ALLENCOMM

8 TIPS FOR BOOSTING YOUR ELEARNING WITH PERFORMANCE CONSULTING

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CHAPTER 1:

CREATE A VIRTUAL LEARNING CULTURE AS PART OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BRAND

With our economy hyper-accelerating into a virtual environment, creating a learning culture as part of your organization's brand has never been more important. With over half of the workforce now working remotely[1], people have an increasing need to feel connected due to near constant isolation. When your organization has a culture that supports and encourages growth and learning, not only will your organization benefit from increased employee competency with employees who feel invested in and successful, your employees will also feel a stronger sense of community and connection. Establishing this kind of virtual learning culture pays increasing dividends as the culture strengthens.

There are, of course, many benefits to having a strong learning culture[2]. Perhaps the most beneficial effects is that a strong learning culture attracts good people and gets them to stay. It impacts engagement more than rewards and recognition, work/life balance, or fun perks like donuts on Friday or foosball tables[3]. This among other benefits will have a positive impact, directly or indirectly, on your organization's downline.

Not only does establishing and nurturing a strong learning culture greatly benefit organizations, but disregarding it is dangerously expensive. Training a new employee costs up to 30% of that employee's annual salary[4]. For an employee with an annual salary of $40,000, that is roughly $12,000. Providing business- and learner-focused ongoing learning to an experienced employee costs $1,200[5] per employee on average—one-tenth the cost of a new hire. Tying a strong learning culture to reducing employee turnover is a safe bet. Creating a culture in which employees' learning and development is facilitated, supported, expected, and tied to career growth improves employee morale and motivation, saves on new hires by promoting from within, helps everyone keep pace with rapid changes in the industry or in technology[6], to name

a few, all of which have a positive impact on the organization.

However, creating a learning culture requires more than understanding its importance. It requires clear messaging outlining the expectations for ongoing learning built into your organization's very brand. This takes top-down and—though less predictable—bottom-up determination, skill, and strategy. Now, if you are taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this, you likely have the determination and skill to recreate your brand to be learning-focused. Read on to learn the strategy.

Recreating Your Brand: Buy-in, Differentiators, and Time

No "culture" is born overnight. It evolves gradually from repetition, cultivated by the right conditions. Before any learning can be implemented, establish these three conditions, and in this order:

Invite Input for Mutual Buy-In

While change demands commitment from senior leadership, it must be reciprocated by the organization as whole, from senior leadership to middle managers and from middle managers to entry-level employees. Senior leaders need to instigate consistent and continual communication, message their coaches and managers, and sponsor the training programs that are needed. Managers must provide encouragement and recommendations, set up systems of accountability, and establish a coaching loop for their team members. Those working on the ground level should be paired to provide peer-level feedback and mentor new hires or struggling associates.

However, while this continual and consistent top-down buy-in is a given (though difficult) first step, gaining ground-up buy-in and input is largely ignored among organizations trying to establish impactful learning programs. Crucial to accelerating the establishment of a strong learning culture is early in this process, inviting ground-level employees to give their input. Not

only is their point-of-view on learning crucial, they can more easily become change agents and influencers if they were involved in the early stages of learning development. Creating a learning culture requires constant input and adjustments to function properly. Doing so will create a learning culture in your organization as your people transition from seeing their work as 'just a job' to becoming advocates for learning. Otherwise your organization's culture will only be as strong as its weakest link.

Define a Differentiator of Ongoing Learning

Think of your organization's brand message, brand promise, or mission statement. It likely outlines answers to these questions: What sets you apart? What distinguishes you from your competitors? What makes your employees and their work exceptional? Your answers to these are your brand's differentiators. Once senior leadership buy-in is established, internal marketing and messaging can consistently and continually communicate that one of your brand differentiators is that you are an organization in which ongoing learning is expected to improve and accumulate expertise continually, to the benefit of your employees and partners.

Establish Protected Time for Learning

What good is a learning culture—especially among busy employees—if no one has time to seek out and consume learning opportunities? This is true participants in the training program, but also any managers, mentors, or coaches. It also communicates a clear message to employees: "We at this organization take learning and your development seriously." It turns out, employees will then take it seriously, too.

Actionable Tactics for Creating a Virtual Learning Culture

Once those three conditions are in place, you can now move on to implementing the tactics for your strategy. Remember, when it comes to the tactics you implement, you must take a systematic approach. Consider the following tactics:

Set expectations and create a system of accountability

For learning to be effective, employee-learners need to know that their leaders will regularly follow up with them. While there is nothing revolutionary about manager/employee one-on-ones, the manager and employee spending time on following-up and targeting learning can determine the difference between mediocre and great performance. Employees who know that their managers will follow up with them (in one-on-ones, team meetings, performance evaluations, etc.) are employees who will do their due diligence in learning. They will feel more accountable to the organization and feel a stronger sense of importance in their work. Through proper analytics and well-designed performance evaluations, you will see not only an increase in revenue, but also money saved from higher employee retention (while decreasing the costs of inconsistency and re-training), and industry influence.

Creating a learning culture requires constant input and adjustments to function properly.

