



## Collaboration Is Just One Way That IBM Is Improving Corporate Learning

Because the world's information technology infrastructure is being transformed by the emergence of Cloud computing, IBM's most critical business challenges and opportunities are to reach the new buyers that these major shifts in the technology sector have created. "Learning must support our transformation by enabling us to seize these new opportunities for growth and make the shift to the new era of computing," observes Frank Persico, vice president of IBM Learning. "Learning needs to build the skills to deliver on our growth plays.

"Our initial actions were transforming how we select new IBMers, how we invite and engage them as they join, how we train our sellers and technical professionals to succeed in a rapidly changing technology sector, and how we train our new managers and executives to be effective stewards and leaders of IBM."

While many large corporations determine learning needs based on current requirements, IBM Learning now addresses adaptive challenges — skill and performance gaps that cannot be closed by existing methods alone. "It is a profound and fundamental challenge," Persico says.

This year, IBM was named a *Learning!* 100 winner for collaboration.

Cooperation comes from the top. When CEO Ginni Rometty's new administration began in 2013, she directed the creation of enterprise-wide employee online collaboration tool, "Communities," virtual spaces where employees share information, ask questions and work collaboratively. There are now 138,763 unrestricted public online "Communities" of interest topics

where work is done. In one of her more recent all-hands' conversations with employees, Rometty said, "We must evolve by continually developing our skills and expertise. IBM is committed to supporting all our employees' professional excellence." She also introduced IBM's "Think 40" initiative that provides every employee at least 40 hours of work time each year for the purpose of his or her own professional development. "We cannot build a great business without nurturing from within," she believes.

One of the company's most innovative learning initiatives is its enhanced

markets such as Hungary, India, Brazil, China and South Africa with a live global broadcast.

Today, IBM annually broadcasts six smaller face-to-face events live to all 380,000 employees in more than 170 countries. It uses Livestream technology, blending online social elements that engage a large virtual audience. During the live presentation, virtual attendees can ask questions of each other and the speaker. This new design also introduced the business challenges that organize global teams to collectively solve real business problems.

"But that's not all," Persico insists.

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**—Frank Persico, vice president, IBM Learning**

Technical Leadership Exchange (TLE), a premier showcase for technical leaders that provides a platform to submit, publish, innovate, share ideas and gain recognition.

Not long ago, nearly 5,000 technical leaders would travel to a physical location for a face-to-face, three-day conference. Due to the increase in its global workforce, especially in emerging markets, this model became cost-prohibitive. A totally virtual approach was piloted, but participants were missing the face-to-face component. So an innovative hybrid design was developed to limit travel and expenses and keep the face-to-face component. This design focuses on locations where rapid increase of skills is needed by bringing the event to the emerging

"We are building skills in an agile way as older, industrial models of learning become less relevant. We can no longer architect and construct learning 'factories' that prepare predictable crowds of employees to perform predictable work. Technology and the opportunities it creates are shifting too quickly."

IBM is a five-time *Learning!* 100 winner.

**AREA OF**  
**★ COLLABORATION ★**  
**EXCELLENCE**