

LES50NS

Creating A Culture Of Shared Learning

Bill Pelster—Principal, National Director Talent Development, Deloitte Services LP

Lesson Summary

Social interactions may be on the decline in some industries, but not at Deloitte. Bill Pelster explains why the company is focusing on a culture of shared learning.

Lesson Transcript

As I think about innovation in corporate learning, there are actually a lot of exciting things that come to mind. But one of them, especially from a Deloitte perspective, is a big bet we're making around something called Deloitte University. While so many companies are moving away from physical infrastructure, one of the big "ahas" for us was the idea that as we become much more virtual, we actually need a physical presence to bring us all together. So we're making a huge investment in something called, as I said, Deloitte University.

But the innovative part of Deloitte University is the idea that all the classrooms there—and it's going to be about 24 classrooms—are going to be fully embedded with the latest technology around video presence. Those are going to be linked to all of our major offices so all of our offices are going to have something called a teleclassroom. The idea is that anybody, anywhere in the Deloitte universe, if you will, including overseas, if they want to participate in any of the courses, the case studies, the simulations, they can actually do that from just about any location in the world.

That is a huge step forward for us. What it's going to do is allow our professionals to learn when they want to learn, in any manner that they want to learn. So it's kind of leveraging technology not where it's at today, but where it's going tomorrow.

When we talk about virtual learning and the idea of a physical space, a lot of people see that as kind of a paradox; you know, why would we have a physical space when the world is moving virtual? There is still something very important that's even beyond learning and that is the culture of an organization.

In taking a look at everything that we're doing around our virtual culture: the fact that people may not see each other on a regular basis; that we work remotely; that we work in project teams; and even sometimes the project teams don't physically see each other; we really took a look at that and said, "You know what? If that is going to be our model, we really need a physical home. A place where there's a shared experience, where at periodic times throughout a person's career at Deloitte, they are able to come back and understand that the firm is much more than about just what it is the service that you're delivering.

And so, Deloitte University, in addition to being a world-class and probably the world's leading educational institution when we're done with this around the technology and the capabilities, it is going to be the historical heart of what it means to be part of Deloitte.

One of the things we're looking to do at Deloitte University is take advantage of that facility to provide that shared experience. We're not going to really allow siloed learning to take place. We're going to force people that would normally not sit together to have a shared learning experience, with the idea being that is probably the best way to build up relationships and to understand the culture, and at the end of the day, deliver Deloitte as a single company to our clients, which is the most important thing we're in the market for.

Questions, Ideas for Action and Takeaways

Questions

1. How would company employees describe the culture of your organization?
2. What personal connections have you made with other employees, through learning or other functions?
3. What words would employees use to portray their work relationships?
4. How can you incorporate virtual learning and communication into learning without de-personalizing it?
5. What do you enjoy most about face-to-face interactions with employees and staff? How can you share that?

LESSONS

Ideas for Action

1. Find a vacant room in your building that can be used for a classroom. Keep class sizes 20 people or fewer at a time to encourage participation.
2. Incorporate interactive learning into lessons. Ask questions, gather feedback, and have employees share personal experiences as part of the teaching.
3. Use video conferencing or Web conferencing in learning to develop relationships between employees in separate geographic locations.
4. Create projects that will require long-term partnerships and teamwork to help build relationships. Allow ample time during work hours for employees to collaborate and share experiences.
5. Add a course specifically on corporate culture or values to company curriculum. Use activities that will help employees live out this culture on a daily basis.

Takeaways

1. As companies embrace technologically based communication, interpersonal relationships are falling by the wayside.
2. Culture in an organization is hard to design and recognize without personal interactions.
3. Using a traditional physical classroom for learning creates a shared experience for employees.
4. The shared experiences of classroom learning contribute substantially to the culture of the organization.
5. Although a brick-and-mortar learning center may incorporate virtual technologies, at its heart it is designed to facilitate employee relationships and corporate culture.

Speaker Biography

Bill Pelster is Principal and National Director of Talent Development at Deloitte Consulting, a leading provider of audit, consulting, financial advisory, risk management, and tax services to selected clients.

Mr. Pelster has led the development of two Deloitte Consulting industry-leading tools to rapidly create and document global HR and learning processes, LearningPrint and Fast Track for Learning, which allow project teams to rapidly transform and build a high-performance organization.

His knowledge spans the spectrum of human resources and human capital areas, including technology adoption, strategic change, communication, culture assessment, training, and talent management. Additionally, he has supported some of the largest HR transformation programs based on SAP, Oracle, and PeopleSoft ERP systems.

As a leader in Deloitte Consulting's offshore Human Capital practice, Mr. Pelster has been critical in building Deloitte Consulting's ability to provide high-quality, low-cost blended HR solutions by sourcing providers, building relationships, and creating the processes and workflows necessary to deliver HR solutions to more than 25 clients in a two-year period.

Mr. Pelster's background in HR and Learning, with a degree in computer science and a master's in business administration and practical experience in both government and industry, have allowed him to effectively deliver comprehensive, business-oriented solutions to large clients around the world.

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