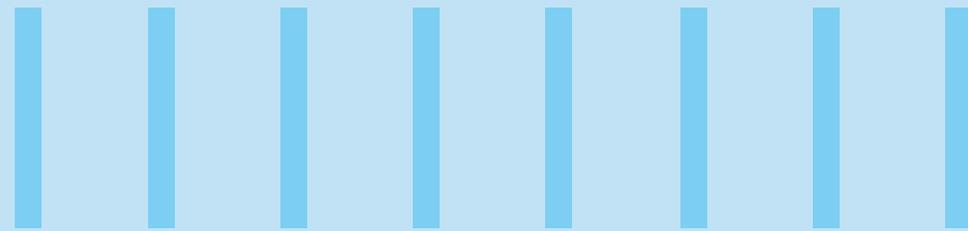# BUILD A LIFELONG LEARNING CULTURE: A KEY ENABLER TO RESHAPE THE LEARNER EXPERIENCE

Where to begin in the current landscape?

Abstract

The current workplace is facing significant disruptions brought by technological progress and the rise of Millennials in the workforce. Learning & Development functions need to adapt their learning strategies to unlock the potential of this ecosystem to shape the "next-gen" learning era. But a robust learning culture is required at both individual and organizational levels to make it happen.

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The post-digital era is creating new challenges for Learning & Development (L&D) departments. Business disruptions are occurring due to remarkable technological progress, creating new habits and trends. And the biggest change is the generational shift of the workforce: a workforce that is digital native, hyper-connected and highly volatile. To ensure their loyalty to the workplace and make them feel engaged, they need opportunities to develop at each stage of their career. Traditional in-class trainings and e-learning videos still occupy an important place in the training landscape, although their efficacy and return on investment have proven to be inadequate. It is time to reimagine and reshape the employee learning experience. But what does it take to make it thriving?

1. The rise of millennials in the workforce and the ubiquity of affordable technology are creating the conditions to revisit learning strategies

If we look at demographics, Millennials and Gen Z have arrived in the workplace. In 2018, they represented 38% of the workforce[1]. They are digital native; the way they learn and consume information in their daily lives is setting new standards. Their habits and workstyle should be scrutinized and replicated to the professional learning environment. There is an opportunity for L&D departments to learn from them and propose innovative learning models away from traditional patterns.
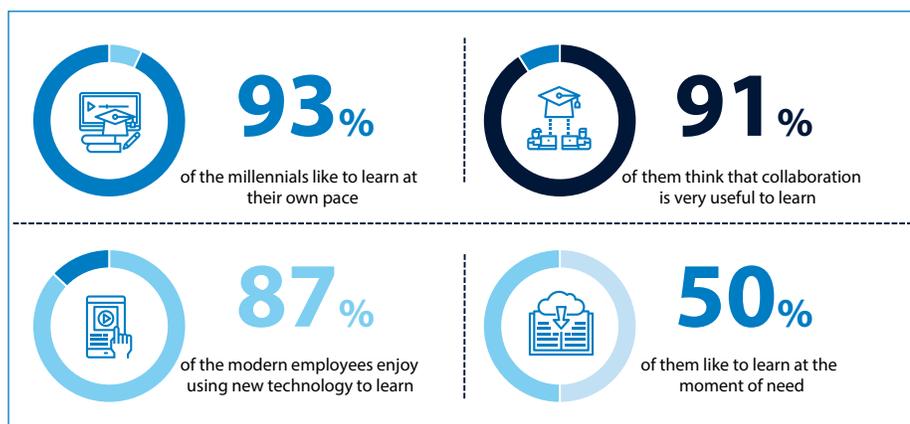
The new generations want to learn:

- **'ATAWAD':** anytime, anywhere and on any device
- **Quickly, but efficiently:** to cope with the pace of change, where time is precious and distractions are everywhere
- **With fancy modalities:** 87% of employees under 30 are enthusiastic about using new technology and patterns to learn[2]

- **From and with their peers:** constantly connected, they are the social media generation and sharing moments with their network is in their DNA.

How can these habits affect L&D strategies? The priority should be put on the following building blocks:

- **Ubiquity and mobility:** Responsive design, to facilitate learning on mobile devices and tablets, online and offline, is a must.
- **Fast-learning and microlearning:** The biggest barrier to learning is time. By "chunking" the learning material into elementary pieces, packing a specific goal at a time, the learner gets targeted bites of knowledge in the moment of need. Typically, short, self-directed videos are the best format for populations that rarely escape from their daily work, such as top management, in-store retailers, salespeople, etc. Studies show that knowledge retention increases by 17%[3] with microlearning.
- **Engaging technology:** Mixed Reality brings learning to life by immersing the learner in an experiential environment.

