



Rise of the Self-Directed Learner (and other signposts in a changed learning landscape)

Andrea Miles

What are some of the forces out there that you see driving the need to make learning an organizational core competency?

Post-“Great Recession” there is still a global skills problem across the board. Deloitte polled business executives in 2016 and found that nearly 90% felt developing future leadership was an issue; in fact it is their number two concern. But the shortage is not just at the top. A study by Harvard Business School, Accenture and Burning Glass Technologies pointed to a persistent global shortage of “middle skills” which fuel a large portion of business output. Both are challenges that can be overcome by improved learning strategies and programs.

Interestingly, that seems to be recognized by industry. Forbes recently polled the market and found annual spending on learning to be around \$130B.

Are there trends you see that are shaping the learning landscape today?

I do. In fact they are not just shaping how we look at learning today; these are transformational milestones that forever change the landscape. I see three fundamentals. Not surprisingly, some are driven by everyday experiences most of us have as consumers and our desire to see similar experiences in our work life.

First is the rise of the self-directed learner. This is a behavioral evolution largely evolved from our online experiences at home. Most of us have explored a topic of interest and navigated through a learning journey about it following links and references. This is self-directed learning. Tapping into similar methods and a notion of learning as a self-directed journey will be just another everyday work experience.

The second is personalization. Many of us were surprised the first time Amazon recommended a product for us. Now that level of personalization is so common for consumer products companies and retailers we don't notice...unless it is absent.



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Andrea Miles heads the Lumesse Learning Business Unit and has seen the learning industry continue to evolve with technology advances and behavioral changes of learners and learning organizations.



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Applying personalization to learning means knowing what individual learners have done and how well, whether they were office or remote learners, on a laptop or tablet – and providing that access. It means sensing a match between a skills need and that learner's potential and then personalizing a learning pathway.

And finally, we will see more insight applied to the learning process. Historically, training organizations have not been terribly data-driven. Collected data was more a look back than a way to look ahead. When it is truly strategic, learning intersects business milestones and provides the best opportunity to optimize outcomes at those milestones. We see an opportunity to aggregate learning data and design experiences with the insights derived from that more comprehensive view to more precisely deliver the right skills at those milestones.

How do you think Organizations ultimately leverage these trends?

This is a time of tremendous opportunity for a step change in the contribution learning makes to business outcomes. Engaging learners with more consumer-like experiences is that first step. The tools are certainly moving in that direction and organizations that are not thinking that way should be.

But beyond that is the really exciting part where we are developing solutions and that is to make learning more contextualized and personalized to encourage self-directed learning behaviors. When more employees become learners, the organizational benefit will come.

The synergies between a self-directed learner and the organization can be quite powerful. Delivering a user experience that encourages and empowers employees to shape their own learning journeys can lead not only to wider adoption and uptake but provide broader and richer views of enterprise learning behaviors. Collecting and aggregating that data with an organization's talent management system-of-choice enables the opportunity to glean powerful insights on the relationships between learning behaviors and employee performance.

With these insights in hand, an organization can optimize approaches to truly attack those skills and leadership challenges about which executives are so concerned today.



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What To Do Next



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