

Creating a Culture of Learning for Hiring, Retention & Growth



A GUIDE BY

veib

Leadership Development for the Modern Workplace

INTRODUCTION

Fostering Employee Culture in the Evolving Workplace

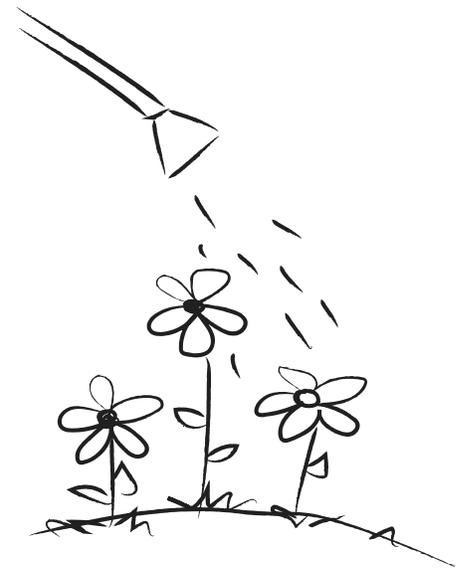
Businesses today value specific qualities in their employees: agility, adaptability, and speed.

These attributes are the result of an employee culture where individuals are engaged and empowered to make rapid business decisions, to be curious, and to reject static ways of thinking. But cultivating these qualities depends on the ability of an organization to foster a culture of constant learning. In an era of remote work, distributed workforces, and accelerated digital transformation, taking the time to thoughtfully encourage learning isn't always a top priority.

Employees and business leaders alike continue to grapple with new ways of working, blurring boundaries between work and personal life, as well as ever-changing and competing priorities. These conditions add layers of complexity to the inherent challenges of building a culture of learning that augments hiring, retention, and growth.

The pandemic has demonstrated how critical the above-mentioned employee characteristics are during a time defined by pervasive change. The majority of companies understand that they must be thinking about how to attract and retain top talent. But the skills shortage in key domains, such as data science, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence (AI), continues to plague organizations.

Organizations are turning to their existing talent pool and nurturing from within to help grow their business as the very context of work evolves. Companies are beginning to focus on deriving value from a learning environment that extends well beyond upskilling and onboarding into all facets of organizational culture – including driving innovation, improving morale, and minimizing attrition.



The Benefits of a Learning Culture

According to Gartner, a learning culture is one that fosters open mindsets, inspires the independent pursuit of knowledge, and appreciates collaborative learning that revolves around the business's main objectives and vision.

Employees are a company's most critical asset – they create solutions that impact the company's bottom line. For example, consider some of most innovative companies today, like Google, Netflix, and Pixar, who set standards in an employee-first culture that provides their respective workforces with the time, resources, and tools to proactively learn and explore new ideas.

Dedicated learning and development programs set the organization up to thrive amidst uncertainty and disruption. These L&D programs ensure employees are cultivating relevant skills to advance and plan career paths, adapt alongside emerging technologies, and work more efficiently.

A culture of learning offers numerous other benefits to both a company and its employees.



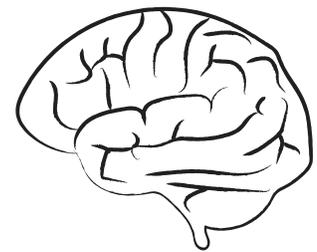
Increase employee engagement

Disengaged employees aren't exceptionally innovative or productive. **But when a workforce is engaged there are advantages across the board**, from individual performance improvement and increased productivity levels, to better knowledge retention and lower absenteeism. Employees who are more engaged also express more happiness and loyalty towards their jobs.

Research reveals that the [employee experience \(EX\) and the customer experience \(CX\) are linked](#). Attempting to drive growth solely through customer engagement and discluding employees from the equation does an organization a disservice. Employee engagement is crucial to enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Businesses with higher scores in both CX and EX witnessed almost double the revenue growth of other companies. One of the primary reasons for this is because informed employees are able to make faster, more confident, and agile decisions when responding to customer service needs.

A well-developed, formal employee training program is even cited by [92% of surveyed employees](#) as having a positive impact on their degree of engagement.

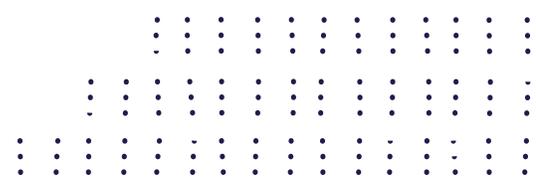


Reduce time and costs associated with hiring

Employee turnover can incur substantial costs – and not just of the financial variety. Generally, the [cost of finding a replacement for one employee](#) is between one-half to more than two times their yearly salary. It takes time and resources to locate a replacement, and in the meantime existing employee morale can take a hit.

