CASE STUDY

Visa Enables a Culture of Learning in the Face of Industry Disruption

Jeff Mike, EdD, Vice President, Human Resources Research Leader
Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Emily Sanders, Senior Research Analyst
Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Overview

Digital transactions are transforming both the consumer landscape and the industry providing these services. New market growth has driven rapid change, and many nonbank financial institutions and agile startups have entered the payments sector. As the payments industry has grown, the pressure to quickly innovate, evolve, and deliver even more sophisticated services to consumers has risen exponentially.

Similar to how Visa has invested in evolving its payments network, products, and services, the company is equipping employees with the right knowledge and capabilities to maintain a leadership position in digital commerce. With talent at the center of its business strategy, Visa has established a learning team, brand, curriculum, and set of campuses that together deliver a differentiated learning experience. This experience enables a culture of learning in which employees can quickly build the skills and knowledge needed for a rapidly changing business environment while managing their own career development and growth.

In This Case Study

- How Visa established a foundation for learning by building a team, as well as a learning brand, campuses, and a curriculum
- Why Visa University has been intentional about program design, leveraging the leaders-as-teachers concept, and using learning analytics to drive accountability and performance
- How human-centered design principles help ensure employees are top-of-mind during the content development process and allow for the launch of new and effective content
- How building a customized curriculum and differentiated campus experiences has allowed Visa the opportunity to increase the competitive value of its workforce in a rapidly changing industry
Company Overview

Visa Inc. is a global leader in digital payments. The company's mission is to connect the world through the most innovative, reliable, and secure payment network, enabling individuals, businesses, and economies to thrive. Visa's advanced global processing network, VisaNet, provides secure and reliable payments around the world, and is capable of handling more than 65,000 transaction messages a second. The company's relentless focus on innovation is a catalyst for the rapid growth of connected commerce on any device and a driving force behind the dream of a cashless future for everyone, everywhere. As the world moves from analog to digital, Visa is applying its brand, products, people, network, and scale to reshape the future of commerce. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Visa at a Glance

- **IPO:** 2008
- **Annual Revenue (FY 2017):** $18.4 billion
- **Employees:** More than 16,000 employees globally
- **Headquarters:** San Francisco, California


---

Business Environment and Challenges

Visa has recognized its exceptional position within the payments ecosystem and has continued to demonstrate agility, anticipating trends with its constant focus on being an innovative company. The pace of innovation and adoption of new technologies that allow consumers to pay by phone, watch, fitness tracker, or even via car is unprecedented. Visa wanted to empower its clients and partners to participate in this exciting digital era, and this has been reflected in significant investments the company has made to its processing platforms, products, services, and network.

*Today, we have more than three billion pieces of plastic that represent our business. Pretty soon it will be tens of billions of connected payment devices.*

—President, Visa

At the same time, Visa wanted to empower its workforce to confidently think, act, and perform in a digital environment that is transforming daily. Company leadership recognized that a robust learning culture would be a strategic business enabler and the best way to equip Visa employees with the right knowledge and capabilities to lead the payments industry in digital commerce.

Creating a learning culture would support two of Visa’s business imperatives:

- **Business growth.** Be a payments industry leader deploying new commerce experiences that seamlessly incorporate secure digital payments. Increase the speed and depth of payment innovations.
- **Best talent.** Prepare employees for the challenges and opportunities ahead and build a culture of empowered leadership. Be an industry employer of choice, providing best-in-class training and development opportunities.

Learning Environment

Learning as a strategic function was jointly championed by both the EVP of Human Resources and the EVP of Technology. Previously, employee education had happened in pockets—for example, customer support had a well-established learning organization—but there was no centralized function across the company that focused on strategic needs.

