

SOCIAL LEARNING

How People are Learning Better Together

NRI's 2021 Research on Global Trends in
Talent Development - Part 3



Social Learning

Imagine you are interested in learning more about Risk Management. The next schedule of training from your company is 90 days from today. Doing Google Search for relevant materials can definitely help, and is, in fact, a form of Always-On Learning. Yet what if you have questions, and you want answers or opinions of others? That is when the idea of joining social media forums, communities, and groups relevant to your learning needs comes in handy.

Visualize a scenario where your employees are divided into various learning communities or action learning groups who are working on innovating processes.

These two scenarios demonstrate the power of bringing people together as a social learning community.

Establishing a collaborative environment where people form communities to learn and grow together is another strategy to democratize learning.

This 3rd part of the series of articles based on research done this year by Nomura Research Institute Singapore Pte. Ltd. – Manila Branch of the global trends in Talent Development being practiced by US-based companies focuses on how the phenomenon and practices of Social Learning accelerate the democratization of learning.

What is Social Learning About?

Social Learning, based on the works of Psychologist Alfred Bandura, is a type of learning enabled by observation of other behaviors. It is based on the fundamental assumption that we can learn from each other, and not just from authorities and experts.

The concept of Social Learning, in its simplest form, has been around since the 18th century. Others made important contributions. Yet, it was Alfred Bandura who advanced the practice of Social Learning in the 1970s and was largely credited as the originator of this field of learning. However, it is only recently when the practice of Social Learning has proliferated. The avalanche of new digital technologies and online social media platforms has become the enabler for both the Always-On Learning and Self-Determined Learning, which in turn, enable the practice of Social Learning to flourish.

Inette Dishler, a Senior Talent and Organizational Consultant at the University of California Berkeley, aptly referred to Social Learning as the “future of learning” in her 2017 article, Social Learning: The Future is Here, which was published at the Association of Talent Development (ATD).



Based on the latest 2021 Workplace Learning Report by LinkedIn, there is a dramatic increase among learners joining learning communities (+1,100% across all generations).

What is Social Learning About? - continued

In support of this trend, Facebook introduced the Social Learning feature of its Facebook Group in 2019. The proliferation of online social learning groups is highly evident among hobbyists and enthusiasts groups such as bikers, planters, car aficionados, and many more. Both for LinkedIn and Facebook, there is an abundance of groups organized for specific knowledge areas ranging from technical, personal, leadership, etc.

In the 2013 research regarding the Pulse on Social Learning done by HCM Advisory and SABA, a global leader in next-generation cloud solutions for talent management, two of the top motivations of the respondents (500+ Director level L&D Heads) in using social learning technologies are to support a culture of learning and to encourage innovation.



Implications of Social Learning

The role of tomorrow's L&D professional will be as facilitator and creator of network connections, social mentor, and curator of knowledge and learning resources."

The rise of social learning creates an imperative for leaders and Talent Development professionals to re-evaluate and re-invent their roles from being coaches or content producers to social learning enablers by promoting the creation and propagation of learning communities within their organizations.

Organizations also need to address the digital divide between those who have access to technologies and those who do not have. And for those that have digital access, the challenge for organizations is how to engage them to embrace Always-On Digital Learning in collaboration with others.

Talent Development and leaders need to "walk the social talk" by championing and practicing social learning themselves for others to follow.

As Jane Hart, Founder of the Centre for Learning & Performance Technologies (C4LPT), correctly observed, "we learn so much from random pieces of information on the web – and yet so many think all learning has to be" designed". Hence, the focus of organizations has shifted from just designing the learning content and experiences towards designing communities and environments for self-determined social learners.

Best Practices

- **Procter and Gamble's** curriculum follows the 70-20-10 framework and the 20% is devoted to social learning at every level of relationships.
- In 2017, **Swisscom** launched what it called the AirBnB of Corporate Learning: a Social Learning Marketplace which enabled 5000 employees to “learn and teach each other for tomorrow.” The employees decide, create, and implement learning. Instead of creating content or conducting training, The Corporate L&D team, called ENT Academy, has transformed its role into a learning organization enabler.
- To address its challenge of creating an innovative, collaborative learning culture, **Hewlett-Packard** adopted Social Learning by rolling out a modern online social learning platform powered by Lynda.com from LinkedIn. It embedded bite-sized contents in tailored learning paths.

According to HPE VP of Learning & Professional Development Adrian Stevens, HPE's investment in Lynda.com is part of a broader strategy to “democratize learning and create a recognized culture of learning.”

“Since November 2017, HPE employees have watched more than 1 million Lynda.com videos and completed 20,000 courses and consumed 67,000 hours of content.” – Elissa Bass

Conclusion

Social Learning, along with Always-On Learning and Self-Determined Learning, continues to enable the rapid democratization of learning. People have now a greater opportunity to determine what they can learn when they want to learn, and how they want to learn.

The role of leaders and Talent Development professionals is to promote an environment where learning is more democratized and people can create and manage their own learning pathways aligned to organizational goals.



Bonus: Interview with Jun Roy



1. Which industries/sectors in the Philippines do you think can benefit most from the shift towards more-democratized learning?

Geographical spread, technology adoption, and age range are the key factors to determine which industries will benefit the most from more democratized learning. Using these parameters, we can say that Banking/Financial Services, BPO, Logistics, Health Care, Retail, and Technology industries are the expected winners in a democratized learning environment.

2. In what ways do you see this shift going to benefit or give a positive impact to businesses in these industries/sectors?

We expect a greater degree of engagement and a higher level of productivity of employees among companies/industries which are able to effectively establish democratized learning environment.



3. What are the top 3 things where organizations can start so that they can shift to more-democratized learning with agility?

Democratizing learning does not only entail providing high-tech learning environment. Before democratization can become desirable, learning needs to be attractive first. Hence, organizations can start first by establishing a conducive learning environment. This is an environment where learning is driven and modeled by leaders, strongly linked to rewards and performance, and is engaging. Another is providing choices and opportunities for employees to pursue their own learning and growth. A self-driven Individual Development Plan that is regularly monitored and reported or a menu of courses and learning materials are just two examples of these choices and opportunities. Gamification and Collaborative



Social Learning are other simple strategies to make learning engaging. Learning is often bypassed because it is detached from the requirements of the job. Embedding learning as part of an initiative or a project, such as adopting Action Learning, can create a compelling reason for employees to pursue learning on their own.

About the Contributor



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Jun's expertise is in HR and Talent Development, Agile Practices, Design Thinking, Quality Management, and Corporate Performance Management. Jun also has extensive hands-on leadership experience in diverse disciplines which include HR, OD, Quality Management, Risk Management, Strategy, and Corporate Performance Management, which he gained from his 28+ years of working in various companies locally and abroad.

Interested to talk about the article or any of NRI's services?

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