Organizations are favoring upskilling and retraining their current workforce to fill gaps that arise as the company undergoes change and grows. A learning culture ensures that the workforce can continuously obtain important new skills necessary to keep the company's internal talent pipeline filled while minimizing any need for traditional, expensive talent acquisition.

Businesses that are top-ranked for workforce training [enjoy 53% less attrition](#). Simply put, a robust learning program is an investment in an employee's lasting success at a company and reduces turnover.



Build a “growth mindset”

In a learning culture, every experience is a learning opportunity.

By establishing a trusted, safe learning environment that values every individual, businesses allow their workforce to envision and pursue their career path’s trajectory. Organizations can also better understand the individual employee capabilities necessary to ensure their success, so employees can best contribute to overall business outcomes.

Learning and agility are core components of growth. L&D programs help employees seek out new challenges and opportunities for further advancement while simultaneously eliminating the fear surrounding learning new things.

Boost innovation and creativity

Innovation can only occur when people are incentivized to work outside-the-box, find creative ways of approaching challenges, and push boundaries.

A learning organization features employees across all levels that are constantly learning, improving, and growing to help the company effectively transform and reimagine itself in a rapidly evolving world.

It drives both individual and team success through an enhanced sense of community and information sharing. With a broad range of knowledge and experiences being aligned across multiple disciplines, different skills enable collaborative problem-solving and solution development.

Individuals and teams are more encouraged to work towards achieving common business goals, and aren’t afraid of experimenting to improve existing products or create new ones, if they aren’t blamed when a pursuit doesn’t work out. Instead, they’re encouraged to take a different route and try again.



Enhance motivation

In a learning culture, every experience is a learning opportunity. Motivation enhances employee satisfaction and productivity while enabling both individual and business objectives to be set and achieved. A better understanding of employee motivation also helps to ensure job roles provide the right degree and mixture of [control, challenge, collaboration, and diversity](#).

When employees learn new things, they're stimulated to maximize their potential because of increased autonomy, proficiency, and a feeling of worthwhile purpose – all of which fuels motivation. They're self-assured about their ability to persevere when confronting challenges, understand that there's always room for improvement, and have meaningful learning resources to make those improvements.

A continuous learning culture is a main source of workforce motivation, giving individuals clarity about how they contribute and placing them on the right track to move forward.



Encourage diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within the organization

Diversity and inclusion in the workforce can elevate the entire organization and is fundamentally connected to company growth.

A [learning-oriented culture](#) is an important distinction between diverse businesses and those that are not. This is because companies that focus on L&D are more agile, independent, and likely to embrace change and new perspectives from a variety of voices. Whereas businesses that are ranked as less inclusive and diverse tend to place more emphasis on traditions and continuity.

Businesses with a learning culture actively look for employees who can enhance the business via different experiences, mindsets, and a lens for problem-solving. Often new talent is also more easily attracted because prospective employees can see opportunities for upward mobility and development.



Develops empathy and more collaborative relationships

Employees today are facing burnout, weariness, and uncertainty, which undoubtedly [plays a role in the current worker shortage](#) and Great Resignation.

A culture of learning cultivates empathy across every level of the workforce and promotes an internal network of connections. In fact, [94% of employees](#) in a recent workplace survey indicated that they would remain at a business longer if it invested in their learning and development. With a proper program, individuals and teams can be equipped with the skills to put aside assumptions and better express expectations, needs, and goals.



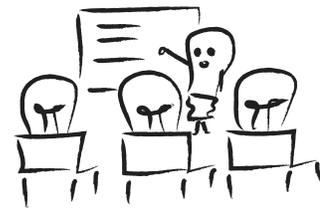
How to Create a Culture of Learning

Organizations are contending with a distributed workforce and hybrid or remote work models. Numerous people are unable to attend live L&D programs and businesses have to shift to digital formats.

This can make it difficult to implement effective learning programs that impact organizational culture. Another challenge is the reluctance many companies still demonstrate towards relinquishing traditional concepts of employee learning, where they approach training as a singular exercise that's intended to help address an immediate concern or need.

Leading companies know that if they want to transform, they must implement a continuous learning framework and use this as the vehicle to develop their employees and attract (and keep) new talent.