Visa understood that becoming an industry employer of choice would require providing best-in-class training and development opportunities and creating innovative programs that enable a learning culture to flourish. The company’s goal was to implement employee development in a cohesive, strategic manner and create a differentiated learning experience. A centralized team, Visa University, was created to cover a common core curriculum. At the same time, the first function-specific college was established—the Tech College. The focus of this case study is primarily on the Visa University portion of learning at Visa.
Developing the Teams

To begin, the senior vice president (SVP) of talent hired a vice president (VP) of learning to build a centralized learning team and establish the Visa University brand. The VP hired senior learning leaders with deep expertise in curriculum design, learning technology, and student experience, and they built the following teams of specialists:

- **Design.** This area included instructional designers, copy editors, and graphic designers responsible for the design and development of custom curriculum to onboard new hires, educate employees about the payments industry, and develop leadership capability.
- **Technology.** Product managers for the digital campus, learning management system (LMS), learning record store (LRS), and learning dashboards support content creation and curation, and ensure all formal and informal learning data is captured and visualized.
- **Regional student experience.** Instructors, training coordinators, and campus coordinators were charged with delivering an exceptional experience to students who visit the physical campuses and those who attend programs delivered in office locations.

Building the Foundation

The following sections take a look at three key elements Visa targeted in developing a culture of learning for Visa University:

- Visa University brand
- Campuses
- Curriculum

**Visa University Brand**

In the early stages of developing a learning organization, Visa recognized the opportunity to develop a learning brand to clearly link and label the company’s investment in its employees’ development and to unify the curriculum and campuses they were setting out to create.

As the team considered the experiences, expectations, stories, and relationships they wanted to create for Visa employees, they were guided by their colleagues responsible for the Visa brand, who counseled that the brand should include three things (see Figure 2):

- **Customer focus.** Understand employees’ needs, even those they might not know they have. Be ahead of the curve.
  
  The team focused on building high-profile programs and products, specifically offerings to onboard new employees, as well as building payments expertise and leadership capability in tenured employees.

- **Consistent expression.** Ensure the sum of experiences through all physical and digital channels look and feel consistent.
  
  The team created a Visa University brand mark and style guide to visually link both the digital and physical campuses to its curriculum and collateral.
• **Core values.** Align with our company’s values and vision (the best way to pay and be paid for everyone, everywhere).

The team adopted a tagline of #LearnEverywhere to promote the digital campus and its ability to bring learning to all of Visa’s employees, wherever they work.

**Figure 2: Visa University Brand Strategy**

**Visa University Brand Strategy**

The Visa University visual brand is clean, sophisticated, and accessible. Consistent use of our Wordmark, Colors, Iconography, and Pattern System reinforces our brand and inspires trust in our learners.

**Campuses**

In designing how learning should be provided to its global employees, Visa looked at two different types of campuses—digital and physical. The following sections look at how Visa developed these different learning environments.
Digital Campus

Visa University’s digital campus serves as a single point of entry to learning for all Visa employees across all the colleges. With 106 offices worldwide, the company’s global footprint demands the scale and reach that a digital learning platform enables. The digital campus provides three primary benefits (see Figure 3):

- **Brings it all together.** The digital campus combines more than 80,000 learning resources from inside and outside of Visa, under one virtual roof. The content ranges from in-person courses to online training, videos, and documents from Visa, along with external sources.

- **Points you in the right direction.** The campus offers content, function-specific colleges, personalized recommendations, and “learning paths.” Developed by experts across Visa, a learning path is like having a knowledgeable friend suggest ways to learn about something that interests you.

- **Helps you grow.** Like a physical fitness tracker, the dashboard on the profile page shows employees how active they have been and how often they are learning.

**Figure 3: Visa University’s Digital Campus**

KEY POINT: Visa University’s digital campus serves as a single point of entry to learning for all Visa employees across the globe.
Physical Campuses

In addition to the digital campus, the Visa University team built two physical campuses, one in North America (Foster City, California) and one in Asia (Singapore). A third campus is planned for Europe (London). (See Figure 4.) The physical campuses were built to support the delivery of a differentiated student experience, a diverse and changing curriculum, and effective employee networking. In developing these physical spaces, the Visa University team sought to apply three key design principles.

- **Dynamic entry.** The Visa University team wanted its physical campuses to set the stage for an exceptional student experience. The team wanted the experience to look and feel different than a typical meeting room. For example, the North America campus affords amazing views of the San Francisco Bay Area. Students enter through an energizing networking area, where they can quickly orient themselves and begin to connect with peers.