Set up a system of support from managers, supervisors, and/or coaches

Support needs to come from leadership, which is demonstrated through the development-focused one-on-ones stemming from formal learning that targets opportunities for improvement: goal-setting that's connected to their learning; on-the-job shadowing and challenges from mentors; peer cohorts to give feedback and record and share best practices all can reinforce their formal learning. When these tactics are implemented with consistency and support from the organization, the culture will follow.

Create a Central Learning Hub or Repository

In order for your learning culture tactics to be unified and, thereby, effective, there should be one place that houses and facilitates the necessary learning, tools, and technologies. This may include access to the formal learning itself (eLearning modules, VILTs,), a catalog with easy-access to quick job aids, just-in-time resources, technology that preserves social learning while virtual, or technology with searchable and filterable capabilities to bundle information according to the learner's on-the-job needs. Having these resources in place will reduce the amount of time and stress the employees experience in the learning process. The time saved will allow the learners to spend more time using what they learn in their workflow which will provide greater benefits to the organization through increased productivity, higher morale, and improved job performance.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most important takeaway is that for a learning culture to become part of your brand, you must involve both the leaders and the employees every step of the way. The process is slow, and demanding, but leads to a tremendous pay-off through higher employee retention, higher quality performance from your employees, an increase in revenue, and expanded industry influence.

CHAPTER 2:

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION – WHY LEARNING MUST MEET PERFORMANCE METRICS

If we're honest, when we hear the words "Kirkpatrick Model of Evaluation," we might suppress an inner eyeroll, feeling both obligated and helpless: *Yes, I should measure learning and performance. But, no; I don't feel like doing so is realistic. Kirkpatrick asks too much of learning. It's especially not realistic to measure to a level where I can actually trace a Return on Investment.* However, the model often isn't applied effectively. While the first two levels of evaluation are better than nothing, they are not particularly useful—they don't lead to the KPIs (performance metrics) or, ultimately, to the ROI an organization needs. This is why learning must be performance-based—attached to metrics. The most valuable data comes from the last two levels, which are ignored all too often.

The good news is that reorienting how we think about and apply the Kirkpatrick levels of evaluation can more digestibly help us measure beyond Kirkpatrick Levels 1 and 2 (that learners reacted well to the learning and that learning happened), where most large organizations get stuck. To reach Levels 3 and 4 (that behaviors changed enough to reach desired business impact), an organization can leverage strategies within a learning culture that can quantify the learning and map it to business results.

So, that Kirkpatrick Level 4 seems less unapproachable, we need first to understand it by way of dissection. While this Level 4 evaluation is meant to answer the difficult question, "How has the training program contributed to the success of the organization as a whole?", evaluating the parts of what leads to "success in the organization as a whole" is less to chew on all at once. To be sure, Level 4 is not meant to be achievable by any lone training. However, this level of evaluation is more achievable when it's consistently incorporated as part of the organization's learning culture as a whole, as discussed in the previous chapter. This is done through mapping the behaviors —Level 3—to the business

impact the organization needs—Level 4. Doing this will begin to quantify the learning in smaller, more digestible sections and provide the organization ROI much more easily.

If the organization's goal is to increase their revenue stream, what is keeping the sales team from success?

For an evaluation to be effective, one has to begin by defining clear performance metrics—relevant behaviors and desired results—that correlate directly with Level 4 of the Kirkpatrick Model. These metrics should be defined by the organization, socialized by managers, with manager or coach follow-up, reinforced in formal and informal learning, ongoing challenges, regular one-on-ones, team meetings, goals for development, and performance reviews. Also, defining the performance metrics with the input of employees makes expectations clear and accountability more likely. Utilizing these strategies allows us to quantify learning and to do so accurately. Frequent and regular manager-employee or peer-to-peer interaction and follow-up help strengthen the learning culture within the organization. Moreover, they account for the skills that lead to behaviors, and the behaviors that lead to competencies, and the competencies that lead to ROI. With that in mind, the first question that needs to be answered is "How do you define your performance metrics?"

Remember, performance metrics are the combination of relevant behaviors—Kirkpatrick Level 3—and desired results—Kirkpatrick Level 4. With that in mind, the best way to define performance metrics is by beginning with the desired results, and then going backwards to the behaviors that create those results. Once the behaviors and results are defined, then the current state of the organization can be mapped out to the future behaviors effectively.

Let's consider a few examples. Perhaps the desired result for your organization is to increase revenue streams, increase asset flow, get clients to feel more successful, or get employees to feel more successful. Each of these examples need a metric that accurately measures the outcome. Increased revenue can be measured by an increase in sales. Employees feeling more successful can be measured by an increase in employee retention.

The next step is to map those over to the micro-behaviors—Kirkpatrick Level 3—that create them. This will require a proper analysis of what is preventing those behaviors from occurring. For example, if the organization's goal is to increase their revenue stream, what is keeping the sales team from success? Do they have all of the tools they need? Are the tools easy to access? Are the tools ready whenever a team member may need them? Does the team have proper **sales training**? Does the sales team get to apply their learning on the job? Do they get regular feedback and follow-up opportunities?

Once you know what's preventing the desired behaviors, defining this component of the performance metrics should be straight-forward. To use the above sales team example, let's say the issue turns out to be that the sales team doesn't have easily accessible tools at their disposal when meeting with a potential client. First, create or modify existing tools to make them easily accessible. Then, track how often those tools are accessed. By using one-on-ones with coaches or mentors, track if sales teams members are using the tools optimally and if they are changing behaviors to lead to the desired metric.

