



Five Ways to Build a Collaborative Knowledge Culture

Get more from employee training dollars with a collaborative learning transfer system everyone can leverage for growth and performance improvements.

Annually, Canadian employers are spending an average of \$889 per worker to train their staff. Employees spend 32 hours a year doing the trainings, up nearly 30 percent over the last decade, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

Unfortunately, most of that training is staying locked inside individual heads rather than being shared across the organization. Less than 20 percent of training makes its way back into the workforce, giving employers a very poor return on their time and financial investments.

It is possible to improve on those dire numbers and spread key training insights to more workers, boosting growth, performance, and the corporate bottom line. The key is that companies will need to do the work themselves. As Aura Interactive notes, 90 percent of training courses do not include any training on sharing what has been learned with others.

Thus, firms have to build their own culture of knowledge transfer, and the following paragraphs will reveal five things firms can do to boost their organization's shared brainpower.

Tip #1: Schedule a Debrief Session in Advance

When sending employees out for training, schedule a debrief session for them with their manager and team before they leave. Let employees know they will be expected, either individually or as a group, to recap what they learned and answer questions from their peers.

This stated expectation of knowledge transfer increases the odds that workers pay close attention in their training and engage with instructors about complex points being taught so that they, in turn, can clearly communicate the content of the session back to their teammates.

It costs little to set up such a session, but by priming workers to pay attention at their training sessions and designating a space for knowledge transfer to occur, even a basic move like this can have a dramatic impact on what is absorbed in external training sessions and by the internal team when workers return.

Tip #2: Create Performance Rewards for Voluntary Knowledge Sharing

High-performance learning organizations have cultures where knowledge is continually and proactively shared. That kind of culture starts by tangibly rewarding employees who share training and insights with each other.



In many firms, there is no line item in the performance evaluation to reward knowledge sharing. Adding one for yearly discussions helps, as does the creation of “on-the-spot” reward mechanisms so that managers can instantly reinforce positive knowledge sharing behaviors. Plus, after an initial habit-building period, the amount and frequency of rewards can be backed off as the organizational culture shifts.

Tip #3: Offer Workers the Chance to be Teachers

With less than 20 percent of paid training making its way back into the organization under current conditions, firms need a way to unlock the skills individuals are gaining for the benefit of the company.

One way this is being done by high-performance learning organizations is to convert regular workers into peer-enabled teachers. Above and beyond a one-time “debrief” session, giving workers the chance to train their colleagues offers them a chance to show off their knowledge and skills in a more socialized setting.

Along with the proven result that those who have to teach a skill gain deep knowledge about it, reinforcing the training, the social element of this tactic is a critical game-changer. As CBC News reports, Canadian workers put training and personal development as a top priority when considering staying with a company. Workers have the chance to transfer their knowledge while developing others, but they also build valuable presentation skills and social status, allowing them to feel as though they are developing themselves.

Tip #4: Consider Building a MOOC

Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, have revolutionized distance learning over the last 20 years. They have also been revolutionizing online learning within organizations, as employers can build private websites for staffers that are packed with videos, special readings, charts, graphics, case studies, and even interactive Q&A sections on specific tasks or topics.

According to Harvard Business Review, when employers support the creation and use of MOOCs, course completion rates rise from 15 percent to more than 58 percent. Considering that this is a “build once, use forever” type of tool, the 24/7 access power and geographic neutrality of a MOOC can make it a dollar-efficient way to boost knowledge transfer and training participation. Plus, since workers can add elements and commentary to the MOOC themselves, it dramatically increases the odds that MOOC training modules will be viewed as applicable to their jobs and helpful in boosting skills.

Tip #5: Host a Knowledge Sharing Retreat

According to the World Health Organization’s dedicated learning development branch, one of the biggest challenges in building a collaborative knowledge transfer culture is getting knowledge and



training out of silos. Individual teams, departments and divisions can be very good at sharing information, but to truly level up into high-performance learning organizations, firms have to make a special effort to leap natural “walls” in the organization’s knowledge flow.

One effective way to do this is with a knowledge sharing retreat. At these retreats, team representatives from different divisions come together and debrief on their latest findings and learnings. Performance hacks, customer behavior insights, and new tech tools for efficient production are all examples of things that can be shared. Presentations mixed with discussions and Q&A sessions offer an optimal format for rapidly spreading key insights across the firm.

When these retreats are bundled with other best practices, like scheduled team debriefs, peer teaching, and MOOCs, the whole organization becomes a part of the ongoing learning. In this way, learning becomes and thrives as a collaborative effort and responsibility. As a result, firms can start to see a better return on the time and money they are already spending on employee training each year.