- **Flexible classrooms.** The campuses were developed to support the delivery of the diverse and changing curriculum. Each classroom has moveable walls, large storage areas, and mobile furniture to accommodate gatherings of different sizes. They can be set up as traditional classrooms, used theatre-style for a large audience, or fitted with soft seating to encourage conversation. Training sessions often morph from traditional classroom to interactive workroom to social space as the day progresses.

- **Informal and formal collaboration areas.** The team wanted spaces to encourage conversation and connection among colleagues. The kitchen, eating area, booths, and central spaces with a “living room feel” offer inviting places to congregate and network. Students also use breakout rooms for group work and productive conversations.

**KEY POINT:** The Visa University team built the company’s physical campuses to support the delivery of a differentiated student experience, a diverse and changing curriculum, and effective employee networking.
In addition, the campuses all include distance learning technology to connect students in the campuses with other office locations in the regions. Classrooms also have video recording and live broadcast capability to expand access to instructor-led training to all employees globally, not just those in regional headquarter locations. This capability allows the digital and physical campuses to work in tandem to support the company’s learning programs. Classes broadcast live from the physical campuses are also available on replay in the digital campus. And most in-person programs have related assets on the digital campus to support learning transfer or “gathering” forums where students can continue to connect with one another and share how they’re applying what they learned in class.

**Curriculum**

The Visa University team is responsible for designing and delivering curriculum that touches all the company’s employees. The Payments College offers programs designed to build knowledge and expertise about the payments industry and Visa’s place in it. The Leadership College builds skills and capability in support of Visa’s leadership principles. The functional colleges focus on role-specific content and leverage the Visa University infrastructure and technology.
Visa University uses an agile, human-centered approach to design its learning experiences. This engages learners at the onset of the development process. Designers iterate through the following five phases:

- **Discovery.** Designers intentionally go wide with their thinking, collecting the perspective of end-users and pairing it with data and guidance from the business. End-user personae are created to give a face and a name to the audience segments for whom the learning experience is being created. These personae become a touchstone to ensure the business data is contextualized in the lives of Visa’s employees.

- **Define.** Following the needs analysis, designers focus their thinking to define the true problem (which can often be different from the problem first articulated). A problem statement that embodies the point of view of the end-user guides development.

- **Ideate.** In this phase, end users, stakeholders, and designers join forces to dream up any and all potential solutions to the problem statement.

- **Prototype and test.** The most promising ideas make their way into prototypes that are rapidly built and tested with end-users. Low-fidelity minimum viable products (MVPs) go through an iterative process of **build** (the MVP), **measure** (the end-user response), and **learn** (how to improve the experience). This process repeats until the experience meets the intended learner response, including targets for a Net Promoter Score (NPS) along with other quantitative and qualitative measures specific to the intervention.

- **Evolve.** Once the learning experience is in production, the learning team monitors learner response, program outcomes, and the ever-changing payments landscape to inform its evolution. Design is never truly finished; there are continual iterations to ensure the product meets the needs of the end user and the business.

### Enabling a Learning Culture

Once the foundation was built and the Visa learning team had designed the core curriculum and built the campuses to deliver it, learning team members turned their attention to building a learning culture. Innovative approaches within and beyond the classroom have become a signature component of the overall learning and development strategy, and employees at every level are actively encouraged to participate.

### Learning from Leaders

One of the primary ways to build a learning culture is to create a teaching culture. With just four staff instructors globally, classes are often taught and facilitated by company executives and senior leaders who bring real-world context and ideas for practical application aligned with Visa’s goals.

