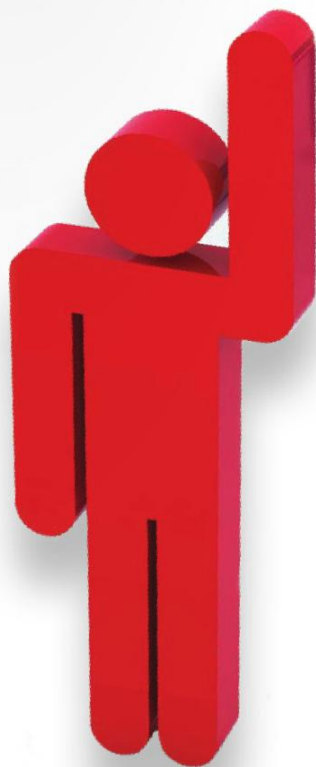


Learning to LEAD THE WAY IN 2016

A well-developed workforce will always help to lead and push the business ahead. *HRM* explores the important learning and development trends that HR needs to be aware of in 2016

Muneerah Bee
muneerah.b@hrmasia.com.sg



“**H**ire for attitude, train for skills” is a philosophy many HR professionals subscribe to. In the same way, training and development have always been a critical contributor to a company’s success.

The year 2015 saw several important Learning and Development (L&D) trends forming, including mobile learning, video-based learning, and modular and bite-sized learning. Some companies also switched to blended learning instead of solely classroom-based learning to maximise the time dedicated to training. Regardless of the methods of delivery, learning was usually aligned to the organisation’s specific objectives and needs.

According to *Deloitte’s Southeast Asia Human Capital Trends 2015: Leading in the New World of Work* report, L&D is in the spotlight for the year ahead, as companies are actively exploring new approaches to address increasing skills gaps.

L&D also emerged as one of the top five human capital trends in Southeast Asia in 2015, according to the report. However, only 37% of Southeast Asia-based organisations’ HR and talent programmes were rated as “good”, and none were considered “excellent” by Deloitte.

Nevertheless, given the growing need of and emphasis on lifelong learning and the upgrading of skillsets, companies are increasingly willing to spend more time and money to make sure their L&D investments bring real impacts to the organisation and business operations.

There are also increasing trends in employee expectations. Staff are looking for on-demand learning opportunities such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), digital learning tools, and new cloud-based training systems. Loo Mei Yee, General Manager of Executive Coach International, says training is fast becoming a virtual affair with increased levels of live interaction.

2016 and beyond

Moving forward in the new year, Loo says employees will expect opportunities to improve their skills and they will look forward to learning processes that go beyond rote learning and direct downloads. This was indicated in annual employee surveys which show high ratings for personalised training and active feedback.

“Professionals also expect value-based training that gives results in the real context of work. As such, L&D should be

focused on developing immediate and relevant value,” she says.

HR can also expect continued change and investment in learning delivery platforms that help deliver updated and more engaging content.

To meet the ever-changing needs of businesses, it is important to have customised training and coaching services readily available. As learning is an active and participative process – as opposed to something that merely provides information to participants – there should be more emphasis on supporting and facilitating the growth of employees through their own processing of information into knowledge, values and skills.

Thus, L&D offerings should aim to be more versatile and give employees the ability to learn at their own pace.

Besides helping companies to retain current employees and top talent, evolved learning systems can also engage the youngest generation in the workplace. By leveraging on technology and blended learning

to make sessions fun and engaging, employers can increase employees’ job satisfaction and engagement – particularly among millennials.

Talent analytics are also set to play a bigger part in L&D in the near future.

Tom Holz, Blackboard’s Senior Director of Corporate and Professional Learning, says organisations are looking for consumer-friendly applications that are easy to use immediately with little or no training. “Many companies believe that analytical tools can be extremely useful to predict employee success and retention,” he says.

Through big data and analytics, companies can use data-generated insights to predict retention, and identify trending topics and relevant courses.

When it comes to the wider Asia-Pacific region, Deddi Tedjakumara, Executive Director of Prasetiya Mulya Executive Learning Institute, says HR practitioners in Indonesia have to be creative to

continue their L&D strategy in the midst of the current economic slowdown there.

To counter this, the institute focuses on customised intervention programmes to bring real impact to its clients.

Addressing challenges

Research by the Association for Talent Development shows executive development is more prevalent in the Asia-Pacific region than elsewhere.

Content focusing on building leadership pipelines, managerial skills, and supervisory knowledge was also cited as among the most important learning content areas for this region.

While L&D programmes are generally focused on junior and senior-level employees, top-level leaders also need to engage with training opportunities.

“There is a need for top level leaders to actually further their personal development, and to bring effective changes to the organisations they are at the helm of,” Loo says. “It is also important to include mid-level managers in L&D

efforts as they need to be able to juggle their personal effectiveness as they manage the team responsibilities on a day-to-day basis.”

Seeing that top leaders often lack viable L&D opportunities for themselves, Loo, who is also a certified coach with the International Coach Federation, says they can often benefit from credible and capable coaches. This gives them the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and ideas with a like-minded professional.

Executive Coach International develops training programmes that help coaches who work with top leaders. “The courses equip them with the skillsets and frameworks to skillfully raise the effectiveness of the top level leaders,” says Loo.

Embracing change

Regardless of the size of the company

or the industry it is in, training programmes must meet the objectives and needs of the company. They should work to develop the employees’ talents and at the same time, put the company in a better position over the long run.

Wu Ye-Her, Head of Business Development, NTUC LearningHub, says HR practitioners should also embrace with social media tools, and invest in social collaboration tools to better engage employees and to foster a learning culture. “They can also improve on current learning functions via mobile learning. More L&D teams are moving into mobile instead of traditional learning,” she says.

By incorporating essential skills into workplace processes and practices, she says HR professionals are able to tap onto their largest assets, develop the widest range of talent, and better position their organisation to avoid skills gaps and shortages.

To prepare Singaporeans for career transitions, and for uncertainties in their lives, NTUC LearningHub offers a wide variety of courses under the SkillsFuture initiative. These cater to individuals who are looking to upgrade skills or to move into a new field. The training provider also caters to adults who have just joined or rejoined the workforce.

L&D for HR

Besides planning and executing L&D programmes for the organisation, employers should not overlook the importance of training for the HR department itself. It is important that HR teams learn extensively and are proactive in seeking development and improvement opportunities in their work. HR professionals should also equip themselves with the latest knowledge to be able to effectively evaluate various HR solutions for their organisations.

As Holz puts it, “Anyone who has the skill set to lead a team, align with good partners, and improve learning while saving money in the mid to long term has tremendous value to their organisation and will advance their career.”

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