work, but also help boost confidence. Additionally, upskilling the workforce offers a competitive advantage. Upskilling is when employers provide employees the

opportunity to learn new skills to better their current work performance, while also prepping them for the projected needs of the company. Today's workforce needs to be agile, and technology can help speed up the learning process. If a skill requires hands-on training, consider how virtual or simulated training could increase both employee accessibility and engagement.

- **Soft skills training**—Guidance on communication, leadership, time management and conflict resolution can help build employees' personalities overall. LMS and mobile apps may be impactful for soft skills training by offering a self-learning pace. By formalizing the process, employee progress can be easily tracked and rewarded.

Keep in mind any other mandatory training for your organization, like sexual harassment, work safety, first-aid training or other workplace-specific procedures. Technology-aided learning can improve the efficiency and impact of most training topics.

Professional Development

Employee development is a long-term investment that can help keep employees around for the long haul. When an organization invests resources in professional development, employees may feel more valued, which boosts engagement and lowers turnover.

Technology can also play an important role in employee career pathing by identifying skill gaps and providing personalized, self-paced courses. Moreover, it can help make performance review processes more efficient by tracking progress, accomplishments and feedback all on one platform. Additionally, employers could consider integrating technology with both short-term and long-term employee development initiatives, such as online coaching, professional organization participation and continuing education.

Lastly, take into account ways to support employees' professional development outside of the workplace as well. Employees may be interested in pursuing online courses or programs to advance their technical or industry knowledge, so consider tuition reimbursement.

Other Considerations

Employee development can be a very attractive perk to applicants and current employees. To get started, consider industry and local offerings and how an organization can match or exceed employee expectations and needs.

The best approaches to implementing learning and development vary due to the unique factors surrounding your workplace. This means that your organization may need to evaluate and change how you educate and train employees on new technologies.

Organizations continue to be tasked with modernizing their learning and development initiatives. Effective uses of technology can help ensure that all employees—regardless of their physical location—remain engaged and focused, and are continually honing their skills. Contact us today to learn more about workplace trends or how to enhance learning and development efforts.