

STRATEGIC GUIDE TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Six Essential Actions to Build a Strong Learning Culture

1 | ELEVATE LEARNING

Make learning a formal organizational value to give it visibility, emphasize its importance, and validate your organization's commitment to ongoing development for everyone in the enterprise.

2 | SHARE INSIGHTS AND EXPERTISE

Drive knowledge-sharing organization-wide by including related behaviors in performance expectations, and by recognizing/rewarding people for learning and imparting knowledge. Allocate time for development, and provide the resources (tools, platforms, guidance, etc.) employees need to create and share information and learning content easily and effectively.

3 | LEVERAGE LEARNING AS A BRAND

Emphasize your organization's commitment to learning in your employment branding and talent acquisition initiatives. Talk about your support for development, the range of learning opportunities you provide employees, and include discussions of learning and learning behaviors in your talent outreach, candidate screening, and hiring. High-performance organizations continue that strong focus on support for learning and development through the onboarding process.

4 | LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Leaders at all levels provide powerful reinforcement of learning cultures and demonstrate the value of development when they teach others, talk openly about learning in meetings and informal conversations, and model learning behaviors in the workplace. Including content that emphasizes the importance of learning to the organization in leadership development programs is a high-performance practice that strengthens learning cultures.

5 | INSIST ON ACCOUNTABILITY

Vibrant learning cultures depend on strict policies of accountability by everyone in the organization. Formally adding expectations to performance or personal development plans is a key step in the process. Leaders are expected to assertively ensure continuous development for themselves and their teams, while also actively demonstrating the importance of learning at every opportunity. For employees, accountability centers on taking ownership of their development and on regularly setting and achieving learning goals.

6 | MEASURE CONSTRUCTIVELY

Measurements that assess learning's impact on individuals' behaviors and on business results are the strongest indicators of development effectiveness and the health of an organization's learning culture. Plan impact measures when designing learning interventions. Tracking effects of learning on sales, revenues, costs, customer loyalty, and other key performance indicators reflects business results. Behavioral measures look at application of knowledge and skills on the job, engagement levels, retention and turnover, advancements, user-generated learning content, and other gauges of employee activity.



WHAT IS A LEARNING CULTURE?

Learning culture, or culture of learning, describes an organizational environment characterized by values, processes, and practices that encourage and support continuous learning and development, growth mindsets, knowledge-sharing, and improved performance for individuals and the enterprise.

WHY IS BUILDING A CULTURE OF LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Learning cultures are hallmarks of organizations that excel in market performance and achieve better overall learning outcomes. In fact, research found those top companies nearly five times more likely to have learning cultures. In addition to stronger business and development results, organizations cite many other benefits gained from establishing and growing learning cultures. Some examples:

- Better employee job performance
- Improved organizational productivity
- Higher levels of employee engagement
- Greater enterprise and individual agility and effectiveness in responding to change
- Improved ability to achieve current—and future—business objectives
- Enhanced customer service and satisfaction
- Heightened creativity and innovation
- Better talent retention rates/lower turnover
- Enhanced ability to compete for and acquire top talent

WHAT DOES A LEARNING CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

Descriptions of learning culture characteristics vary from one organization to the next, but the following ideas—however they may be expressed—are core features:

- Learning strategies and business strategies are closely aligned
- Organizational values speak to the importance of learning and development
- Leaders at all levels promote and demonstrate the value of learning
- Learning is a core element in organizational talent practices (e.g., rewards programs, talent acquisition, employment branding, performance management, etc.)
- Learning and development are appropriately structured, funded, designed, measured, and managed
- Learning is viewed and expressed as an organizational way of life
- Individuals are characterized by a learning, or growth, mindset and take ownership of their development.

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