

LEARNING IS THE NEW WORK:

Four Ways to Make Learning a Strategic Advantage

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LEARNING TO COMPETE

For humans, growth has always been a competitive necessity. Now, it's not only vital for our personal development, but for the businesses we lead. As professionals, we need to develop new skills, acquire knowledge, and gain expertise. Learning is more important to our careers than ever before. As a recent Harvard Business Review article points out; "People's employability – their ability to gain and maintain a desired job – no longer depends on what they already know, but on what they are likely to learn¹."

For organizations, prioritizing growth, development, and learning will create a culture that positions both the company and its employees for success. There are many ways to emphasize learning as a central strategy. Here are four methods that any company can utilize to make learning a strategic advantage.

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1 | TREAT LEARNING AS A PARTNERSHIP, NOT AN ASSIGNMENT

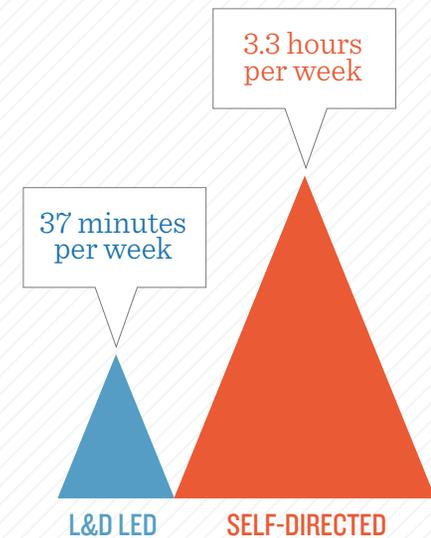
In the traditional sense, learning at work was a top-down approach, with leaders in HR and L&D determining the learning necessary for an employee's growth. The reality is that we're learning all the time, very often outside the purview of L&D. With so much content available online (and elsewhere), workers and their managers can decide what's best for them when they need it.

A recent Degreed study found that workers spend just 37 minutes of their average work week on their employer's training, but invest some 3.3 hours a week learning on their own. 61% would invest more time learning if they got professional credit for it¹.

The perspective of learning and development needs to change to match our true learning habits. Learning should be collaborative; aligning with the goals of both the employer and employees.

Consider Deloitte's [2016 Millennial Survey](#) of some 7,700 millennials from 29 countries. All respondents had college or university degrees and were employed full time, most in large, private sector organizations. The study found that over half (57%) of those surveyed expected to leave their current employer within four years (by 2020). Participants cited lack of development, training, and leadership opportunities as primary reasons for their discontent. When asked what they looked for when weighing a new job opportunity, these participants ranked professional development programs and opportunities to progress among the 5 most important².

Deloitte's research is a wakeup call for organizational complacency. It also presents a blazingly clear rationale for investing in better ways to do L&D. If investing in employee learning is not a clear and visible priority for your organization, your biggest risk isn't just losing your current employees; you may not attract new talent at all.



Workers spend up to **5x** more time learning on their own each week than from their employers.

¹How the Workforce Learns

²The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey; Winning Over the Next Generation of Leaders

2 | RECOGNIZE WHAT WORKS - AND USE IT.