---

3. “Net Promoter Score” is based on the fundamental perspective that every company’s customers can be divided into three categories – promoters, passives and detractors. By asking one simple question, “How likely is it that you would recommend [Company X] to a friend or colleague?”, you can track these groups and get a clear measure of your company’s performance through its customers’ eyes. Customers respond on a zero to 10 point rating scale and are categorized as follows. “Promoters” (score nine to 10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep buying and refer others, fueling growth. “Passives” (score seven to eight) are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who are vulnerable to competitive offerings. “Detractors” (score zero to six) are unhappy customers who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word of mouth. To calculate your company’s Net Promoter Score (NPS), take the percentage of customers that are promoters and subtract the percentage that are detractors. Visa surveys internal users of these products to determine its NPS.
Visa University Faculty

Approximately 30 senior leaders, located in Visa’s key offices around the world, have been certified as “Visa University Faculty.” This is a group certified to teach leadership development programs, including those on inclusive leadership, feedback essentials, and goal-setting. Becoming a faculty member involves a rigorous three-step process:

• **Faculty nomination.** Senior leaders are nominated based on their geographic location and their strong communication and people leadership skills. They must also have a passion for learning and development.

• **Train-the-trainer program.** Once identified, leaders attend an intensive three-day training class that includes observation by a staff trainer teaching the class, time to learn the content, facilitation skill instruction, and “teach backs,” where the faculty members are observed, rated, and coached so they are prepared to deliver to a real audience back in their regions.

• **Certification.** Once faculty members deliver a minimum of two classes and satisfy evaluation standards, they are certified and receive a Visa University Digital Campus badge identifying them as Visa University faculty.

Once certified, Visa University faculty members complete a two-year rotation in the program and learn new curriculum / deliver new programs biannually.

Visa University Presents

An additional way in which executives share their knowledge is through “Visa University Presents.” This is a monthly, one-hour broadcast and discussion hosted at a Visa University campus and delivered via live-stream to all Visa employees globally. Popular sessions have included the following:

• The CEO taught on characteristics of a great leader.

• The chief marketing and communications officer spoke on powerful brands, including the history of the Visa brand and brand stewardship.

• The chief technology officer elaborated on the technology powering Visa’s network and how Visa is evolving its technology strategy to succeed in the digital age.

• The chief financial officer taught how Visa makes money and how investors view Visa in “How Value is Created at Visa.”

• The company’s chief economist spoke on world markets and economies.

These sessions are some of Visa University’s most popular offerings and generate crowds of 200-plus employees in-person, 1,000-plus via live-stream, and hundreds more via replays on the digital campus.
Learning from Colleagues

Visa University’s signature industry-focused curriculum, Payments Everywhere, is a three-part learning experience designed for all employees (see Figure 5). Over two months, participants become payments experts through a series of group experiences, individual learning paths, and a cohort project.

- **Kickoff event.** At a two-day, in-person kickoff event, employees learn about the payments industry through a competitive simulation. They also play VisaNet, a virtual reality team challenge. Class sizes are limited to 42 students—six cohorts of seven employees each.

- **Learning paths and assessments.** Participants then move on to completing seven learning paths through Visa University’s digital campus that focus on technology, the economy, risk, information security, public policy, and more. Each path ends with an assessment that they must pass.

- **Cohort project.** Employees return to their cohorts to solve a real-world business problem, chosen from among three opportunities Visa is currently attempting to address. Cohorts work together in solving the business problem they selected and to produce a short

---

**Figure 5: Payments Everywhere Program**

Payments Everywhere Learning Journey

1. Kickoff Event
2. Learning Paths and Assessments
3. Cohort Project

Visa Enables a Culture of Learning in the Face of Industry Disruption

Visa Enables a Culture of Learning in the Face of Industry Disruption

Copyright © 2018 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved. Not for distribution. Licensed material.

video outlining their solution. Employees from around the world vote for their favorite solutions via the digital campus. Quarterly, the single best idea from each region is presented to Visa’s president for a decision about implementation and potential funding.

After completing all three components, employees become certified as “Payments Everywhere professionals” and are recognized with $25 that they can contribute to the charitable organization of their choice. The Payments Everywhere learning experience not only develops business acumen but also emphasizes the development of innovative ideas and collaborative teamwork to solve real-world business challenges. It also recognizes those who complete the journey in ways that align with Visa’s values of contributing to the communities in which employees live and work.

