




# MAKING MODERN LEARNING LAST

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The ability to sustain a comprehensive Modern Learning agenda requires a combination of communication, adaptive change, and employee accountability.

Rapid digitization has huge talent implications. As the benefits of technology become more widely available, this raises important questions about how organizations can equip themselves with the essential skills for the future of work. Home growing your own talent has clear benefits – cost, preserving valuable knowledge, business continuity, and reinforcing culture. But changing times also require a significant rethink of learning practices; in reality, many firms' learning programs have not changed much in the past decade.

In “Modern Learning for the Digital Era,” we examined the sweet spot between traditional employer-driven and employee-driven learning when elements of each are combined. We looked at practical ways in which firms could redesign their Modern Learning approach to be more agile, proactive, and creative. Yet with any major cultural change, there is no guarantee of employee buy-in. Past experiences often shape current attitudes, and transforming behavior patterns and long-established mindsets will not happen overnight. To harness workers' full and continuing commitment, organizations need to take several important steps to ensure a lasting and sustainable Modern Learning agenda, including communication, adaptive change, and employee accountability.



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# MARKETING MODERN LEARNING TO THE WORKFORCE

To be successful, major changes to learning will require compelling marketing to employees. Employees will only be receptive to new learning approaches if they understand how the overall business strategy affects them personally as individuals. Firms should balance the desire to recommend courses (the ones they think will help workers adapt to changing markets) with the foresight to offer employees sufficient freedom to pursue training in line with their personal interests, career goals, and ambitions.

Ongoing and open feedback to shape platform content should be encouraged as soon as firms begin to design their Modern Learning approach. This should include opportunities to sample the new programs prior to launch through practical, hands-on sessions and demonstrations, and incorporate suggested improvements into the program's development and roll-out.

As with any change, organizations should make every effort to ensure communications are customized and tailored to the right audiences, involving direct influencers such as managers or business leaders. Broad, general communications are not only impersonal but also undermine the radical nature of the redesign, associating it with past, well-worn approaches.

## BRILLIANT LEARNING FOR BRILLIANT FACTORIES

GE's Brilliant Learning platform is an internal initiative launched to train GE's employees around the four pillars of their modern Brilliant Factory strategy: lean, advanced, additive, and digital manufacturing. The Brilliant Learning program was designed and communicated within the context of its wider aim to transform GE's factories to use newer manufacturing methods, targeting 150,000 global supply chain employees.<sup>1</sup>

1. <https://www.ge.com/reports/schools-ge-new-brilliant-learning-program-will-train-workers-jobs-future/>  
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170330005648/en/GE-Launches-Brilliant-Skills-Curriculum-Train-Workers>

# SUSTAINING MODERN LEARNING

Many of the benefits of moving to a Modern Learning approach may seem intangible – such as helping the organization become more flexible and responsive to change. This is as much about changing the culture of the organization as about producing direct benefits. So, where possible, there is significant value in monitoring and reporting key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to organizational goals. As an example, learning KPIs can be linked directly to improvements in production line quality, sales uplifts, or changes in customer satisfaction levels. Other KPIs can include measuring the completion of personal development plans by staff and the proportion of employees who are engaged with different aspects of the platform on a regular basis.

These measures can help provide hard evidence of the value generated by Modern Learning. To facilitate this, organizations should build tracking systems into the platform to monitor performance and user satisfaction with aspects of the program. This will, in turn, provide opportunities to optimize the offering over time.



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# INTEGRATING MODERN LEARNING WITH PERFORMANCE AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

Learning will always take a back seat to execution in any busy organization unless it is properly incentivized and accommodated. To overcome the potential barriers to learning, organizations should integrate the new learning platform with existing performance- and talent-management systems to ensure learning is monitored and incentivized.

## 1. Ensuring employee accountability

Employees need to have a direct connection to the organizational goals embedded in the learning program. This requires them to have personalized goals and KPIs that are directly connected to their learning and skills development. Achieving their goals and KPIs should form an explicit part of their performance rating.

## THE MARKET VALUE OF JOBS

AT&T's current business strategy involves a shift to software-as-a-service (SaaS), moving away from its traditional base in telecommunications systems, resulting in a retraining of its workforce to meet the new technical demands. As part of this new training strategy, AT&T restructured its performance metrics to "recognize the market value of jobs" and to acknowledge how individuals contribute to its business. This is now reflected in greater financial reward for employees who become proficient in such skills as cyber security, computer science, and data science.<sup>2</sup>

2. <https://hbr.org/2016/10/atts-talent-overhaul>



## 2. Budget time for learning and development

Not every employee has a hunger for learning or feels they are not afforded sufficient time to undertake training programs. Some perceive it to be an additional chore that is secondary to the main tasks of their role. One way to overcome this barrier is to budget one hour a week of their time for learning. The individual employee can use this period to engage with the organization's learning programs.

This signals to employees that Modern Learning provides them with a newfound freedom in setting their learning agenda. They can integrate it within their working week and it allows them to significantly tailor their learning to their own needs and agenda.



## THE CASE FOR PAID SABBATICALS

DBS Bank has taken a radical approach to learning and development. It has created a budget that gives employees the opportunity to take paid sabbaticals to further their skills in areas seen as relevant to the organization, such as the management of digital data and analytics, design thinking, and automation. Employees can use this budget to take up study scholarships, to work on the development of prototypes, or even to start a business. As part of this approach, DBS allocates a set amount of time for employees to focus primarily on learning. This ensures employees see learning as important as their everyday tasks.<sup>3</sup>

3. <https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/case-study-dbs-bank-can-fill-26-vacancies-via-internal-transfers/>  
<https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/how-dbs-is-readying-10000-staff-in-singapore-for-smart-nation-skillsets/>  
[https://www.dbs.com/newsroom/DBS\\_to\\_invest\\_SGD20\\_million\\_over\\_five\\_years\\_to\\_transform\\_employees\\_into\\_digital\\_workforce\\_in\\_support\\_of\\_Singapores\\_aim\\_to\\_be\\_smart\\_financial\\_centre](https://www.dbs.com/newsroom/DBS_to_invest_SGD20_million_over_five_years_to_transform_employees_into_digital_workforce_in_support_of_Singapores_aim_to_be_smart_financial_centre)

# THE FINAL WORD

For many, the goal of becoming a Learning Organization has proved elusive. Yet, in the face of digitization and ongoing market disruption, almost every organization faces an immediate demand to become more responsive and flexible. Doing so requires new skills and capabilities, new mindsets, and cultural change.

It is all too easy for organizations to make an impact with ambitious changes only to revert to old habits later on. The flexible approach of Modern Learning is

designed to meet such challenges. Give employees more control over what and how they learn but, at the same time, tie their learning directly to organizational goals. This can not only provide a completely new level of energy for learning and development but also facilitate a whole new dimension for flexibility in learning.

Implementing Modern Learning in the right way is just as important as its design – and an aspect that cannot and should not be overlooked.

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