93% of the millennials like to learn at their own pace

91% of them think that collaboration is very useful to learn

87% of the modern employees enjoy using new technology to learn

50% of them like to learn at the moment of need

Source: "How modern workers learn", Digital Learning Academy, Survey 2019[2]

In the energy industry, for instance, Virtual Reality (VR) is used to replicate dams through a digital twin that is a perfect replica of the real-life environment. This enables technicians to be trained on how weather conditions, such as a sudden water flood, can affect their work. Augmented Reality (AR) is about overlaying digital information on a physical asset, such as a domestic electric panel. Instead of being trained before performing a duty, technicians place their smartphone device in front of the electric panel and get direct access to the content they need, on-the-job. While VR is increasingly affordable, use cases, although very powerful, are often limited to safety, security and operating procedures (such as maintenance).

On the other hand, AR is highly scalable and its range of applications will skyrocket in the coming years.

- Other new trends arise in the learning landscape. **Adaptive learning 3.0** refers to an AI-enabled system based on machine learning, that imitates the one-on-one training experience, such as an "artificial" tutor. It is broadly used to teach foreign languages. It creates a personalized self-paced learning experience through real-time adjustments, immediate feedback and knowledge reinforcement[4].

- **Social and informal learning:** Fostering collaboration and interaction with co-workers is fundamental. The possibility to exchange with peers through forums or chats, the use of collaborative activities and the curation of learning content from different sources to a learning playlist that you can share with a colleague are representative examples of how social learning can be integrated into a learning pathway. Leveraging social networking tools is important to share knowledge and embrace and value somebody's achievements. After all, "we always learn alone, but never without the others"[5].

The common ground among these building blocks is the learner experience. Ensure that learning remains relevant and efficient, in a rapidly evolving world shaped by consumer experience and driven by technology, is the major challenge.

2. The learner experience becomes a preeminent corporate priority

The learners are internal customers of L&D functions. As a result, the way they learn should be revisited through seamless digital experiences and engaging interventions during the entire employee career, from onboarding to retirement. In other words, the learning journey should be holistic, meaningful and supported by engaging technology.

The evolution of learning systems in this direction is significant. We are shifting from traditional LMS (Learning Management Systems) to cutting-edge LXPs (Learning Experience Platforms) where we are observing a convergence of best practices in:

- **Ergonomics:** Tile-based home page 'Netflix-like', other features similar to a social network look & feel, guided tours

- **Navigation:** Intuitive simplified navigation requiring less effort to find what the learners are looking for, or where to resume (e.g., "continue learning" playlist)

- **Content curation:** A content library relevant to learner needs and profiles, e.g., home page suggesting content that "matches" their interests

- **Learning format:** A variety of resources and activities, such as videos, microlearning and quizzes

- **Social learning enabled:** features allowing exchanges with peers, share content via cohorts, add content to playlists or create goals to be shared with colleagues - empowering digital collaboration

- **Gamification:** Fun and engaging experiences through badges, leader boards and other features fostering a healthy emulation

- **Analytics:** Possibility to give feedback at any time on learning content, metrics available to track learning completion and fitness

As the learning journey should start with a compelling onboarding experience, learning systems can also be used to promote the corporate culture to the new hire and ensure a sense of belonging from day one. Welcome videos, testimonials, quizzes, forums can be added to the induction curriculum and available in the corporate learning system. This also applies to employees who just got promoted or moved to a new role.

Another illustration of user-centric strategies is the use of Digital Adoption Platforms (DAP) for software adoption. DAPs offer just-in-time help to the learner by pushing contextualized information in the moment of need, within the software used. Instead of searching for the information in an external source (typically, user documentation), the user gets additional content directly in overlay or split-screen within the software, enabling immediate application of the knowledge on the job and therefore increasing employee productivity. When the same DAP is used across all software of one company, the employee experience becomes seamless and homogeneous regardless of the software used.

It is exciting, to observe other ways of revisiting the learner experience, such as "edutainment"[6], combining education and entertainment, or innovative learning formats designed as mini-series on a specific subject, like cybersecurity, with strong storytelling and videos with integrated quizzes to rhythm the path of the learners and keep them engaged.

3.Altogether, organizations, managers and employees should be held accountable to create a lifelong learning culture

The value proposition of compelling learner experiences is a must, but it is not sufficient to thrive in the digital era. What remains necessary, on top of this, is the ability to create and nurture a true mindset of lifelong learning. And it is the responsibility of every actor in the company to make it real.