Now that we've discussed how to define key performance metrics, let's take a deeper dive into the Kirkpatrick model and the importance of reverse engineering from Level 3 to 4.

Deconstructing and Reverse Engineering the Kirkpatrick Model

The power of reverse engineering the Kirkpatrick model is that it offers a more approachable and doable method for achieving those business results. Using this method does more than just say that training happened, but that performance improvements align with organizational goals. Not only that, but the method makes it more likely for the training to lead to positive Level 4 (ROI) results because it making the training behavior-based and incorporating valuable strategies like performance evaluations, reinforcement, and follow-up from formal, social, or contextual learning and support

from managers or coaches—all of which increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Let's take a look at levels 3 and 4, in the order of their importance.

Kirkpatrick Level 4 - ROI

Kirkpatrick's fourth level focuses on results, or the Return on Investment (ROI). To deconstruct Level 4 into the key performance metrics, you can start by asking yourself questions geared toward the desired results.

Kirkpatrick Level 3 - Behaviors

You can deconstruct level 3 in a similar way, by asking questions geared toward the micro-behaviors that produce the desired results. You could ask questions such as the following:

- Am I completing learning experiences aligned with the skills of my manager and I set for a growth plan?
- Are the micro-behaviors, skills, and competencies my manager and I set for a development improving over a targeted time?
- Do I use the valuable micro-skills in my client relationships?
- Am I using the sales performance tools available to me?

Considerations like those above are instrumental for conducting evaluations to determine whether your learning strategy is effective. Evaluations are most often conducted by mentors, coaches, or managers to assess the employee for the defined behaviors that can ultimately lead to Level 4—positive ROI. The evaluation can be done by integrating metrics with the learning experience using the following strategies:

- Define your learning culture: Is it employee-owned, but coach-guided? Or employee-owned but coach-driven until a strong self-assessment culture is secured? Either way, performance should be governed by sustainment and follow-up, meaning heavy coach/manager integration.
- Coach mapping performance gaps to promote learning, then development, then development plans, then performance reviews and ROI.

Conclusion

By taking the time to build an employee training strategy around tangible behaviors and results, the challenge of measuring training ROI becomes much more manageable. This this method of reverse-engineering is vital to measurement and evaluation, but that doesn't mean to disregard levels 1 and 2. Reactions, for example, are a valuable representation of factors like motivation and engagement which directly contribute to learning outcomes. However, if you can evaluate levels 3 and 4 as well, then the organization has all the data it needs to refine the employee training and development experience and support key business goals.

CHAPTER 3:

BLENDED VS. HYBRID LEARNING – THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING CONTENT FOR THE GROWTH OF EMPLOYEES

Blended learning and hybrid learning are very easy to mix up, but each is tied to a very different set of implications. To compare the two, blended learning is a combination of online and offline learning methods and materials for formal learning experiences. Hybrid learning on the other hand, is a comprehensive learning experience that combines formal training within informal and experiential learning in the workflow.

The problem is that these two learning styles both sound similar in definition and can look similar in application.

Both use online and offline resources and methods. Both are focused on improving upon traditional learning methods. What is even more confusing is that many organizations use the terms interchangeably, further muddying the waters.
So, why learn the difference?

By understanding the different learning styles, you can tailor your training programs to your desired outcome. While neither style is necessarily better or worse than the other, understanding the difference allows organizations to know which method is best to make their needed business impact.

To have a better understanding of the difference between the two, let's look at the different styles of learning that govern how these methods are applied. These are known as push-learning and pull-learning.

Push vs Pull: A Tale of Two Learning Styles

When it comes to a learner's experience of learning there are two primary categories: pushing and pulling[7].

Push learning is when the material and the timeline to learn it are determined by someone who is not the learner—usually the instructor or manager. The learner consumes what they are given. Push learning is considered the traditional approach and is the most common form of learning found in schools and Instructor-led training. However, with the advances in **training technology**, a new style of learning has developed to provide more effective learning opportunities.

On the other hand, pull learning is learner-driven, meaning learners have more control over how to process the material. They can set their own pace, apply the learning according to their schedule and on-the-job demands, and determine how much of the material to consume or to skip.

Some organizations, like those fulfilling required **compliance training** or training certifications, may find that a push style accommodates their legal requirements and business needs. However, others with less stringent requirements can more easily

facilitate both push and pull learning training methods in combination, allowing both required and personalized learning to complement one another.

Blended Learning

Blended learning employs many strategies to accommodate the learner. But, as organizations move toward a virtual-first learning experience, a few have become more popular:

- Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT)
- Virtual Coaching/Mentoring
- Interactive Videos
- Simulations
- Podcasts

With the bespoke design of a performance consultant, blended learning is an excellent strategy that has proven results across many industries.

With the bespoke design of a performance consultant, blended learning is an excellent strategy that has proven results across many industries. The variety of learning strategies and training modalities increases the likelihood of enabling the desired learning outcomes and behavioral changes among a large group of learners.