Learning Analytics

In early 2018, Visa’s CEO set a learning goal for all employees to take two classes or complete two digital assets on the digital campus. To drive completion of this goal, the Visa University team developed simple dashboards to visualize aggregated data representing all formal and informal learning. What emerged was a leaderboard-style visualization broken down by each of the CEO’s direct reports that showed who within their organization was meeting the goal and who was not (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Dashboard to Monitor Learning Goals**

**Goal: 100% of employees complete/create two or more learning classes/digital assets**

This dashboard generated a dialogue among executives on how to provide the time and support required for their teams to learn. For example, many organizations launched development days during which their entire team was encouraged to spend time on personal development, individually or through group activities or classes.
These dashboards were developed by layering a data visualization tool on top of a “data lake,” another name for an LRS. The technical architecture that underpins the ability to aggregate all of this data in the LRS is based on the xAPI standard, which allows the learning team to have a common taxonomy when aggregating data across three main categories:

- Formal learning data from the LMS
- Informal learning data from external content partners
- Informal learning data that is openly curated from the Internet

The LRS also allows the team to capture innovative learning experience data when partnering with new providers. For example, the team is currently capturing learning experience data from a custom virtual reality experience, which is not hosted on any formal learning platform.

**Business Impact**

Results from a recent employee engagement survey indicate that 82 percent of Visa employees feel that learning and development resources are helping them grow their careers. A year-over-year increase of 14 points in this metric indicates that Visa University is not only reaching its audience, but delivering value to the organization.

All of the Visa University programs have received extremely positive learner reaction scores, with 4.5 Likert and 74 NPS averages (level 1). The Payments Everywhere program is also generating tangible level 2, 3, and 4 results. Participants in the Payments Everywhere program are required to complete assessments demonstrating their payments knowledge (level 2) and apply this knowledge in the creation of their cohort project (level 3). Several of these projects are currently being implemented in regions in order to drive business results (level 4).

**Lessons Learned**

- **Branding is powerful.** Creating a learning brand gave Visa an opportunity to link and label the investments the company was making in employees’ development. It also allowed the Visa University team to hone in on what the employees really needed, how to deliver a consistent expression of the brand, and to ensure alignment with the organization’s corporate vision and values.

- **Focus on the end user.** Visa University used agile, human-centered design principles to ensure its employees are top-of-mind during the development process. Subject matter expert and employee interviewing, prototyping, and constant iteration have allowed the

---

4 The “Experience API” (xAPI) e-learning specification, also known as the “Tin Can API,” is the product of an Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) Initiative (from the U.S. Department of Defense, www.adlnet.gov) to develop a runtime application programming interface (API) that captures data on a person’s learning activities other than using courseware (e.g., social and informal learning, and other activities). The development goals of the xAPI are to meet the expanding needs of online distributed learning and to be the next generation of SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model).

5 Donald Kirkpatrick’s four-level Measurement Model has been widely published in many articles and its terminology is well known to most training professionals. The original model was published in the Training and Development Handbook, R. L. Craig / McGraw-Hill, 1976.
learning design team to rapidly launch new and effective content. Human-centered thinking is applied to every learning experience, from short training videos to entire curriculums.

- **Deliver using multiple modalities.** Visa University has positioned both the digital and physical campuses as necessary components of its global learning delivery strategy. The digital campus is a hub of learning that brings together a range of content and allows for tracking individual progress toward learning goals. The physical campuses catalyze collaboration and create a differentiated learning experience across the organization.

- **Leaders are the best teachers.** Executives and senior leaders teach numerous classes, create content, and engage with employees from across the company at learning events. The number of full-time instructors is limited to ensure that internal payments industry experts drive the learning across the organization.

**Next Steps**

As the rate of change in the payments industry accelerates, knowledge and expertise need to keep pace. In recognition of how aligned Visa's learning strategy and curriculum is with the company's business strategy and priorities, the CEO of Visa moved Visa University and the Tech College from HR to the company's strategy group. This group is focused on the complexities and nuances of the payments industry and is continually looking to the future. For this reason, employees' learning needs are well served by this integration. As the company continues to invest in developing the business and industry acumen of its employees, it also intends to leverage that expertise as a strategic asset for use in engaging merchant and financial institution clients to create stronger relationships. The company's first-ever CLO was recently hired to integrate all learning at Visa and will continue to reside in the strategy function.

