

# HR Insights

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## Understanding the Value of a Learning Workplace Culture

As many employers today are finding ways to combat attraction and retention challenges, learning and development (L&D) efforts are one way for organizations to find and keep employees. Workplace trends and protocols change fast, so today's workforce wants to broaden their skill sets to keep up with industry and role evolution. To meet this desire, a culture that promotes continuous learning can facilitate an environment where employees are equipped to maintain a competitive skillset. In turn, this can help an organization keep up in today's marketplace.

This article explores the benefits of organizational learning cultures and how employers can build or reinforce that culture.

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### Understanding a Culture of Learning

An authentic learning culture supports a growth mindset, an independent pursuit for knowledge and collective understanding related to organizational missions and goals. Not only do employees want to learn and apply new skills in their job and company, but they're also open to sharing that knowledge with others. Employers can cultivate a workplace culture that offers opportunities to help support employees on their learning journeys. When employees don't have development and career advancement opportunities, they may feel unchallenged or unmotivated in their roles.

In addition to being a powerful recruitment and retention tool for organizations, a learning company culture has the potential to impact workplaces by:

- Closing worker skill gaps
- Keeping up with workplace demands
- Increasing employee innovation and creativity
- Boosting employee productivity

As with any workplace initiative, L&D efforts are an investment. However, employers should consider L&D an investment in both employees and the organization. Consider the following statistics from ClearCompany that reinforce the importance of workplace L&D opportunities:

- Most employees (94%) said they would stay at a company longer if it invests in their careers.
- Employees who have access to professional development opportunities are 15% more engaged.
- Companies that spend \$1,500 or more on employee development per year report 24% higher annual profits than organizations that spend less.

More employers are using L&D initiatives to effectively retain employees and recruit. These findings show the impact that continuous learning can have on an organization—and its employees.

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### Creating a Culture of Learning

Developing a learning company culture takes time and dedication, but the payoff is typically worth it in the long run. Consider the following ways to build or reinforce a workplace culture of learning:

- **Personalize learning.** Employers can offer personalized learning plans to help guide employees on their journeys to make learning efforts relevant. Instead of focusing on course completion, employers can support employees' long-term learning to reach their career goals.
- **Support risk-taking.** Employers can tolerate and perhaps even encourage mistakes—as long as they support learning and growth and are managed appropriately. When employees feel safe taking risks, significant growth can occur at the individual and team levels. The feasibility of this strategy will vary based on industry and organization.
- **Reward and recognize learning.** Employers need to show their appreciation and value of learning regularly. Focus on how employees apply their newfound knowledge versus simply what was accomplished.
- **Leverage technology.** Employers incorporate e-learning, online coaching and learning management systems (LMSs) to train and develop their workforce. The right technology learning environment can facilitate and support continuous learning, ultimately making it accessible for all employees.
- **Hire lifelong learners.** Recruiting and hiring managers could leverage assessments and behavioral interviews to gauge if candidates are a good fit or add to company culture. For example, such an assessment could help reveal if a prospective employee is driven, curious or has a learner mindset.

An authentic learning culture requires ongoing attention and effort from organizational leaders and managers. Employees want to feel like they're part of something bigger than just their role, and career development and advancement opportunities can be part of that.

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## Conclusion

A motivated and engaged workplace is a powerful one. An approach to workplace learning that focuses on the culture can help ensure that employees continuously learn and develop. Not only can a learning culture motivate and develop current employees, but it can give organizations a necessary competitive edge in today's tight labor market by attracting workers who want to broaden their skill sets.

The right L&D opportunities and initiatives vary by organization and industry, but, regardless, they are a critical investment in individual employees and the organization as a whole.

Contact Ollis/Akers/Arney Human Resources Consulting today for additional workplace resources.

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