Hybrid Learning

Whereas blended learning is push of formal learning that is highly calculated and tailored, hybrid learning allows for an ongoing pull of relevant learning. Hybrid learning, which focuses on ongoing learning and application on-the-job, accelerates employee development and naturally leads to a dialogue between training and performance. Moreover, Hybrid learning incorporates both push and pull learning. For instance, push learning occurs in the training zone, whereas pull learning occurs in the performance zone.

While taking time to learn crucial behaviors and skill sets may take time, intermingling training phases with performance phases will generate the best outcome through a back-and-forth interaction. By switching between strategies like formal learning, on-the-job application, performance support, social reinforcement, formal reinforcement, on-the-job challenges with performance support, contextual coaching, and formal refreshers, learners can experience higher levels of retention and positive behavior modification.

Let's look at different strategies a hybrid learning method would use in a training zone versus a performance phase. During a training zone, you might use:

Controlled Environment

This could include anything from a classroom to a WBT module.

Dedicated Time

A controlled environment usually comes with time set aside specifically to learn the material.

Scheduled Events

This strategy could include and ILT or attending a seminar to gain a new skill set in your industry.

Practice in Simulated Context

When acquiring a new skill, having a practice session is a good strategy that makes the learning process active and engaging and helps the learner change their behavior to the desired state.

Access via LMS

Should the learning phase incorporate any strategies that require online access, such as a WBT, a VILT, or a

Flipped Classroom, these online resources will need to be stored in a Learning Management System (LMS).

When the training and performance zones have an ongoing dialogue with each other, they have an ongoing relationship of support and development, and are able to deliver a learning experience in the right time, in the right place, delivered in the right way for the right learner.

When the performance zone is well-defined, the learning experience should have a few key characteristics:

On Demand

Search results from a digital catalog can give just-in-time job aids

On-the-job

Learning should be integrated into the flow of work, allowing learners to spend as little time away from their responsibilities as possible. That means creating **custom eLearning** activities and assets that can be quickly accessed and easily consumed.

Immediate Application in Real World Context

The ability to immediately apply training to work minimizes the learning gap between where the learner is and the desired behavior. For instance, incorporating newly acquired knowledge or skills immediately after completing a course helps the learning stick.

Access via Learning Portal

Having an easily accessible platform allows the learner to be more self-sufficient in the learning process and allows them to learn while working with minimal workflow interruption.

Conclusion

Employee training and development increases and can be measured with ongoing performance and training transfer. In addition, managers can assess gaps, recommend learning, tie it to employee development plans, then measure it with performance evaluations. This can be accomplished with both blended and hybrid methods of learning, and for most organizations, using either would be a major step forward.

CHAPTER 4:

CUSTOM ELEARNING – PERSONALIZATION WITH DIAGNOSTICS

With the increasing demand for highly personalized learning, the need for a custom approach to eLearning design strategy has never been more important. Training assets can be configured to different experience levels, roles, performance, or career paths. However, personalizing the learning experience with employee data from diagnostic tools has an even greater impact upon learning outcomes behavior changes. That data allows learning consultants to design custom eLearning that aligns training activities with the knowledge and competencies that support organizational goals. Moreover, that data can also be helpful for learners. It enables them to focus more time on the areas in which they struggle or skip over the subjects with which they are already comfortable. This kind of data-informed personalization enables self-paced pull-learning, even in a formal learning setting.

Diagnostics can also provide critical data for your organization around how effective the training program is and where it could use improvement.

Diagnostics – Why They Are Important And What Methods To Use

Diagnostics are assessments which can be either objective or subjective and allow the learner to gauge how confident they feel with or how frequently they demonstrate certain competencies and underlying behaviors. A diagnostic produces a measurement of efficacy from which a personalized learning path/menu is served up and from which the learner can "pull" the most necessary courses to their performance needs.

Diagnostics can also provide critical data for your organization around how effective the training program is and where it could use improvement. In terms of data for your organization, the best way to collect data is to include a diagnostic both before and after the course. However, it is also important to remember that these diagnostics must directly relate to their employee development. For instance, consider using professional development planners and performance evaluations so that your learner's growth can be quantified in relation to performance.

Likert Scales[8] are a common diagnostic, but they are limited to learner experience, confidence levels, and other self-reported measures. On the other hand, they are easy to measure over time. However, to have objective measurements of learning and performance, diagnostics should recreate key components of ideal behaviors and ask learners to apply their knowledge.

What Are The Benefits Of Diagnostics?

When you implement diagnostics, the personalization you create leads to the following benefits for your organization:

- Targeted business objectives
- Personalized learning targeted at core competencies and behaviors
- Data to structure coach follow-up and peer feedback
- Supported formal learning with easy-access and aligned, just-in-time resources
- Learners become able to bundle resources, tools, and job aids as needed for tailored on-the-job support

