

## **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: THE TOP PRIORITY FOR ORGANIZATIONS**

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### **Abstract**

A robust and up-to-date employee Learning and Development manual are a must-have in this digitally disruptive and transformative world of technology. Finding skilled employees is becoming difficult in this digital age. Ongoing training empowers employees with knowledge and skills, boosting employee performance and satisfaction. Ongoing training for your workforce is the need of the hour. Employee training and development is becoming a top priority for many organizations. The corporate world is led by digital transformation, and the way employees do their job is continuously changing under such a climate. It demands that employees be dynamic and adaptive to their job.

**Keywords:** Learning and Development and development, employees, organization

### **Introduction**

Learning and Development are globally accepted human resource functions. Most organizations gaze at learning and development as a vital human resource activity. It is an ongoing effort made within organizations to enhance the performance of their employees through various educational methods and skill development programs. With the advancement in technology, competition has increased with the rise in customer expectation of the quality of the products and services and a decrease in the prices. To withstand the competition, employees should be sharp enough to perform their best for the organization. This includes high competency, which may not be readily available to the employees. This can only be made possible with a well-planned learning and development program, by which the organizational goals are satisfied, which promises better returns to the organization in the future. Learning and Development have recently emerged as a recognized profession with distinctive theories and methodologies. Many organizations of different sizes are now adopting continuous learning and development programs for promoting employee performance to acquire a highly skilled workforce.

### **Evolution of Learning and Development**

Since prehistoric times, elders trained children on how to work to prepare them for adulthood.

- Training in Egypt – Organised Apprenticeship or learning for work originated in about 2000 B.C. for scribes in Egypt. The Code of Hammurabi in 2100 B.C. contained the rules regarding the governance of the apprenticeships. But until the Middle Ages, learning did not become widespread.

- Middle Ages – In the Middle Ages, the criterion for apprentices was to stay and get trained by the trainer or master without receiving any payment. Some children were apprenticed in exchange for work to get trained by expert craftsmen.
- Scholasticism - Scholasticism is one of the predecessors of Learner based instruction or experiential learning where, once the information has been provided, then the learners are supposed to use different methods to make judgments and arrive at the actual meaning of the evidence.
- Gaming – During the 1800s, the Prussians and German armies developed Kriegsspiel (wargame) for military training. The games contained maps and colorful blocks representing different troops. After the games, discussions on the decisions made by the trainers on troop placement and appropriate armaments were evaluated and criticized.
- The Industrial Revolution (The Classroom) –In 1872, in the city of New York, the first factory school for learning machinists was established by Hoe and Company. The workers were given learning in classrooms within the factory. The Industrial Revolution paved the way for quicker movement; as a result, many companies started factory schools.
- Vestibule Learning and Development – Vestibule training was a new method of learning combining classroom learning as well as on-the-job learning. In classrooms, a skilled worker or supervisor trained six to ten workers at a time using the same machines used in production.
- World War I (Systematic Learning and Development) – The First World War created an urgent need for more manufacturing and defense workers. In 1917, Charles R. Allen developed a new method of learning, “Show, Tell, Do, and Check, which quenched the need for trained and experienced workers during this period.
- World War II (JIT)- During World War II, The National Defence Advisory Commission advanced a systematic on-the-job learning method called JIT (Job Instruction Learning and Development). Under this method, first, they prepare the learner, then a step-by-step presentation of the job, continued with making the learner do the steps under supervision, and finally, a follow-up.
- After World War II (Individualised Instruction)- After the World Wars, Individual instruction started to replace teachers with systematic or programmed materials. The materials were divided into small steps which were comprehensible to the learners. After each step, their responses were sought and followed up.
- Instructional System Design – Companies began looking for learning effectiveness, which gave birth to ISD (Instructional System Design). During this period (1950-1960), the Plato system launched the first computer-assisted instruction at Illinois University. And Albert Bandura wrote about Observational Learning and Development, which gave the foundation for modern social learning.
- Learning Theories - The term informal learning emanated from Malcolm Knowles. The theory of multiple intelligence got introduced by Howard Gardner. ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implement, and Evaluate) model evolves under the ISD family that becomes more flexible and linear.
- Computer and Web-based Learning and Development – Computer-based learning evolved as a method of individualized instruction to up-skill employees on computers. Blended learning grew, and LMS (Learning Management System) emerged from e-learning.
- Mobile Learning and Development–In the early 2000s, Mobile learning entered the learning lexicon. But it did not gain track until the explosion of smart phones in the

mid to late 2000s. Nick Pelling formulates gamification even though people use gaming for different applications.

- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) - The Web-based free distant program gets introduced in the workplace following distance education.
- Social Networking –Towards the late 2000s, the concept of social learning acquired a new platform along with personal social networking, which grabbed much of the attention in the learning departments.

### **Meaning of Learning and Development**

Learning and Development involve developing an employee's knowledge, skills, attitudes, aptitude, beliefs, values, and personality. It is an effective tool that elevates an employee to a position where he can do his job effectively and efficiently. Organizations must possess new mechanisms for systematically improving and increasing employees' skills and knowledge to enhance their performance. Learning and Development is a planned activity that improves current job performance. Learning and Development prepare employees for their utmost growth and development. Thus, learning is an activity that helps the workforce perform their present job and prepares them for further advancement.

### **Concept of Learning and Development**

Learning and Development in fill employees with essential skills and knowledge to effectively perform their jobs. It is about enhancing employees as perfect individuals, making them confident and efficient in their careers and successful lives. By all means, learning is a hallmark of every good management. Having high potential employees does not mean that success is guaranteed. Instead, learning has to be a well-planned activity that is to be conducted after a thorough analysis. Management must know what is expected from the employees and how it has to be done. When the learning program is designed, the individual and organizational goals must be kept in mind.

### **Scope of Learning and Development**

The scope of Learning and Development has been considerably widened with the recognition of the importance of exercise. Learning and Development enhance organizational effectiveness and job-related performance by developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes leading to personal growth. It enables an individual to be competent in handling life issues, managing interpersonal relationships, and improving interpersonal effectiveness. Learning and Development influence every aspect of an individual's life. The scope of learning includes the following:

- Achieve organizational goals.
- Total quality management.
- Improve organizational performance.
- Reduce the gap between the skill needed for the job and the employee's skills.
- To motivate the employees.
- Increase the satisfaction level of employees.

### **Objectives of Learning and Development**

Learning and Development is an actual investment made by businesses in their employees. Learning and Development must also have a payoff to be worthwhile like any other investment. The primary objective of learning lies in bringing a match between man and his job. Every organization looks forward to more production, improved quality, turnover reduction, industrial safety, and retaining an effective management team. From the viewpoint

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of an organization, learning must not stop with individual growth, but it should be a means for organizational effectiveness. The following are the main objectives of learning in an organization.

- To enhance the growth and productivity of the employees and the organization.
- To impart systematic knowledge and skill, especially to the new entrants.
- To build up the employees to function more effectively.
- To improve confidence and team morale.
- To prepare all old and new employees to meet the organization's changing requirements.
- To ensure the required quality and economic output.
- To preserve safety standards.
- To develop the employee's equipment handling practices.
- To bring up a new line of competent officers and prepare them for more responsible positions.
- To reduce the need for monitoring.
- To enhance smooth functioning and efficient working of the departments.
- To lift organizational efficiency.
- To better human relations.
- To refine the organizational flexibility, viability, and scalability.
- To upgrade the employees for future advancement.
- Apart from these, there are some other objectives:
- Individual objectives – These objectives assist the employees in achieving personal goals, automatically enriching the employee to contribute to the organization.
- Organisational objectives – Organisational objectives help the organization to meet its primary goals by rendering individual effectiveness.
- Functional objectives – Functional objectives maintain the department's contribution to a level that suits the organization's needs.
- Societal objectives – With the societal goals, the organization makes sure that it is ethically and socially responsible in meeting the needs of society.

## **Pros of Learning and Development**

Learning and Development reconsidered unavoidable factors for effective organizational communication and coordination. It is one of the most important motivators that benefits both the individual and the organization. Rapid technological changes require that employees acquire skills, abilities, and knowledge to subsist with the new production and process techniques. The advantages of learning can be understood in two dimensions: Advantages to the company and benefits to the employee.

### **Advantages to the company**

- Efficient Employees- proper learning makes the employees more efficient and effective, bringing out optimum output and results.
- Less supervision- with formal learning, mistakes will get reduced, resulting in less need for control by the employer.
- Reduction in wastage- learning helps the employees make use of the resources better and more productive by reducing waste.
- Reduced labor turnover- Due to scientific learning, employees perform well with stability and flexibility, and their chance for promotion also increases while they stay with the company reducing the labor turnover

- Increase in Productivity – Efficient employees will increase the organization's productivity.
- Organisational Development – Once the employees get well trained, they provide better revenue than before. Expertise puts forth quality to the work and development of the organization.
- Customer Satisfaction – Learning and Development upgrade the performance of the workforce. Employees' quality performance will lead to improved and increased customer satisfaction.

