

CREATING SELF-SUFFICIENT LEARNERS

BY JONATHAN CHOI

Enabling your team to build skills on the job is essential for addressing skills gaps and ensuring that your team stays ahead of industry trends.

We've all been there, managing our own deadlines and priorities, when suddenly requests for training and upskilling come in from all departments. People don't know where to find crucial information to complete the next phase of their project, training materials aren't updated, or the proper training environment hasn't been set up for learners to self-navigate through.



How do we make our training easily accessible and available on demand? Let's explore some actionable methods that will transform your learning environment and empower your team to learn autonomously.

CREATE CLEAR INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

It all starts with a clean house; your team must know where to find training material. Using software such as Confluence by Atlassian and Notion Application by Notion Labs Inc. provides a structure to your training content, with clear navigation tabs on the left-hand side. A straightforward navigation may seem like stating the obvious, but a better user experience means less frustration for your learner and a more enjoyable time finding content to learn from.

ESTABLISH WHICH TRAINING CONTENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT

The most fundamental training topics must be placed at the top of the architecture. Fundamental training topics break down the key skills that enable a learner to execute their job successfully. For example, in customer service the fundamental training topics might be the company mission, company core values, how to greet a customer, delighting the customer, resolving the customer's query and post-sales service.

INSTIL A CULTURE OF SELF-LEARNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

To support your new information architecture, learners must have the mindset of finding information on their own, disseminating it and actioning it on the job.

As a result, trainers must instil learners with a culture of self-learning from the first day on the job, or even during the hiring process if possible. The expectation must be set that the trainer is not here to spoon-feed teams, rather to point them in the right direction for self-learning.

Trainers should explain why the learner will benefit the most through self-learning. Without an easily-accessible trainer to spoon-feed the content, the learner is forced to work harder to break down concepts and gain the knowledge required, resulting in a greater level of understanding.



BUILD TEAMS THAT OVERCOME CHALLENGES TOGETHER

Trainers should reinforce the concept of 'grit' in order for learners to appreciate the lifelong journey of learning and the benefits of persevering through tough challenges to reach a greater goal.

Angela Duckworth is a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and an expert on the concept of 'grit'. Her research has formed a bestselling book and established grit as a key ingredient for long-term success. She defines grit as, *'the tenacious pursuit of a dominant superordinate goal despite setbacks.'*

On her website, Duckworth provides an online quiz which assesses your level of grit. Although this test is not a certified resource for hiring candidates, it can be used as a minor indicator for online assessments. Duckworth's online grit test can be supplemented by in-person questioning of challenges that the job candidate has faced and the steps they took to overcome them.

BUILD A LEARNING STRUCTURE THAT ALLOWS INSTANT PRACTICE

According to a McKinsey & Company survey, adults typically retain just 10% of what they hear in classroom lectures, versus nearly 66% when they learn by doing. This stark contrast in retention clearly shows that enabling learners to instantly action learnings allows trainers to deliver content more effectively on the first go.

To allow learners to instantly practice after learning, trainers should be revising their entire training ecosystem to become more engaging through gamification. Gamification is creating a simulation of how knowledge and skills will be transferred on the job. By creating a simulation of what the learner will action on the job, the learner will begin building stronger neural pathways and ask insightful questions for coaching.

One hurdle to instant practice can be the limited scope of a learner's role. If your learners' roles don't allow them to action new learnings, create the opportunity for team members to collaborate with other teams on short-term projects that exercise new learnings.



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CREATE A MENTORING NETWORK

Embrace the fact that 'leaders build leaders'. In order for a team to become legendary, existing leaders must continue growing and new leaders must be given opportunities to develop foundational leadership skills.

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LISTEN TO LEARNERS

Making learning accessible and available on demand is achieved when we question how our learners access information and how we can create the path of least resistance. Trainers should ensure that their ears are attentive to frustrations or complaints about learning, as these will uncover the most convenient methods for learners to access learning resources.



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FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Why Leadership Development Programs Fail (McKinsey & Company, 2014)
www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/why-leadership-development-programs-fail

Self-Control and Grit: Related but Separable Determinants of Success (Angela Duckworth and James J. Gross, 2014)
www.dropbox.com/s/cvg1mbz0xrfx25I/DuckworthGross2014.pdf?dl=0

www.angeladuckworth.com