Where should we begin? Consider the following questions to assess your readiness.
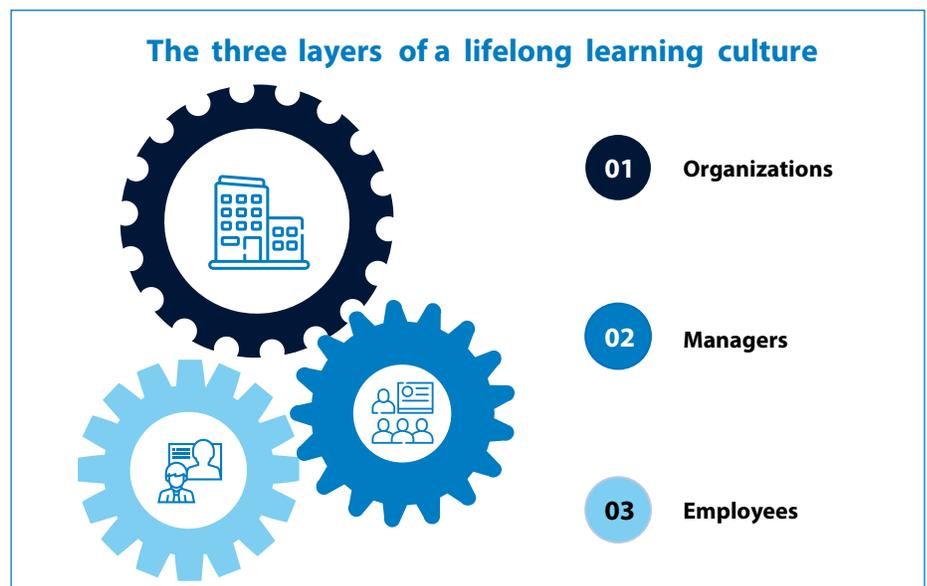
At the organization level

- Have you set up the right sponsorship to promote the lifelong learning paradigm?
- Have you aligned your learning transformation roadmap to the company's business goals in order to get maximum buy-in from the leadership?
- Have you defined corporate initiatives that link employee learning achievements with performance goals? Are you promoting those initiatives internally?
- Are you clearly communicating that learning is at the core of your business strategy?
- Do you provide enough means to your L&D department to reinvent the way to attract and retain people?
- Are you ready to invest in innovative technology and new learning solutions (like LXPs, mixed reality, AI, etc.)?
- Are you shifting from a B2C to a B2B approach to accelerate your learning transformation? Are you investigating on ready-to-use knowledge content for your people? Are you considering partnerships with pure players?
- Are you leveraging UX design principles and design thinking to adapt to your workforce expectations?

At manager level

- Are you promoting employee learnability and self-service learning in your teams?
- Do you value time for training within your teams?
- Are you creating regular learning moments, where everyone can share knowledge?
- Do you recognize training as effective worktime? Do you value social and informal learning as a true part of employee upskilling?
- Have you defined SMART* learning objectives in your teams? Do you link them to employee appraisals? (*SMART stands for Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)
- Do you proactively propose learning programs to your collaborators? Do you share learning playlists with them?
- Do you "lead by example"? As a manager, you are also an employee who should pave the way for the others.

At employee level

- Do you feel ready to learn differently: online, offline, on the go, while commuting, in the moment of need, informally?
- Are you "feeding"/developing your digital dexterity? In other words, do you use and manipulate multiple channels and media to find solutions for your everyday challenges? (such as corporate knowledge base, platforms, apps, webinars, conferences, web search, etc.)
- Have you established regular learning moments in your calendars? Have you created recurring placeholders for learning, ideally at the same time every week? Are you able to stick to them?
- Do you share the results of what you've learned with your peers?
- Do you get in touch with knowledge contributors and authors?

The three layers of a lifelong learning culture

01 Organizations
02 Managers
03 Employees

Source: Infosys

Conclusion

Research has shown that companies that invest in their workforce are 30% more likely to become leaders of their industry in the future[7] and employees are generally more committed to a business that invests in their development. 93% of them claim that they would stay longer in such an organization[8]. Lifelong learning makes employees "bankable" and happy at work. Time has come for all the parts of the equation to play their role in shaping the next-gen learning: employees by embracing a growth mindset and becoming agile learners; managers by supporting their team members' development and giving them the opportunity to become business "influencers"; organizations by investing massively in empowering their workforce and enhancing a continuous learning culture. We are convinced that lifelong learning is the way for both employees and organizations to stay ahead and relevant in a fast-paced environment. Transforming it into a key cultural component of the future enterprise will become vital[9].

93%

of **employees** say they would stay longer at a company that invests in their development

Source: https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report-2018#

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