

Learning Strategy & Operations

The thinking behind the talent



Although talent managers are always on the hunt for employees with hard-to-find skills, retaining and developing existing talent — especially future leaders — will be the primary talent priorities both now and over the next three years, according to executives participating in Deloitte's November 2011 *Talent Edge 2020* survey. Yet, just a few months earlier, nearly two-thirds of employees we surveyed indicated they are actively seeking or open to seeking new employment. Nearly half of them also believe their organizations are doing a "fair/poor" job of leadership development and managing and delivering effective training programs.

These findings suggest that organizations need to step up their learning and development programs to maintain and grow the talent they need to meet broader business strategies. Successfully entering emerging markets, adopting new technologies, leveraging merger and acquisition (M&A) opportunities, adapting to ever-changing regulatory requirements — all depend on having the right people with the right skills in the right jobs in the right locations. And that requires two specific factors: (1) having an enterprise learning strategy properly aligned with the business strategy, and (2) operational support for that strategy via an efficient learning organization.

What holds back many organizations is that the learning and development function is not treated or run the same

way as other parts of the business — in other words, it's not run as a business. Rarely is there a centralized function that "owns" learning and is accountable for crafting and overseeing a unified, enterprise-wide approach to strategy and operations. Instead, as organizations evolve and grow, particularly through M&A activity, learning groups come to reside in various business units and operate largely autonomously, with multiple learning management systems and numerous vendors in use.

How we can help

Over the past few years, we have observed a significant shift in HR leadership, with a new breed of executives coming into HR from Finance and Operations. These new leaders bring data-driven skill sets along with them — and they are changing how HR supports the business. They're challenging their HR organizations to be more fact-based, cost conscious, and focused on higher returns on HR investments. Our Learning Strategy & Operations professionals are adept at helping them meet this challenge.

We work with organizations all along the continuum of learning strategy and operations development and refinement, whether they are looking to completely transform their learning practices or evolve them to more effectively support their business.

Learning transformation — We can assist you in your efforts to integrate the learning and talent organization into your enterprise-level business strategy by:

- Assessing the current learning strategy, operating model, and governance structure to identify strengths and areas of need
- Evaluating the current organizational curriculum against the business strategy
- Building a business case for transformation
- Developing a transformation roadmap to guide the journey
- Designing and developing the new learning strategy, model, and governance structure based on leading practices
- Aligning learning with overall talent strategies including competencies, performance management, deployment, and recruiting

ROI enhancement — We can assist you in your efforts to improve your ability to measure return on investment for the time and resources spent on learning and talent development effort, including:

- Developing a learning measurement and evaluation strategy
- Mapping of learning and development to shareholder value
- Analyzing the feasibility of selective or fulll outsourcing of learning administration and operations
- Pursuing tax credits and incentives related to talent development and learning

Operations optimization — We can assist you in your efforts to transition decentralized learning operations to a shared operating model, common processes, technologies, and vendor pool to help you reduce operating costs and provide greater impact on the business without increasing expenses. We can assist your organization with learning infrastructure, operations, and technology assessments, vendor consolidation strategies, and process optimization efforts.

Bottom-line benefits

An effective learning strategy can help you in your efforts to:

- Make better use of your human capital and the significant investment it represents by approaching learning more strategically
- Develop and maintain talent with the skills and behaviors needed to support your overall business strategy and growth objectives
- Improve the return on your learning investments through better evaluation and measurement of their impact and

prioritization based on those programs that return the most value

- Extend learning impact through specific strategies to support functional business lines (such as sales and marketing, financial management, product development, customer experience, and the like)
- Manage total learning costs more effectively by streamlining operations and simplifying the vendor landscape

How to unlock value now

Understand business drivers. What forces are impacting your organization the most? The shifting regulatory environment, mergers & acquisitions, global expansion, and other wholesale changes are opportunities to restructure career paths and align learning to address to changing development needs. Effectively supporting your people assets may mean taking new measures such as building Centers of Excellence, establishing talent and career path models, and structuring informal learning to provide a broad learning strategy to achieve business objectives.

Build the business case. It can be difficult to get senior leaders on board with learning investments unless they are tied to a clear business need and significant returns. An appropriate business case and metrics can help you allocate your learning resources to achieve higher investment impact and build the C-suite buy-in needed to reinforce the importance of learning and execute a learning strategy over time.

Think globally and locally. Tying learning strategy to overall business strategy can help you identify broad talent and competency requirements. But specific functions or locations may have particular needs. Understand the needs of your learners and build those into your learning strategy.

Learning Strategy & Operations in action

- By reviewing and modifying its learning vendor strategy, one organization cut its global learning vendor pool from more than 150 vendors to fewer than 60, driving improved pricing and saving more than \$20 million annually. The organization also standardized and centralized engagement and management of vendors across divisions in order to realize economies of scale, improve quality of learning vendor services, and increase consistency of learning solutions.
- In an effort to establish accountability, create consistency, and support efficient and effective operations across its highly decentralized learning organization, one organization developed a global

learning governance structure to administer learning standards and compliance across business units, functions, and regions. By formalizing a learning governance structure — including decision rights, role profiles, and operating norms — the organization was able to provide a channel for business input into enterprise-wide learning strategy and programs, align investments in enterprise-wide and divisional training programs, allocate funding to centralized programs and infrastructure, and share learning knowledge and resources across businesses.

- After conducting an in-depth assessment of its learning operations — including its organizational structure, administration processes, governance, and spend — one company discovered that its learning organization was delivering technically solid training programs, but was lagging behind its competitors with respect to its learning development approach and staff, its integration of learning with talent and performance management, and its investment in learning. As a result of the assessment, the company uncovered 13 quick hits and 10 longer term opportunities to transform its learning organization. It also developed a learning strategy, vision, principles, and support structure to guide the transformation process and provide a “touchstone” for future decisions about learning.

Related insights

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