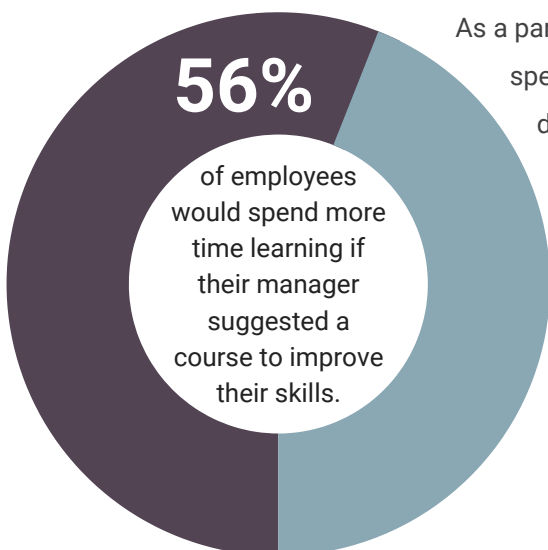
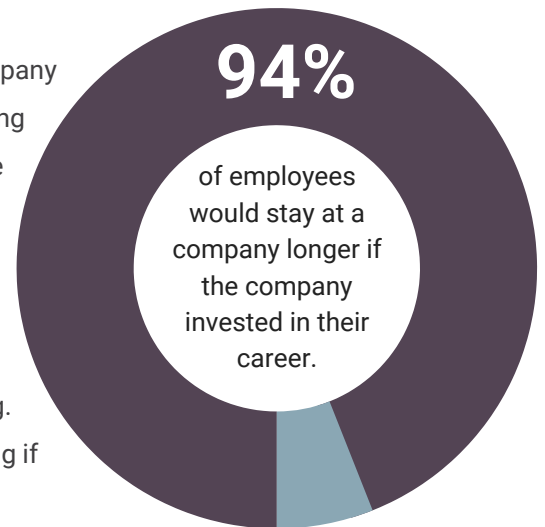


Investment in Employee Training

Recent reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) state that approximately 7.1 million job openings exist in the United States compared to 6.0 million unemployed workers. These circumstances, where there are more jobs than people to fill them, is making it harder for companies to attract talent. It is also making it harder for companies to retain employees. As such, many companies are increasing wages and offering improved benefits such as paying for college tuition. One benefit that has become increasingly important for retaining workers in the current economy is workplace learning.

Recent research has shown that 94% of employees would stay at a company longer if the company invested in their career¹, yet workplace learning opportunities are often not made available or accessed. The number one challenge identified by talent developers in 2018 was getting employees to make time for learning, followed by getting managers involved in workplace learning, a limited budget, and demonstrating the return on investment. In particular, manager involvement was a critical factor in improving employee growth mindset as well as in improving employee engagement in learning. The research showed that 56% of employees would spend more time learning if their manager suggested a course to improve their skills.



As a part of this research, employees were asked: “what would lead you to spend more time learning workplace skills?” The results showed that manager direction was a key ingredient. In particular, employees were looking to their managers to provide guidance on the classes that they should take or the skills that they should be developing. Other drivers of workplace learning include tying it to promotion and other incentives. In addition to manager direction, peer recommendation was reported to be an important factor that could lead employees to spend more time learning workplace skills.

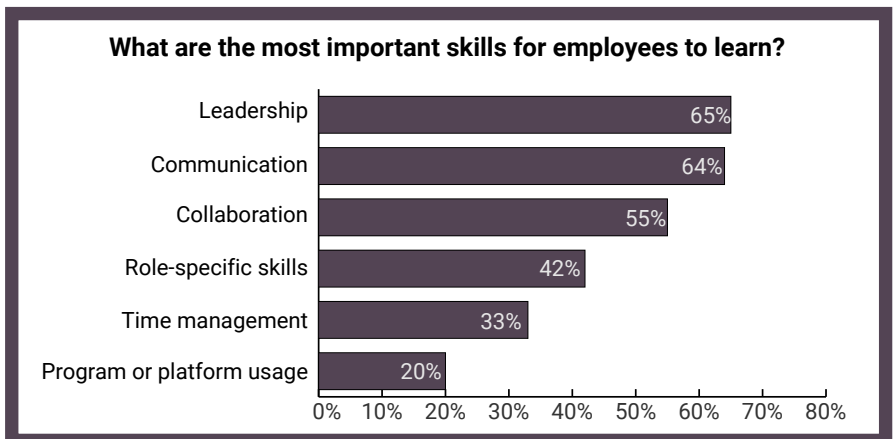
1. LinkedIn (2018). 2018 Workplace Learning Report. Available at: <https://learning.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/learning/en-us/pdfs/linkedin-learning-workplace-learning-report-2018.pdf>



Source: LinkedIn (2018)

engagement³. Engagement is important: a Dale Carnegie survey found that companies with engaged employees outperform those without engaged employees by up to 202%⁴. Conversely, Gallup estimates that actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. an estimated \$500 billion in lost productivity every year⁵.

What are the most important skills for employees to learn? Employees at all levels of organizations agree that leadership and communication are the most important skills to develop, followed by collaboration⁶. Ninety-two percent of executives say that soft skills are equally or more important than technical skills, and 89% of executives say that it is difficult to find talent with soft skills⁷. There is evidence that the soft skills highlighted above are important to both employees and companies as robots and automation cannot currently replicate them⁸.



Source: LinkedIn (2018)



An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.
— Benjamin Franklin

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Recommendations for Employers

Gain buy-in at the top of the organization

Organizational leaders can work together to understand how a learning culture works and the best ways to cultivate a learning culture in their organization⁹. The leadership of an organization that is planning to develop a learning culture should model the behavior that they would like their employees to engage in. Leaders can benefit from consistently measuring and reporting how learning is improving business results.

Engage managers

Managers are similar to other leaders in that they can benefit the organization by actively creating a learning culture¹⁰. Fostering such a culture means making learning a part of their work as well as helping workers understand the best courses to take or skills to learn. Also, encouraging workers to make time for workplace learning can boost the adoption of the behavior. Google has reported positive results by encouraging their workers to spend 20% of their time “working on what they think will most benefit Google.”¹¹ One way to be intentional about this strategy is to create time codes and ask employees to document the time that they spend learning.

Encourage workers

As mentioned earlier, encouraging employees to devote some of their time at work to workplace learning can be an effective method for improving talent development. Furthermore, providing flexible learning options including on-demand and mobile solutions can be effective¹². An important factor in engaging employees in workplace learning is matching different learning options to different learning styles. For example, providing workplace learning solutions that take advantage of technology can help adoption of workplace learning among Millennials. Finally, a critical element is providing time for employees to learn and encouraging them to do so.

9. College for America (2018). Why Upper Management Buy-In is Critical to Workplace Development Success. Available at: <http://collegeforamerica.org/why-upper-management-buy-in-is-critical-to-workplace-development-success/>

10. Training Industry (2018). The Manager’s Role in Reinforcing Learning. Available at: <https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/mar-apr-2018/the-managers-role-in-reinforcing-learning/>

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Beyond the Headlines

Policy and labor market updates for those working to help low-income and low-skill individuals advance through education, training and living-wage jobs

About Seattle Jobs Initiative

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today’s marketplace.

Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development

Contact Information

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