



# CUTTINGS

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

## L&D Priorities

In a survey of learning and development professionals, 63% claimed that their number one priority for the next 12 months was to develop the soft skills of employees. The second priority was leadership, followed by customer service, professional development and compliance training.

The survey, conducted by Video Arts, has seen leadership (top priority for the last 3 years) pushed into second place as L&D teams increasingly recognise that technical qualifications and knowledge are not enough; employees also need soft

skills for organisations to be successful. Issues of personality, attitude and behaviour have a big impact on performance in the workplace because they affect how well people are able to communicate and work effectively with others.

In terms of how, 81% of organisations plan to use face-to-face workshops. E-learning (79%), coaching (72%) and experiential learning (53%) remain popular options and newer forms of delivery are growing: virtual classrooms (27%) and mobile learning (12%). 64% of organisations plan to increase

their provision of coaching over the next two years; 55% will offer more learning through virtual classrooms and 55% will provide more experiential learning.

Spending On L&D seems to be holding up in a difficult world: 20% of organisations claim their training budget will be increased over the coming year; 53% say it will stay the same and 27% expect it to be cut.

Mobile learning is still in its infancy. Advocates claim it delivers learning at the point of need and that users are more likely to participate because of the bite-sized format.

## Engagement in a Virtual World

Despite what Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer thinks about the barriers to innovation and collaboration caused by teleworking, it is here to stay.

For years, sales people and other customer focused staff have worked from home in order to be close to the customer. The latest move may be more about flexible job conditions and reducing costs, but the principles of teleworking are well established as a way of life for many organisations.

But there are issues to address. BlessingWhite's 2013 Engagement report found that in North America and in Europe (but not AsiaPAC) employees who work remotely are less engaged than those whose teammates work at the same location.

BlessingWhite define engagement as maximum satisfaction and maximum contribution. So they could also test whether remote workers were possibly benefitting more than employers, by achieving high

satisfaction with low contribution. This was the case in Europe where 19% of remote workers had high satisfaction and low contribution compared to 9% of employees whose teams are entirely on site, but not in North America or AsiaPAC.

According to BlessingWhite, managers need to align employees with the organisation's direction and priorities in the virtual world by:

- discussing how to work together, not just on results. Most importantly, how will they communicate? Some workers assume a phone call to the manager equals escalation and so they flounder on their own. Instant messaging provides an "open door" feel to the virtual work environment.
- regular team check-ins by video or phone with a loose agenda of catching-up to building community and relationships. Bring individuals in from the field or have them meet

in clusters whenever practical to boost a sense of community (especially when a team features a mix of on-site and remote).

- research consistently links trust and engagement. The virtual workplace doesn't provide the informal opportunities to exchange information that exist on location (e.g., an shared lunch, chance meeting in the hallway, or coffee corner conversation). So, managers need to be more purposeful in sharing insights into their personal motivation and goals.
- carrying out very regular reviews to clarify an employee's point of view on job success, providing clarity on the most pressing work priorities, understanding work challenges, demonstrating support, and recognising the role the employees plays in the company's success.

Mary Ann Masarech, Employee Engagement Lead, BlessingWhite

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# nippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

- ✂ "This outward spring and garden are a reflection of the inward garden." *Rumi*
- ✂ "By far the most important form of attention we can give our loved ones is listening... True listening is love in action." *M. Scott Peck*
- ✂ "Happiness always looks small while you hold it in your hands, but let it go, and you learn at once how big and precious it is." *Maxim Gorky*
- ✂ "I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance." *Pablo Casals*
- ✂ "The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer." *Peter F. Drucker*
- ✂ "The world is all gates, all opportunities, strings of tension waiting to be struck." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- ✂ "Great designs are not accomplished without enthusiasm of some sort. It is the inspiration of everything great." *Christian Bovee*
- ✂ "Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace." *Buddha*
- ✂ "Promise yourself to live your life as a revolution and not just a process of evolution." *Anthony J. D'Angelo*
- ✂ "In the measurement world, we set a goal and strive to achieve it. In the universe of possibility, we set the context and let life unfold." *Benjamin Zander*
- ✂ "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." *Mahatma Gandhi*
- ✂ "If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room." *Anita Roddick*
- ✂ "Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out." *Stephen R Covey*
- ✂ "People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things." *Sir Edmund Hillary*
- ✂ "We learn most when faced with a real problem which we are obliged to solve." *Lord Weinstock*

## Seven Secrets to Manage Change

### 1. Be clear about what you're doing and why you're doing it

Sounds like common sense, but too many companies are unclear of their aims or communicate them poorly, even to their most senior people.

### 2. Leadership must be visible

Ensure that the top team is aligned and prepared to stand in front of the organisation and explain what they are doing, why they are doing it and why it is right for the organisation.

### 3. Ensure that you have employee buy-in

Ultimately, change is likely to have an impact on all employees and so it is only sensible that that staff are involved so that they feel valued and appreciated.

### 4. Be open and honest in communications

The worst possible scenario is when the rumour mill runs riot. So, it is better for managers to take control of any messages being communicated, to demonstrate that they are being upfront and to tell people what is happening and why.

### 5. Change must be adequately supported

Ensure that employees are given adequate support to help make it a reality. All too often, organisations fiddle with reporting lines and structures, but everyone continues to work in the same way and nothing really alters.

### 6. Ensure project teams remain focused

People responsible for planning and undertaking change must be given time and resources to focus on it. If everything takes place in-between other day-to-day duties, the chances of success are much lower.

### 7. Be flexible

Don't be afraid to adapt and change as new information comes to light and more thorough research is conducted. The first solution proposed will not necessarily be the final one.

*Matt Keen, Maxxim Consulting. From HRZone.com*

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