**Conclusion**

Visa provides a wide range of growth and development opportunities to its employees through Visa University and Visa functional colleges, investing in their long-term career journeys at the company and helping them keep pace with the rapid transformation of payments technologies. Visa University has purposefully positioned its brand, campuses, and curriculum to support the company's learning culture by being intentional about program design, leveraging the leaders-as-teachers concept, and using learning analytics to drive accountability and performance.
The Bersin™ Membership Program

Our research-driven insights are provided exclusively to organizational members of Bersin. Member organizations have access to the Bersin suite of offerings, including our proprietary tools and services. In today’s business-driven HR landscape, we offer research, analytics, and industry insights to help design and execute innovative talent, leadership, and change programs, including:

• **Content and Insights**—Market-leading, proprietary research including research reports, high-impact industry studies, videos, webcast replays, process models and frameworks, and case studies.

• **Bersin Blueprints**—Designed to provide actionable approaches to help Human Capital leaders address their most pressing talent challenges, Blueprints offer convenient access to research, performance support materials, tools, and member advisory services to tackle key challenges.

• **Interactive Factbooks**—Covering a wide spectrum of Human Capital metrics, this platform allows members to filter by industry and company size and create custom benchmarks, analyze trends, and identify drivers of variance.

• **Maturity Diagnostics**—Research-based maturity assessments, integrated with business feedback, deliver actionable custom analysis, relevant research resources, and guidance from member advisors. These assessments help members develop a plan to progress in maturity.

• **Performance Support**—Practical materials in the form of illustrations, handouts, worksheets, templates, assessments, and recipes. Members can use these materials to help promote thinking, facilitate discussion, enable self-assessment, outline steps, direct processes, and aid decision-making.

• **Member Advisors**—Through virtual and in-person activities, our specialized member advisors help members understand our research, uncover deeper insights, prioritize human capital issues, and map solutions to some of their most pressing challenges.

• **Networking**—Member-only online Communities, working groups, and roundtables let you connect with peers and industry leaders to discuss and learn about the latest industry trends, emerging issues, and leading practices.

• **IMPACT Conference**—Our executive conference brings research-driven insights to Human Capital leaders and their teams, offering them the opportunity to exchange ideas with other senior-level practitioners, industry thought leaders, and Bersin team members.

For more information about our membership program, please visit us at [www.bersin.com/membership](http://www.bersin.com/membership).
About the Authors

Jeff Mike, EdD
Vice President, Human Resources Research Leader | Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Jeff integrates rigorous research approaches with more than 15 years of experience leading HR functions to generate actionable knowledge. Prior to joining Bersin, Jeff was head of human capital for a public policy consulting firm based in Maryland, and a faculty member in human resources development in Morocco. Jeff holds an MS in OD and strategic HR from Johns Hopkins University, and a doctor of education in human and organizational learning from The George Washington University.

Emily Sanders
Senior Research Analyst | Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Emily is currently completing a PhD in industrial / organizational (I/O) psychology at Illinois Institute of Technology and holds an MA in I/O psychology from Middle Tennessee State University. While at Bersin, she has contributed to research covering career management, talent management, and performance management. Prior to joining Bersin, Emily held consulting and advisory roles with Daniels Consulting Group and Strategic Talent Solutions.

About Us

Bersin is the indispensable digital destination for the HR Professional to build capability, community and credibility, stay informed, and lead on workforce issues. Our membership delivers research-based people strategies designed to help leaders drive exceptional business performance. A piece of Bersin research is downloaded on average approximately every minute during the business day. More than 5,000 organizations worldwide use our research and consulting to guide their HR, talent and learning strategies.

As used in this document, “Deloitte” means Deloitte Consulting LLP, a subsidiary of Deloitte LLP. Please see www.deloitte.com/us/about for a detailed description of our legal structure. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting.

This publication contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this publication, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This publication is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this publication.

Copyright © 2018 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.

Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited.