

GIVING WINGS TO A CORPORATION'S DREAM

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Leon Meyer, Chief Learning Officer at one of the world's largest engineering corporations, is deploying a unique learning platform to reinvent it, as its employees reinvent themselves.

Leon Meyer is a striking person. Tall, immaculately dressed – almost aristocratic – he speaks in measured tones. He looks at you with a steady gaze, his brown eyes boring into you. But when he begins speaking about a subject close to his heart, his eyes seem to light up.

Like they do right now, as he speaks about the revolution he's bringing about at his company.

Leon tells us about an interaction he had over lunch with Simon Gruber, a 48-year-old worker at the Laatzen plant. Every month, Leon takes off to a different location and discusses “every topic under the sun” with employees there, over lunch. This is a regular event in his busy calendar. “Employee surveys only give you the numbers,” he says, “these interactions uncover the deep insights behind them.”



The interaction with Simon in particular, stands out in his memory. “Simon was so distraught, you know? He was absolutely certain that we would make him redundant. He had given us 26 years of his life,” continues Leon, “but he was sure that his generation was out of time. Our company no longer needed workmen like him, it needed IT specialists. Because everything was IT!”

That was just before Christmas, 2019.

That interaction only confirmed a much bigger issue that Leon had been grappling with these past few months – how does a century-old behemoth compete with these new-age engineering companies? How, to borrow that famous phrase from Mohammed Ali, can the company “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee”?

At the crux of the problem was the changing nature of the industry itself. The premium on “German engineering” that the company so prided itself on, was losing out to new industry standards, where information technology increasingly played a pivotal role in delivering the product experience. AI, IoT, Cloud Services, Cybersecurity and Digital Apps had quickly taken center-stage in a product’s proposition.

The fact that their product portfolio was spread across categories as diverse as power generation, medical equipment, mobility and home appliances only made it more pressing for them to transform.



But transformation meant constant upskilling and reskilling of over 300,000 employees that were spread across 200 countries – no mean task! Luckily, the upskilling initiative had the full backing of their CEO, so its implementation was somewhat easier.

The company's existing learning platform could only do so much. "There was standard course material that we had developed in-house, and some external courses as well," says Leon, "but that had its limitation. Courses were long,

some people called them boring, and there was always a 'cooler' course on the same subject available on other platforms like Udemy or Coursera."

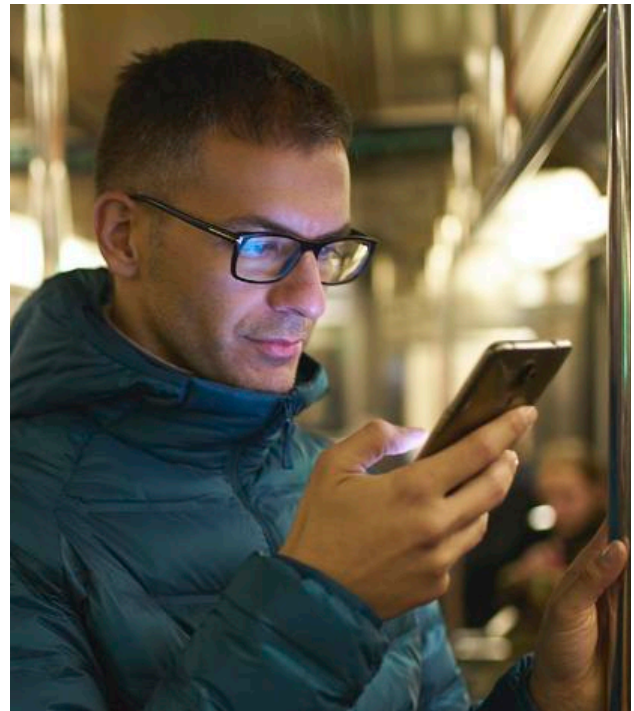
"There is only so much you can do with mandated learning," he concludes, "Finally, an employee needs to want to come back and keep learning. That is the only sustainable way to reskill."



In January 2020, the company and Infosys got talking. Infosys demonstrated a cutting-edge learning experience application, called Wingspan. Developed in-house, Wingspan was a next generation, cloud-based talent and learning experience platform. It had features like mobile access to enable learning anytime and anywhere. An AI-powered search that used ‘topic spiders’ to curate the most relevant modules for the learner made the learning experience truly personal. Best of all, Wingspan curated learning modules not just from in-house content, but also had feeds from outside sources like Coursera, Udemy and even YouTube. And, because it was all delivered through multiple interfaces (including mobile), a learner could potentially complete a module on a bus ride from home to the factory. The fact that Infosys had been using Wingspan for the last four years to upskill and reskill its own employees only made the proposition more compelling, for here was a live use-case. Leon had seen it in action on his visit to Infosys’ campuses in India and had come away suitably impressed, not just for the platform but also for the insights that Infosys could provide his company to help navigate their “learning at scale” journey. Here was a living, breathing system that was working at a scale that he hadn’t seen before. 240,000+ employees? Check!

But more than just the system, Leon was impressed with Infosys’ strong system integrator skills. For, it meant that Infosys could seamlessly integrate Wingspan into the existing learning systems that his company used.

To Leon, it seemed like the perfect solution.



February and March saw back-breaking work, as Infosys worked at warp speed to customize and deploy the solution at 25 pilot locations.

The initial results far exceeded what Leon’s company had imagined – engagement with the new app was at an all-time high of 98%, average man-hours spent on learning shot up from 4 to 7.5 a month and the number of employees that were enrolled for a course at any given point of time topped 137,000 – the highest, in their history.

On March 12, 2020, Leon’s company unveiled its all-new digital learning and talent transformation platform. Since its launch, the system has seen 235,000 employees registering, with 753,000 modules being completed and an average of eight learning man-hours per month being logged. Whichever way one looks at it, it’s an unprecedented success.

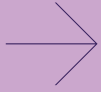
But for Leon, the real measure of success is an email he received from Simon Gruber, in September 2020.

“I thought this was the end,” Simon writes, “but this new system has shown me a new pathway. I’ve spent the last two months exploring new topics, learning new things of interest, and by December, I will have my first certification in machine learning.”

The behemoth looks like it’s learning to float like a butterfly, after all.



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