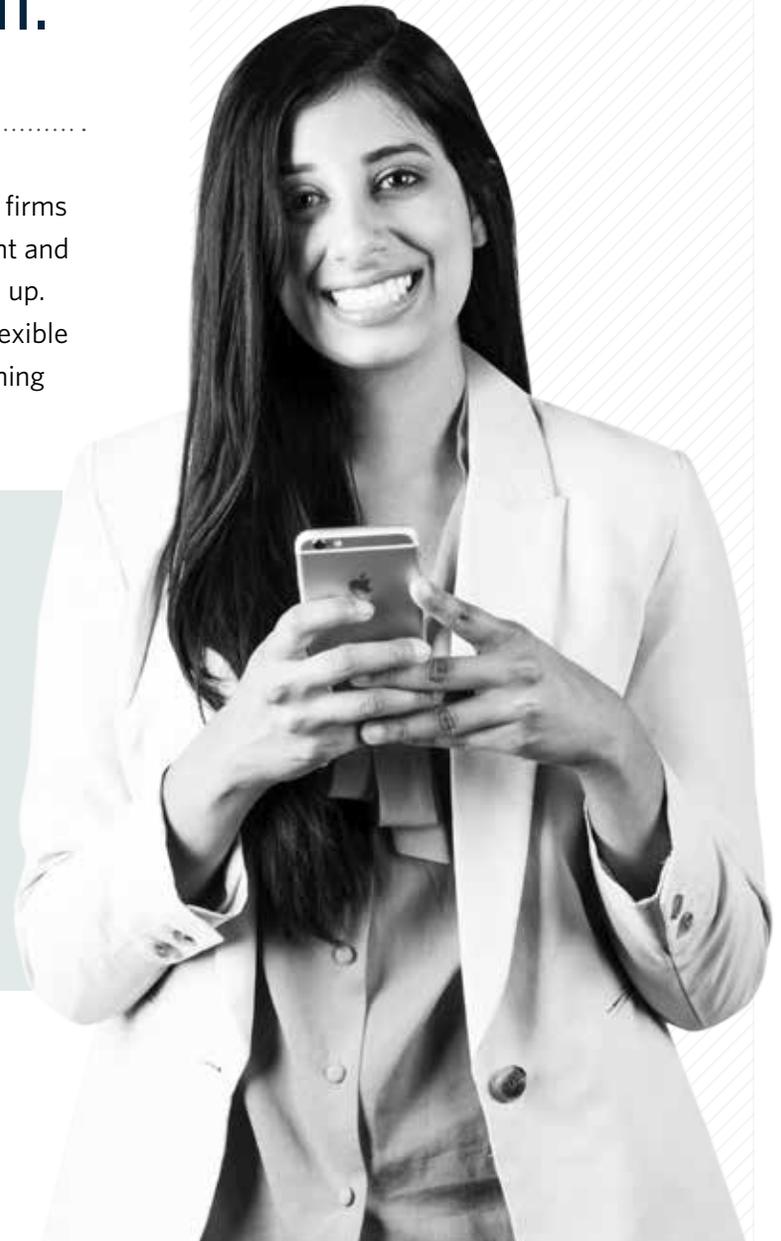
As you're creating a new learning strategy, form partnerships with today's rising crop of firms that focus on engineering learning for businesses. Because they leverage existing content and technology, you won't be responsible for creating a learning ecosystem from the ground up. Explore and utilize partnerships that will work best for your employees, optimizing for flexible learning and engagement. This will help you provide your people with personalized learning and development experiences that can evolve to meet ever-changing needs.

As you seek these partners, look for:

- ◆ Access to a vast range of digital content and ease of integration through a central portal, designed to honor and reinforce the employer brand.
- ◆ Learning content that is rewarding, well-designed, and easy to access.
- ◆ Both digital and in-person learning experiences, opportunities for group collaboration and individual coaching, and various formats of content ranging from videos to articles to Moocs (and everything in between).



Pro tip: ease of use and utility should be consistent. Learning content should be rewarding, well-designed, and easy to access.



3 | GET THE WHOLE PICTURE TO MEASURE SUCCESS

The third piece of this puzzle is analytics. In order to be a strategic advantage, L&D needs to provide actionable insights into the learning happening at your organization.

Don't just use data to report to executives and others in HR and L&D. Give your managers and employees access to personalized data about their learning in order to:

- ❖ **EMPOWER** employees (and their managers) to track their own progress and help them accomplish goals, build skills, and drive development at their own pace.
- ❖ **FACILITATE** real-time adjustments to cover skills and learning gaps within the organization as they're identified. New content can be curated and integrated seamlessly, so there's no delay in employee's learning.
- ❖ **ENABLE** employers and managers to build recognition and credit into the learning program.
- ❖ **PROVIDE** immediate opportunities for engagement, feedback, and social recommendations.



4 | MONITOR YOUR LEARNING CULTURE - AND IMPROVE IT - CONTINUOUSLY.

We've seen workplace culture as a whole take a macro-shift; changed by demographics, globalization, and technology. These cultural shifts especially affect how we learn at (and for) work. We work in a knowledge economy; speed, access, self-determination and transparency aren't just expected. They're rewarded.

Purch, a worldwide digital content company, evaluated their learning culture by creating a Learning Needs Assessment³. This simple assessment helped their L&D teams identify what their learning culture looked like, how their employees learned, and what gaps needed to be filled. If you're unsure about what learning culture you have at your organization, you can download your own learning needs assessment [here](#).

Growth is vital for individual and organizational success. Organizations can turn learning into a strategic advantage by empowering leaders and learners, leveraging technology strategically, analyzing and acting on data, and evaluating and adjusting the learning culture. If we focus on making learning a strategic advantage, we can work together to solve the problems of the future with the skills, knowledge, and expertise we gain.



³Purch Learning Needs Assessment



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