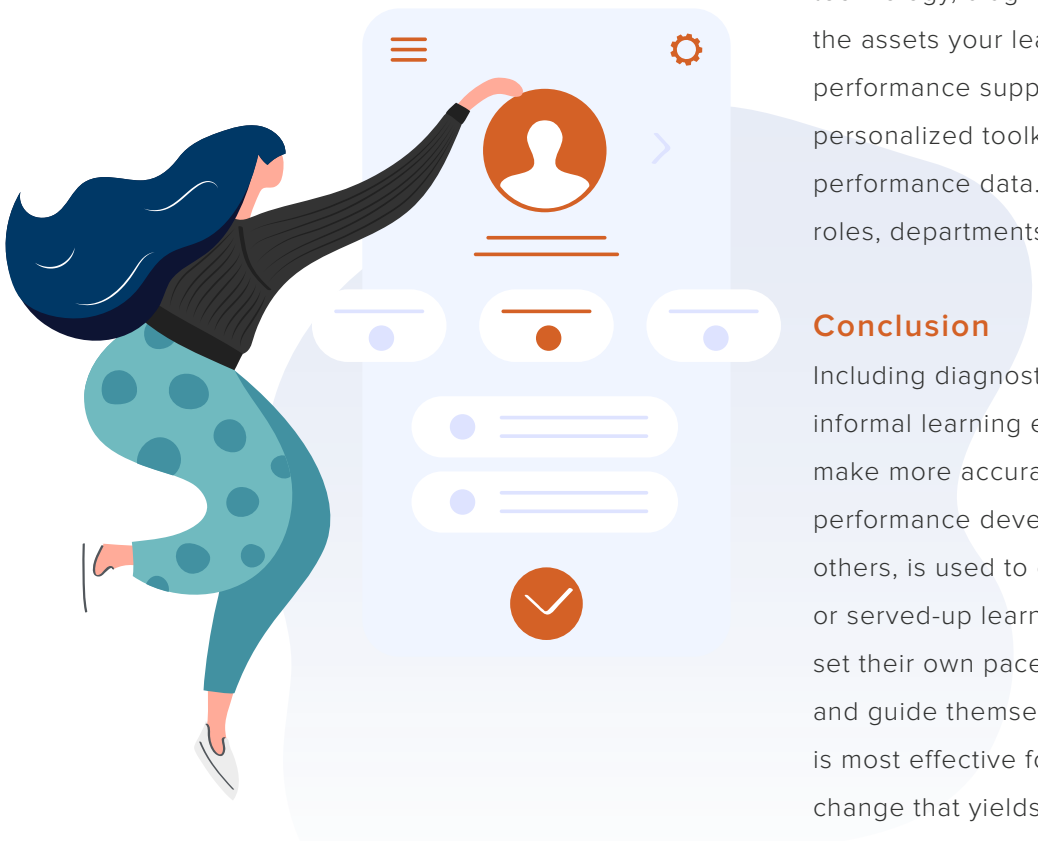
Let's take a look at each of these individually.

Targeting business objectives

Diagnostics can be used to help you target specific business objectives by assessing knowledge and behaviors that will lead to needed business objectives. By including a pre-diagnostic with questions tailored toward key behaviors, a learner will discover their knowledge and performance.

Personalizing learning targeted at core competencies and behavior

Pre-assessments on core competencies can give insight into individual challenges. Then, that data can be used to automate learning paths to create a personalized learning pathway. But this data can be used even after an employee finishes the initial formal training event, serving up tailored on-the-job resources and refreshers.



Provide data to structure manager/coach follow-up and peer feedback

Diagnostics also provide much-needed data that allows managers or coaches to know exactly how to follow-up and reinforce competencies with the learner. The results should inform lesson plans during coaching, as supplementary material to the formal learning experience.

Support formal learning with easy-access and aligned, just-in-time resources

Providing performance support and other just-in-time training assets has the highest likelihood of creating the desired behavior change when it is immediately applicable. Diagnostics allow you to support formal learning with personalized, easy-access resources in the workflow.

Allow learners to bundle resources for on-the-job support

With the help of a learner portal or similar learning technology, diagnostic data can help to predict the assets your learners will most likely need as performance support. So, use that data to create personalized toolkits of the resources based on performance data. Diagnostics can reveal trends among roles, departments, or cater to individuals.

Conclusion

Including diagnostics before and after a formal or informal learning experience will help your employees make more accurate, targeted, and bought-in performance development. When this strategy, among others, is used to create a custom eLearning experience or served-up learning path, the learner will be able to set their own pace, learn according to their schedule, and guide themselves through the material in a way that is most effective for them. The result? Spot-on behavior change that yields the specific impact the organization needs.

CHAPTER 5:

MICROLEARNING AS A TRAINING MODALITY: STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

What is **microlearning**? Why is it useful?

Microlearning is more than simply bite-sized training modality. It is focused and offers just the right amount of information necessary to help a learner achieve a specific, actionable objective. Not only that, but your employees will also be able to use these micro-modules on the job when they need them, which makes microlearning in business contexts especially valuable. There are two ways we can apply microlearning. First, there are micromodules that can be pulled. These are modules that are on-demand and just-in-time, serving as standalone, digestible modules that serve as a quick reference or refresher. Learners should be able to pull these modules by searching for exactly what they need so that they can have the performance support they need right on time. While most training is designed to provide 70% experiential learning, 20% social, and 10% formal education, consider if another ratio is more effective for your needs: the 10:20:60:10 model. We

start with a formal foundation for **employee onboarding** (10%), then include practice and feedback through social learning (20%). On-the-job experience is still the highest proportion in the model at 60%, since it gives employees the context of their role. Finally, we reinforce concepts and principles through a formal refresher (10%). This refresher engages learners and helps them to apply their training experience to the foundational principles for increased sustainment.