### **Advantages to the Employee**

- Improved Performance - Once the employees get the learning required for the task, their weaknesses will turn into their strength with a better understanding of what to do, how to do and when to do it with better ideas.
- Enhancing Growth – Every organization aims to get development and growth for their efforts. They become ambitious and skilled in handling every situation by providing learning to employees, proving that education includes space for employees to learn and grow.
- Boosting self-confidence- Increasing self-confidence improves employees' efficiency by removing their fears.
- Augmented Satisfaction – Gaining skills improves the confidence level of the employees, by which they accomplish their job easily with new innovative strategies. This builds the satisfaction level of employees.
- Attitude- Learning and Development bring a positive attitude, increasing employee motivation.
- Elimination of mistakes- Learning and Development makes an employee suitable for the given job with less opportunity for misfits.
- High Morale- learning motivates employees to work hard. Employees who are thorough with the job are likely to have increased morale.

### **Characteristics of Learning and Development**

Organizations have rightly understood that learning has a significant positive impact on job-related behaviors and individual performance. The extent to which learning influences learning, behavior, and profitability highly depends upon the various characteristics.

- Effective program management  
A quality learning program starts with a program manager who will be responsible for the planning and execution of all learning initiatives. He is the specialist or learning coordinator who manages the learning process.
- Needs Assessment  
The program manager must identify the needs of the organization. He must identify who needs to be trained and how to be prepared.
- Alignment  
Once the needs are identified, they must be aligned with the organization's objectives. Through this, employees will understand the learning, which the managers will also support.
- Goals and Metrics  
Quantifying learning is a complex matter. But when the program manager sets up organizational needs and aligns them, quantifying knowledge becomes much more accessible. When goals are developed, metrics should give the whole picture.
- Leadership Buy-in

It is leadership that makes a program end up successful.

- Relevant content  
Providing relevant content is the key to a successful learning program. The content presented must be applicable and timely to cope with the daily duties.
- Creativity  
Creativity ensures the level of importance to the program in an organization.
- Marketing and Communication  
A successive marketing plan includes initial launch activities and ongoing efforts throughout the program.
- Post-training Reinforcement  
Here, small lessons or activities continue to teach what was already prepared.

### **Importance of Learning and Development**

Learning and Development is an imperative and crucial tool for the organization to renovate the performance of all the personnel for organizational growth and success. It is advantageous to both employers and employees of an organization. Employees become more efficient and productive when they are trained well. Comprehensive learning enhances the quality of the current employees. Learning and Development are necessary to increase productivity and inspire and motivate employees by making them aware of the importance of their job and providing them with all the information needed to perform their job. Learning and Development are essential due to the following reasons:

- Training assists in the proper recruitment of staff.
- It ensures better-qualified employees.
- Training eliminates risk by the apt use of materials and equipment.
- To build up consistency in the employee's performance of duties.
- Training ensures increased productivity and quality products and services.
- It provides more satisfaction to the employees.
- It reduces cost.
- Training acts as a monitoring factor in organizations regarding employees.
- It increases adaptability and loyalty in the workforce.
- Employee morale is improved with the help of learning.
- Training reduces supervision.

### **Investigating learning Needs**

Running a business organization is an ongoing process, a journey. The success of every business depends upon the performance of the employees. Therefore, Human Resource managers must look forward to new methods and techniques to improve their workforce's performance and train them to be efficient in meeting the organizational goals. The need for learning arises when a gap occurs between actual and desired performance. The following are the reasons for the need for learning in an organization.

- To increase productivity and to update the quality standards.
- To improve organizational flexibility and stability.
- Improve the efficiency of the employees.
- Efficient utilization of resources.
- To save time and money.
- To reduce guidance and supervision.
- To acquire maximum performance.
- To enhance the morale of the employees.

- To withstand competition.
- To trim back accidents and errors.
- Maintain industrial relations.
- To minimize grievances.
- To build up a promising career with personal growth.
- Reduction in turnover and absenteeism.

### **Challenges in Learning and Development**

In most organizations, the allocation of learning resources is given the highest priority to increase the effectiveness of learning programs. Despite careful resource allocation, many organizations still find their learning ineffective in attaining organizational goals. This is because of the various challenges in the field of learning. Some of the challenges faced in learning are:

- Scheduling learning – One of the most difficult challenges the human resource department faces is scheduling the learning program. Many managers show reluctance in sparing their employee's duty time for learning.
- Dealing with Changes - Organizational changes are faster and more common nowadays. Dealing with rapid technological changes, budgets, mergers, acquisitions, and staffing makes it challenging to prepare updated learning programs.
- Age, Gender, and Cultural differences – Different cultures will give different regard to gender and age. Cultural differences may lead to misconceptions, resulting in inconsistent learning.
- Different learning Habits - To prevent further learning issues, it is vital that learner preferences and habits have to be taken into consideration. Each workforce includes at least three generations with different patterns and relationships with technology. So, learning would be less effective if all the employees were equally treated.
- Linguistic Problem – Language is a means of communication and the essential ingredient of culture. The trainer must be well versed in communicating with the trainees in understandable language.
- Organisational Barriers – Organizations sometimes become more rigid in their thinking and processes when they grow and mature. When problems arise, the solutions proposed may not be suitable enough to solve the issue.
- Individual barriers – Employees may resist tying up with the learning provided. Organizations cannot compel the workforce; it's all up to individual choice.

