

Why Aren't Employees Engaged in Professional Development?

Written by: Courtney McIntosh | May 23, 2017



Employee engagement is a hot topic right now. We decided to do some research on employee engagement as it relates to professional development. We found that professional development is extremely important to employees but that many of them don't feel that their development is important to the people managing them.

A 2015 Globeforce study found that employee engagement is one of the top three priorities

for HR organizations. The study concluded that employee engagement is driven by three factors. These are strong relationships within the workplace, interest in employee happiness, and a strong emphasis on employee development. Another 2015 survey from CompTIA found that 58% of employees, including 62% of Millennials and GenX, say that professional development contributes to their job satisfaction. An even more striking result came from a 2014 Recognition Trends Report by Quantum Workplace. It found that employees under the age of 25 rate professional development as their number one driver of engagement and is the number two priority for workers up to the age of 35.

Clearly, companies need their employees to be engaged, and a great way to do this is to provide opportunities for professional development. The statistics about the importance that people under the age of 35 place on learning and development is particularly interesting as younger people make up a large amount of the workforce. If their preferences continue as they age, then eventually professional development will be the number one issue for employees at all ages. However, in a 2015 poll by Right Management, 68% of employees said that their managers aren't actively engaged in their career development. Not only that, but only 17% of them felt that their manager was actively involved in their career development.

Many companies are working hard to set up learning and development programs. Yet, in some cases there is a disconnect. Learning and development programs are in place, but employees are not engaging with these opportunities. We have come up with four common reasons why employees might not be engaging with the development opportunities their workplaces are providing.

1. EMPLOYEES DON'T UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS

A Small Business Trends article notes that many organizations are so keen to get started with professional development that they neglect to explain to employees why they need this development.

This one has a simple fix. When starting a professional development program, managers need to have a one on one discussion with each employee and explicitly state the purpose of the training and why it will benefit the employee and company. Will it lead to a raise or promotion? Is it important for the development and vision of the company? Managers should also ask employees what they think they need to learn and work together to set specific learning objectives.

2. EMPLOYEES DON'T HAVE TIME

Many professional development tools are online and employees are expected to complete units during their work day. It is easy to understand why this doesn't work out in some cases. Taking an hour out of their busy workday to complete an online unit can be a huge disruption

and distraction.

One solution to this is Micro-learning. Micro-learning delivers lessons in small bursts based on what the learners are interested in and have time for. Software Advice, a LMS systems [consulting website](#), published a [study](#) which found that 58% of employees surveyed would be more likely to use their company's online learning tools if the content was broken up into multiple, shorter lessons. Micro-learning is a quickly developing trend in Learning Management Systems.

3. EMPLOYEES DON'T KNOW ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The internet is full of blog posts explaining to readers that their employer probably offers professional development opportunities if they ask about them. The issue here is that they have to ask about them. If companies want employees to take part in professional development, they have to let their employees know about the opportunities that exist, not wait for them to ask.

4. EMPLOYERS DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TRAINING METHODS IN PLACE

We have already established that the majority of employees want development. Therefore if you are offering professional development and no one is taking advantage of it, your methods could simply be bad. If you have ever had to sit through a three hour lecture in a conference room with 50 other people, then you know that this is not a good method. Even if your company's method is not quite this bad, the 2015 Human Capital Trends survey by Deloitte University Press found that many companies are still using learning management systems that have been around for decades. Of the companies surveyed, under 25% are comfortable with today's learning environment.

What is today's learning environment? It is digital, mobile, and on-demand. New learning management systems provide access to internal and external content, are easy and convenient to use, and recommend content to users in a manner similar to Netflix.

Need help with professional development in your workplace? Browse Learning Management courses [here](#).

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