Pulled micromodules should also be mapped to performance gaps to align support and job aids with targeted needs.

Pushed micromodules, on the other hand, can be driven by learner assessments and diagnostics. This allows you to target your learners' needs. For instance, coaches and supervisors can have their employees take certain microlearning elements to target performance gaps they've noticed or to help their team meet relevant competencies. From there, learners can take the training quickly, without cutting into their normal duties.

How can you apply microlearning as a training modality?

As we saw in Chapter 3, two popular and relevant approaches are Hybrid learning and Blended learning.

Because these approaches differ in their use of digital assets, it's important to consider how each can apply to microlearning. Since Blended learning is a mix of digital and classroom modalities for formal learning experiences, microlearning helps to support the learning experience. For Hybrid learning, which combines formal, informal, and experiential learning,

HYBRID LEARNING

A comprehensive learning experience that combines formal training with informal and experiential learning in the workflow.

TRAINING ZONE
Controlled Environment
Dedicated Time
Scheduled Event
practice in Simulated Context
Accessed via LMS (PUSH)

PERFORMANCE ZONE
On Demand
Real Time
On the Job
Immediate Application in Real World Context
Accessed via Workflow Platform (PULL)

microlearning can be at the center of the structure, supporting every topic. Each step of the Hybrid learning journey requires the right assets to drive learning outcomes, and microlearning offers benefits at every point.

Remember the learning and performance elements of Hybrid learning from Chapter 3? Microlearning excels at establishing a connection between both phases. Due to the bite-size nature of micromodules, microlearning allows you to personalize the experience for each learner, which will help to optimize performance and provide immediate application.

Blended learning, on the other hand, emphasizes a mixture of learning approaches, succeeding when instructional strategies and learning objectives are in strong alignment. For example, if your goal is to increase your employees' ability to help customers find what they need, your strategy could be to create on-the-job access to relevant resources. The blended approach offers a wide range of instructional tools and methods which enable you to deploy tailor-made tactics for each specific learning objective.

Blended learning has grown to include more than lectures and eLearning modules. Mentoring, cohorts, performance support, and job aids, as well as other learning experiences, can all be used to build a comprehensive learning ecosystem. Microlearning can be used throughout every modality in your ecosystem to provide a return on your investment.

Application

Let's consider how we can apply microlearning to help your organization. For coaches and managers, micromodules are key for ongoing learning. Here, your management teams take account of known skill and performance gaps and targets them with specific microlearning. This provides a solid foundation on which to create career development plans, target skill and proficiency gaps, and engage your employees with your vision.

Our **performance consulting** team can partner with you to capture that vision. We help you to connect microlearning to development plans and performance reviews. We provide guidance to align training methods with your content, as well as your business goals. By helping your workforce to develop skills and knowledge more effectively and efficiently, you will experience a transformation in your business. Taking the time to truly invest in your employees' training results in return for your investment.

CHAPTER 6:

INCREASE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE WITH A LEARNING ECOSYSTEM: EASY-ACCESS TRAINING DELIVERY METHODS

Have you ever seen what happens when a company doesn't have a technology or platform in place to create and uphold a learning culture? What about when employees can't access the resources they need on the job or when they spend time taking training that's irrelevant to them? It affects how employees view the company and drains time and resources. It's time to consider how your training delivery enables or hinders learning. This is the learning ecosystem – all the factors that facilitate your employees' ability to learn.

By applying the best practices in performance consulting, you can develop a comprehensive learning ecosystem that will deliver employee performance support, job aids, workflow tools, and resources at the right time, to the right employee, and in the right training modality. We see this system as a central hub connecting each part of the ecosystem together. Such a system can create the foundation and the scaffolding of your learning culture, enable a cohesive and relevant learning experience, and uphold your brand.

So, what training technology do you need to develop and support a learning ecosystem? The first key to a learning ecosystem is a central hub. This is an Employee Development platform that is connected to each piece of learning your employees will use. This is an integrated system, which requires you to bring together analytics, aggregated platforms, and data feeds to effectively deliver training and resources.

Note that the **learning portal**, career development platform, and the resource tools are interconnected to allow for a comprehensive, just-in-time learning experience that accurately facilitates the learning and support your employees need on the job. Back in Chapter 4, we looked at how diagnostics can create a tailored development planner from which micromodules can be pushed to individual learners. Once you have the learning portal in place, you can create diagnostics for your employees to personalize their training delivery. You can also create personalized learning paths based on each employee's role, experience, and competencies. This ensures you can provide different formal and contextual avenues for your employees' growth as the central hub platform connects learning to career development, quantifying both.

Another key component of any good learning ecosystem is a catalogue that allows learners to search and filter a library of training options.

Another key component of any good learning ecosystem is a catalogue that allows learners to search and filter a library of training options. This supports just-in-time, on-demand learning experiences. Let's consider how this works for an employee on the job. Adrian runs into an obstacle on his project for a client but doesn't know how to proceed. Instead of emailing a manager and waiting to hear back, Adrian goes to the company training catalogue to find a solution. After a quick search, Adrian finds a resource that outlines exactly what to do in that situation.

