



WILL THIS SORT OF HYPER-FOCUS ON TRAINING BECOME THE NORM?

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

What will corporate learning and development look like 10 years from now? It's easy to say, "It will be different," but it takes skilled foresight, critical thinking and a dash of imagination to extract valuable insights from today's trends and use them to envision tomorrow's reality. In this new column, I plan to use such tools to explore the changes that lie ahead.

As an experienced futurist, teacher and entrepreneur, I am adept at identifying trends that will impact industries and organizations in the short and long term. I'm also passionate about learning, and through my work teaching employees at all levels to be more innovative, I became especially interested in corporate learning and development.

As you know, the field is experiencing powerful shifts that are rapidly disrupting old models. With a global, multi-generational workforce and new tools and technologies arising all the time, it's never been more important to leverage opportunities to create more effective programs and to understand the forces driving these changes.

One particular change on the horizon is that learning and development increasingly has the potential to become a competitive advantage for organizations—in fact, some believe it will become the number-one differentiator between tomorrow's leaders and laggards. It's true that some companies already operate this way. Jack Welch, former CEO of GE, once said "an organization's ability to learn, to transfer that learning across its components, and to act on it quickly is its ultimate, sustainable competitive advantage." Well known for its culture of learning, GE invests over \$1 billion each year in employee training and education.

Will this sort of hyper-focus on training become the norm? Imagine if every job seeker evaluating a potential employer weighted training and development just as heavily as salary and benefits. A shift of that nature would, in turn, bring metrics to the forefront. Despite the difficulty organizations already face measuring their own training effectiveness, there will be an increased demand for the ability to compare learning programs across companies.

Another prominent force affecting learning and development is social learning. While many companies today are sure to make use of "trendy technologies," such as Facebook, the true value of social learning lies in the potential for collaboration—not simply in knowledge sharing. Organizations that get this right will certainly have an advantage in the marketplace.

It's thoughts like these that get me excited about imagining the future of corporate learning and development, and I hope to impart not only enthusiasm but valuable insight as we evaluate these trends and topics. I look forward to gaining wisdom and exploring new ideas together as we anticipate and plan for what corporate Learning and Development will look like in 2020.

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