### **Recent technological trends in Learning and Development**

Living in a technologically-driven world has brought about a drastic change in organizational learning trends. The ability to adapt to change often defines one's success. But as of now, speed has become the factor of success. Organizations showing a higher performance level are adaptable to the fast-changing technological world.

The pandemic crisis of COVID-19 has caused a massive alteration in work settings and wedged learning processes in organizations. With the variations happening due to COVID-19, technology has also changed enormously to help this transition become smoother. The modern trends in learning and development and how the new technological advancements and practices have certainly impacted the overall education at organizations are discussed below.

**1. AI Boosted Learning**

Organizations need to safeguard a continuous and hassle-free learning practice for employees. This can be done by making sound investments in advanced tools. L&D professionals must keep up with rapid-changing technology to augment the learning experience and consequences. They must advance new learning approaches that take benefit from AI and other tech revolutions. AI-powered learning programs empower adaptive learning, where the learning modules are altered to suit the requirements of each learner. This can be in video lessons, guided roadmaps, pdf content, etc. AI also offers visibility and awareness into each employee's advancement in the learning database.

**2. Digital dexterity**

Digital dexterity is “the employees’ ability and ambition to embrace existing and emerging technologies to achieve better business outcomes.” A few years before, there were a lot of workplace training groups in reality that refined digital skills, culture, and proficiencies, but they were not mentioned as digital dexterity. It is a different strategy that creates a paradigm shift in making technology people literate rather than making people technology literate.

**3. Up skilling and Reskilling**

Up skilling denotes an employee learning supplementary skills to be well prepared to do their job. Examples of up skilling exertions are digital, analytics, and organizational revolution skills. Reskilling refers to an employee learning new skills or training to achieve a different job. Reskilling is generally done when a new employee joins the workforce or if the existing workforce has to learn new technology.

**4. Digital Adoption Platform (DAP)**

A DAP is a technology layer that parks across diverse applications to guarantee quicker and simpler implementation and adoption. DAPs includes four functional elements; In-application guidance, Digital experience analytics, Process automation, and Active user engagement. Digital Adoption Platforms such as Walk Me, let us gather and analyze usage data, gain discernibility into the learner expedition, and find out where our employers struggle so that we can make data-driven conclusions about what kind of training material to create and where to best publish it.

**5. Microlearning**

Microlearning is a learning approach that involves breaking down a skill or idea into its most essential parts and only teaching those. These small chunks of learning are consumed in relatively short periods. It is ideally suited for skills training. Studies show that microlearning is effective and boosts learner engagement. Not just that, employees prefer microlearning over traditional learning methods since it is easily consumable. Microlearning is also faster to deliver and is highly affordable.

**6. On-Demand and Reinforced Learning and Development**

On-demand learning is where learners are provided contact with knowledge-based content in real-time, whenever, wherever. The employee or learner must have access to the internet to enable this type of learning. On-demand learning that strengthens what the workforce has learned by giving instant access to learning content solves this problem. Both employees and employers treasure on-demand knowledge since these properties can be employed whenever and on whichever stratagem an employee wants. This permits employees to choose the appropriate learning courses, thus positively affecting increased employee engagement in learning and development programs.



**7. Prioritizing Communication**

With the unexpected swing to remote work, online communication has become crucial for every workforce. Without a solid communication channel and approach, business endurance could be lost. Organizations are capitalizing on new podiums and agendas to progress communication and enable remote work. As business progressions advance according to fluctuations in the business landscape, employees must also acquaint themselves with these deviations.

**Conclusion**

The success of an organization tremendously relies on its employees. Effective employee on boarding and training practices can break one's organization's bottom line. It is high time that companies understand this and invest in practical employee training and on boarding platforms and curricula. Today's workforce assumes modern and advanced training systems. Learning and Development and Training organizations should invest in augmenting current infrastructure to contain new education and training technology, methodologies, and professionals. With the rapid technological advancements cropping up every day, employees need to gain the necessary knowledge and train regularly to keep their skills sharp. The new technology used in training employees is the missing layer to the challenges with digital dexterity as organizations look to make the digital, modern workplace a reality.

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