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More A Necessity, Less A Choice

Managers and employees need to embrace the shift towards continuous learning to address complex issues faced by the workforce. An organisation needs to provide clarity in its business goals and enable the designing of learning programmes for assured success.

Most of the successful companies today have an important thing in common. They have unique and powerful people strategies that create a competitive advantage, and help deliver what the business needs from its "most important asset." To remain competitive, development of employees is no longer optional, but essential. Competition is forcing changes to products and processes and is making learning a lifelong requirement for every individual. While products and services can be replicated, collective intelligence of employees is unique to each organisation. New technologies are constantly transforming jobs and bringing new approaches to collaborative learning.

What does continuous learning and development mean to individuals, organisations, and teams?

Practicing continuous learning

According to McKinsey, 45 percent of the activities performed by employees today could be automated. In the future, automation will affect various jobs across industries. Also, the emergence of the gig economy is changing the landscape of traditional employer-employee relationships since positions once occupied by full-time employees are being filled by a freelance workforce. With the fast-paced growth of digital technology, the learning cycle will only move faster. Today, it is not enough to learn only skills sets that

are required on your job role. It is about learning continuously over the course of one's career or lifetime. For companies to win and remain competitive in the market, managers would benefit from helping employees stay relevant in their competencies and preparing them to adapt quickly to changes in the future.

Creating individual development plans

It is a myth that it is difficult for organisations to recruit the best fit, and the best approach is to develop the capabilities internally. Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an excellent approach for targeted growth and development of employees. Managers can use IDPs to foster a culture of continuous learning and development, which would help retain the most valued employees. Employees, especially millennials, attach enormous importance to career development in the workplace, and personalisation is their favourite mantra. A carefully constructed IDP can accommodate the learning needs of almost any employee, yet keep them aligned to business goals. Organisations need to encourage employees to become more agile by rewarding those who quickly adapt to new changes and learning progressions.

Working as a team

Organisations are more likely to perform well when employees work effectively as a team. Working together, members of a team can

apply individual perspectives and experience to create new solutions and come up with ideas that result in collective learning. Team learning is a collaborative effort to achieve a common goal within a group. Research indicates that team learning has an impact on organisational learning, the speed of technology implementation, and new product development. Team learning contributes to organisational effectiveness by enabling teams to create a knowledge base by interacting internally, externally, and with the environment to adapt to change.

Both Managers and employees need to embrace the shift towards continuous learning to address complex issues being faced by the workforce now, and the ones they might face in the future. All that the organisation needs to do is provide clarity in business goals and enable the employees and their managers to work together to design learning programmes that would help them achieve success. 

About the Author

Devika Thorat is the Talent Acquisition Specialist - India at IDEaS Revenue Solutions (a SAS Company). She is responsible for heading the Talent Acquisition for the company and also leads initiatives for college connect programmes and placements. She has previously worked in the TMI Network, CIGNA Healthcare, IKON Office Solutions and Unison Software Consultancy. Devika has a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and a Master's in Computer Management from Bharati Vidyapeeth.