Social sharing is also key to creating a cohesive learning environment. When employees can share their learning with others through integrated tools, they are more engaged with the content and the system, contributing to a unified learning culture. A best

practices forum allows you to capitalize on that engagement, helping your learners to develop targeted behaviors to make your organization succeed. Such a forum could include searchable case studies that showcase and deconstruct best and worst practices, empowering learners to replicate those practices and share them with their peers. A best practices forum must be managed and curated to ensure that resources have a high quality, align with your brand, and are relevant to your organization.

Of course, another key to a hub is the ability to track and score your employees' progress toward their learning goals. Not only does AllenComm have incredible performance consultant resources to help you design exactly what you need, but we also have a team of technical experts. They work with you to create the technical aspects of the training and to record the data to increase your employees' performance through a learning ecosystem that provides easy-to-access training. The hub personalizes experiences through core competencies, diagnostics that tailor learning, and strategic timing that allows learners to access complementary training at the right time.

CHAPTER 7:

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF PERFORMANCE CONSULTING: A CASE STUDY

Let's take a more personal look at how performance consulting can help to architect a just-right learning culture. Back in 2019, Nestlé came to us with a problem to solve. Nestlé wanted to find a way to help their global marketers use their *Due To* tool more effectively to get the best insights about their business while using the least amount of data. This required buy-in from every employee using the tool, which was challenging since Nestlé's marketers ranged from MBA graduates to experienced employees. While new graduates were eager to use new methods, tenured marketers did not see the value of learning another report and had their own way of gathering data. Since they were experienced employees, they helped to train and mentor new employees using their own methods. This caused marketers to spend too much time on data gathering, focus on unnecessary or incomplete facts, and create disruption and inconsistency between teams and divisions. As a result, learning was disjointed and marketing remained siloed and even inconsistent.

AllenComm stepped up to help by using a performance consultant to build custom eLearning solutions and infrastructure to help create a cohesive, comprehensive learning culture. How did this work? Let's look at the process.

Performance Map

We first brought in our performance consultants to analyze the employee performance gaps. Our consultants created a performance map, which analyzed the motivations of Nestlé learners, and discovered what they needed to do and understand in order to change behavior. When we create performance maps, our goal is to provide a meaningful learning experience that produces real business results and has a lasting effect on learners. Performance mapping drives our decisions when selecting strategies and activities for training. The driving force behind the map was a learner-focused design that considered the required results and the desired impact that would create the best experience possible for Nestlé.

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Workshop

Once we knew the performance gaps and developed a plan to meet those gaps, we held a design workshop to discuss the current and future state that Nestlé envisioned, as well as a variety of methods to achieve the desired state through a variety of solutions. A landing page connects multiple modules that the goal of the course through an interactive, gamified strategy.

Next, AllenComm's performance consultants dove into the specific needs, categorizing and creating strategies and tactics to develop content. Think back to Chapter 2, where we saw how to reverse engineer a return on investment by working backward from the desired outcomes. The same principle applied for the design here. By working backward from the desired result of the course, we developed performance catalysts to support each step of the learner transformation. These enabled us to create an effective, award-winning course.

Results

AllenComm created a custom eLearning course that encouraged business owners on the marketing teams to improve their businesses with a more strategic approach and to apply a unified, consistent approach to their data-gathering methodology.

AllenComm built an eLearning experience designed to unify and present a cohesive, consistent approach that would win over Nestlé marketing learners. Within the course, a concise business story is represented for marketers to use to prepare to talk about the business in any given moment. It grabs attention from the very first click and shows learners how much easier their

job could be if they took a few minutes to learn a new method. This addressed areas where learners applied inconsistent methods and information ended up being siloed rather than shared. The just-in-time training points learners back to the Due To tool and reinforces the importance of using the standardized organizational approach over other disparate data-gathering methods. Our solution empowers Nestlé learners to trace the line of logic from raw data to business implication, model general manager behaviors, and to save time in analysis to invest more in action.

As experts in the industry, we often see the results of training that doesn't include any investment in performance consulting. Such training tends not to provide meaningful learning experience that produce real business results and lasting effects. But our work with Nestlé suggests that it's worth the time, effort, and resources to apply that expertise. Whether it's rapid and extensive needs analyses or performance mapping, our consultants use a variety of assessment methodologies to ensure you're your training initiatives meet your business objectives.

CHAPTER 8:

STRATEGIES FOR CUSTOM ELEARNING DEVELOPMENT TO OPTIMIZE YOUR EMPLOYEE TRAINING PLAN

As business processes transform and become more unique, businesses increasingly look to custom eLearning development as a solution for their employee **training strategy**. However, finding the right training plan that creates real business transformation can be difficult.

Let's look at another case study to see how AllenComm helped Panera Bread to develop **leadership training** that brought change, transformation, and a return on investment by tapping into best practices in performance consulting and project management. Panera Bread partnered with AllenComm to create a leadership development training initiative to support their growing company. Their current internal promotion process of transitioning assistant managers to general managers was outdated and didn't apply to the realities of their growing business. So, they chose to make a long-term investment in their culture and leadership training by valuing, developing, and retaining potential leaders.