Most importantly, in order for L&D programs to be successful, learning approaches should be agile, repeatable, and embedded throughout the company's entire ecosystem. **To create a culture of learning, businesses must:**



Prioritize learning as a core value of the organization from Day 1

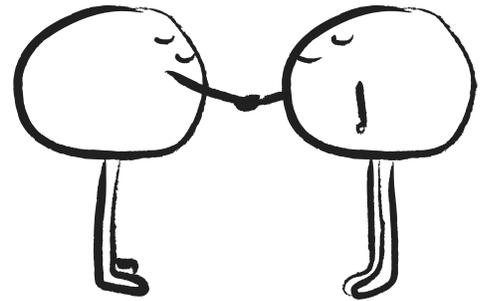
L&D should be an intrinsic component of every business and part of an organization's brand identity in order to gain the benefits of a learning culture, including enhanced efficiency and productivity.

- Spotlight the learning culture as a core company value in interviews with prospective employees during the hiring process.
- Ensure the learning experience doesn't exist in a vacuum. Make delivering constructive feedback and metrics an essential part of the business so employees can better understand and visualize their progress.
- Create interactive roadmaps with employees so they can set individual goals for their development.
- Generate enthusiasm and excitement about learning opportunities through engaging learning techniques, like remote lunch and learn sessions for example, and a wide variety of options to pique their interest.
- Focus on providing memorable learning experiences for employees that include game-based learning, team-based learning, workshops, simulations, and interactive demos and labs.
- Ensure individual employees understand the implications of L&D programs in terms of their career trajectory and long-term professional goals.

Lead by example

Leaders must be ready to lead by example and nurture a culture of learning that ultimately impacts the entire company. This culture needs to be a core part of every level of the workforce, including C-Suite and upper management, who should be openly participating in continuous learning programs to inspire others and further develop their own skills and capabilities.

- Gain stakeholder and leadership buy-in to act as champions for a learning culture by ensuring they understand the advantages and are helping work towards a shared vision.
- Constantly communicate the importance of a learning culture and invite the workforce to join in the conversation so they can be an active part of the process.
- Harness the expertise of seasoned employees so they can guide and mentor newer employees.
- Demonstrate that regardless of where an individual is at in their career, there's always a benefit to learning something new.
- Prioritize a communal focus on improvement and advancement amongst teams.
- Be humble, honest, transparent, and accountable for any mistakes along the way to encourage employees to feel secure approaching leaders with their own concerns or mistakes.
- Be welcome to feedback from all levels of employees.



Give people the resources to learn and make them easily accessible

A successful learning culture effectively incorporates technology. Making learning easily accessible so employees can learn anytime, on any device, from anywhere is vital.

- Invest in development programs that extend to both live and digital courses to accommodate hybrid or remote work models.
- Identify key capability gaps and provide certification courses for these specific positions.
- Offer human-centered leadership development programs that merge learning with real-life practice.
- Invest in a data-driven learning management system (LMS) or intranet with job-related skill training that offers learning analytics and an intuitive dashboard.
- Ensure learning content contains diverse media and aligns with the organization's values.

Set aside time for people to learn regularly

Businesses must invest in continuous learning opportunities to ensure the learning culture sticks. But this can be challenging given that employees often aren't able to find the time and space to train or learn new skills. A recent report discovered that across over 700 organizations, the average employee only had about [24 minutes per week for dedicated learning](#).

- Be consistent in reiterating support for employee's time to participate in learning programs.
- Offer easily consumable learning sessions, like fifteen minute self-paced online courses.
- Gain buy-in and support from management to ensure all employees are able to dedicate blocks of time throughout the week to focus on development and learning.
- Once-yearly webinars or training sessions simply won't suffice – build time into every employee's day and week where they're expected to learn.

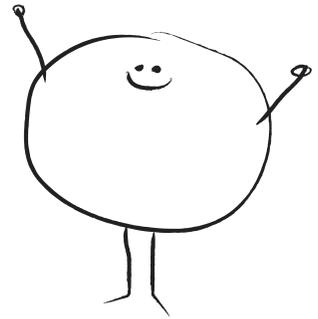
97%

of surveyed employees said they would utilize an opportunity to learn a new skill. But only 39% think their company effectively helps them understand information about their skills.

(Harvard Business Review, 2021)

Reward learning and eliminate fear around failure

Admitting that you don't know something is often uncomfortable. To strengthen a sense of community and growth in the learning culture, employees need a space that's free of judgment, where questions are encouraged and there's an expectation that every experience (even failures) are a natural part of the learning process and an opportunity for growth.



- Link team trust-building exercises to the learning experience to help foster fellowship. This will help employees feel more comfortable speaking up and acknowledging areas they'd like to improve upon or topics they're unfamiliar with.
- Provide unique incentives to learn. [Outcome-based financial incentives](#) are proven to motivate individuals to complete training or learning programs.
- Provide fun rewards when employees accomplish specific learning milestones, such as giftcards or time off.
- Gamification support, like leaderboards and badges, awarded when employees complete a course can be a great way to formally recognize achievements.

Support Sharing

An important part of the learning culture is developing peer connections and a spirit of community, as well as driving cross-functional harmony. Essentially, **businesses should aim to build a knowledge-sharing ecosystem** that's defined by the willing exchange of ideas, expertise, and insights between diverse individuals. Otherwise, there's a risk that a siloed, disconnected organizational culture will emerge.

- Empower employees at any level of the business to lead a learning session, whether in person or online, on a topic they excel at.
- Consider routine breakout sessions that enable various departments and teams to come together to connect, chat, and learn from one another.
- Create opportunities for employees to interact and reach out to one another for insights.

Incorporate Leadership Development into Your Learning Culture

Employees are under constant pressure as the world around them quickly changes and they need to overcome new challenges with innovative solutions.

Organizations have to prepare employees to lead in an increasingly complex world. **After all, effective leaders are built, not born.**



Leaders impact the entire organizational culture by enhancing job satisfaction, ensuring accountability, reinforcing core business values and ethics, enforcing recognition, and stimulating a willingness to learn. Leadership development builds human-centered capabilities that are crucial to a company's success and growth. Internal leadership development also reduces the need to hire, and increases retention by providing career advancement opportunities directly within the organization. Key qualities of an effective leadership development program that will lead to growth with more successful leaders include:

- A diverse catalog of learning options that encompass an assortment of human skills.
- Being customizable to meet leaders wherever they happen to be in their professional development.
- Availability to employees across all levels to foster

Businesses are
4.2x
more likely to outperform
companies that inhibit
management development when
they leverage inclusive leadership
development.
(Global Leadership Forecast, 2018)

The Verb Platform

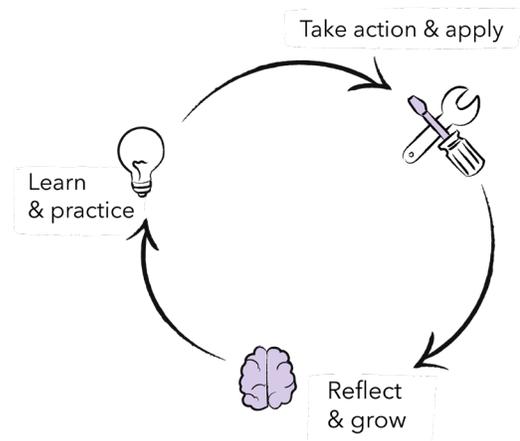
Verb is the leadership development platform that prepares your people to adapt to the challenges of today's rapidly changing workplace. Microlearning activities can be completed in under fifteen minutes and prompt learners to practice skills in a safe space, take action in the real world, and reflect on their growth – leading to real skill development and behavior change.



Topics focus on the human-centered mindsets and capabilities needed in the modern workplace, such as building inclusion, creating psychological safety, and goal setting. With over 100 hours of searchable content, learners can choose topics that interest them or follow a more formal learning plan that aligns with personal, team, or organizational goals.

Verb not only engages people to learn new tools and strategies, but also prompts them to apply what they're learning in the real world and then helps them to grow with reflection.

THE LEARNING LOOP: By closing the adult learning loop, Verb's leadership development platform makes it easy for organizations to maintain their culture of learning.

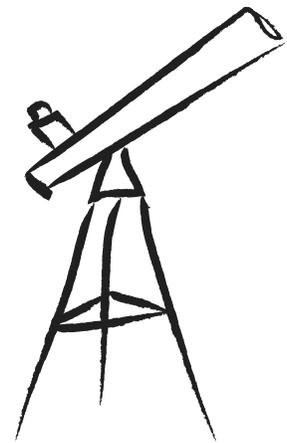




Conclusion

Leading companies today understand that learning is critical to corporate performance and the ability to traverse through perpetual uncertainty, change, and disruption. Implementing a continuous learning culture enables businesses to future-proof their organization through a constant cycle of new idea generation and viewpoints, skill development and expansion, and innovation. A culture of learning instills a strong appetite for learning, the means for employees to consistently grow in the organization, and powers better outcomes.

When learning is a key pillar of an organization's ethos and fully embedded into the employee experience, the business is ready to meet new challenges and grow.



Develop Your Learning Culture

To discuss how Verb can be a part of your company's learning culture, contact us at sales@goverb.com