The Panera Plan, Process, and Takeaway: A Case Study

After the initial needs analysis, AllenComm developed a custom training solution that took learners through twelve microlearning modules to target the skills critical to successfully transitioning into management roles. The comprehensive, blended learning program focused on building confidence through competency and was built with an iterative change process to include pre- and post-diagnostics for the measurement, sustainment, and evaluation of competencies. Guided by mentors, learners applied what they learned in on-the-job experiences. The learning strategy also included custom action planners to help learners reach their daily goals and development activities. Through pre-test and post-test diagnostics, learners assessed their Panera-specific competencies.

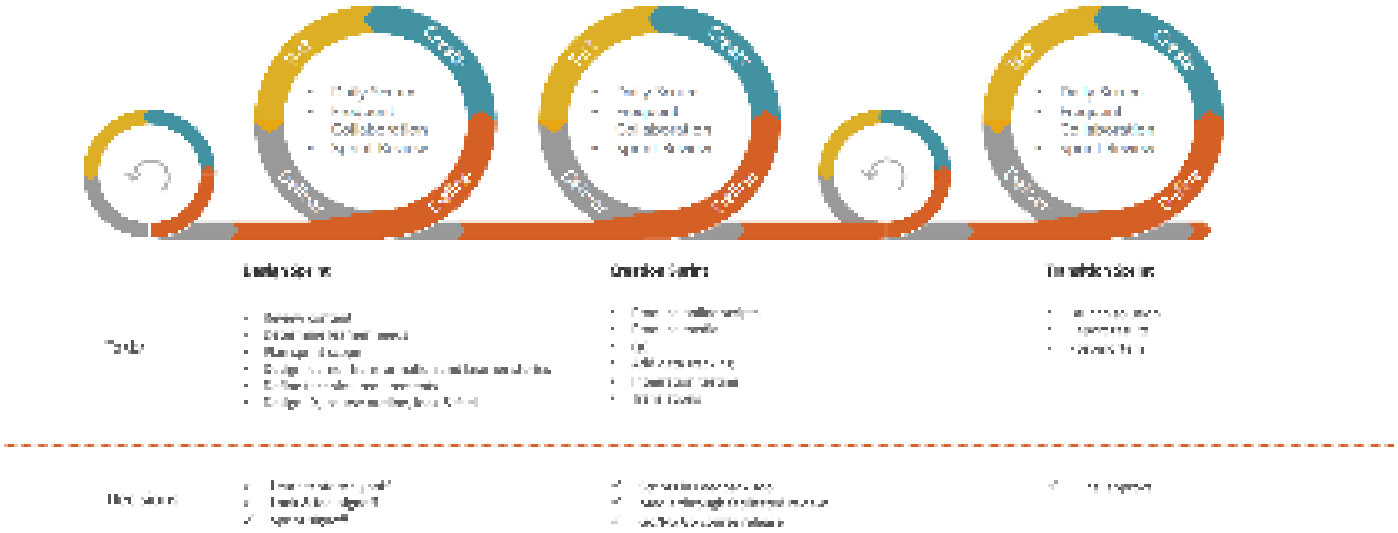
This design or the course and its activities has encouraged new leaders to practice and apply new

leadership skills, increased internal promotion rates, increased retention of skilled employees, and helped to build a diverse and supportive community. It also improved the quality of Panera's food and their service speed, cultivating a culture that celebrates sustainably-grown, nutritious food. By focusing our development on building and evaluating, we created a program that went above and beyond. We can clearly see that the design and the development process should be governed by sustainment and measurement.

Let's look more in-depth at the specific strategies we use throughout our process to ensure project success.

Project management

We employ an agile process to ensure that the project stays aligned with your goals and needs throughout the project development lifecycle and can adapt to unexpected changes and findings. Our performance consultants and project managers work in tandem to facilitate this process and iterate where needed to ensure that your business needs are met. In short, we move with you and adapt to the changing nature of your needs. To work efficiently, those on the project team need to operate according to standardized processes. But we avoid models that dictate rigid, detailed steps for design, development, and deployment in favor of hybrid variations of the ADDIE and Agile project management models, each consisting of phased development and review cycles that deliver tangible products.



Sustainment and Measurement

We apply our capabilities to help you to measure and sustain the results of the training. Everything we've discussed so far affects this step. By building a cohesive, unified learning experience, personalizing training paths for each learner, tailoring learning approaches for the size and scope of the project, and creating systems that bring the training to employees at the right time, we make sustainment a success. By putting the right strategies in place, you'll be able to create meaningful career development for your organization, a great return on the investment.

Change management

For large projects and enterprise-level solutions and initiatives, a change management plan isn't just important, it's a necessity. In order to get learners to buy in to the new processes, we integrate a plan for change management into the overall training plan so that the learning strategy affects the overall learning culture.

We also look for change agents within the organization, the people who act as catalysts to inspire change in the people around them. This requires us to consider the points of view of all members of your teams at all levels in order to create an effective plan.

In conclusion, you'll see the results of partnering with our performance consultants and the rest of our teams. Not only do we have over 35 years of experience in the business, but we also bring our extensive performance consulting and instructional design expertise, agency-level creative teams, and innovative learning technologies to design, develop, and deploy the right learning solution to support your business transformation.

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