

PERFORMANCE DRIVEN LEARNING

Three methods to develop employee skills, explained by
Steven Rees-Pullman.

E-learning is already known to be the most efficient and cost effective way to deliver training to a workforce. However, the best way to truly prepare employees for meeting organisational objectives is to focus their training on three major areas of skill development.

Use a learning solution that is capable of delivering optimal training on each type of skill and check for comprehension by examining the outcomes from other HR processes.

This will drive performance as employees develop all three areas: soft, functional and compliance skills.

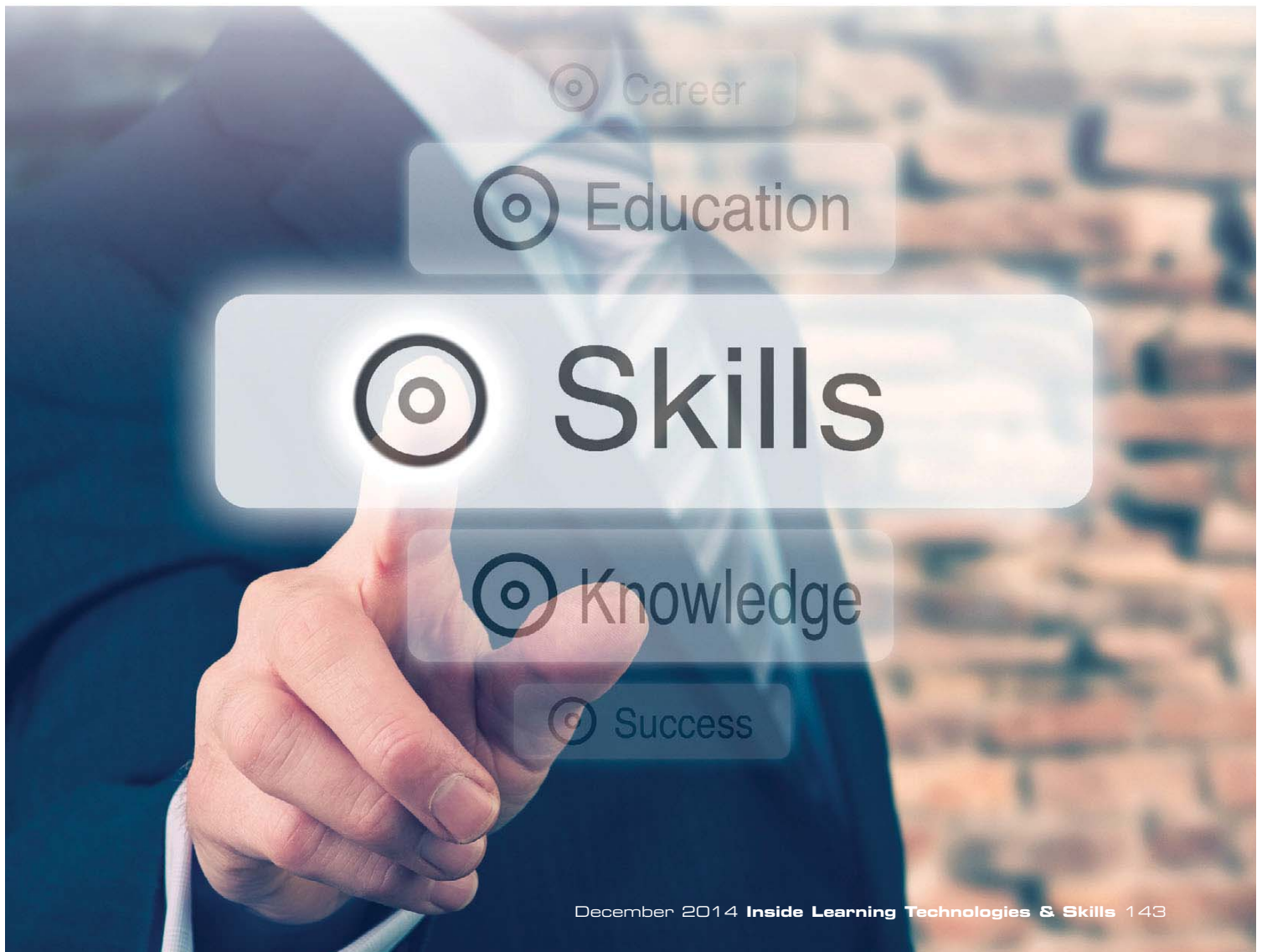
Performance-driven learning is key to effective employee development. It will impact your organisation's bottom line and gain the highest return on your learning and development investment.

Furthermore, e-learning is the right delivery tool to enable your company to align human capital resources with organisational objectives.

Today, forward-thinking human resources executives view learning as a strategic component of their HR mission. Leveraging integrated talent applications will drive optimum employee performance and here are three key approaches.

1: SOFT-SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This targets the improvement of an individual's competencies and behaviours. These encompass communication, personal effectiveness, creative problem solving, strategic thinking and team building.



These skill-sets govern much of the interpersonal actions inside and outside the workplace and particularly for anyone in a sales or customer-facing position. While soft skills tend to be regarded as less essential than functional skills, they can be much more difficult to grasp.

E-learning is an optimal training method because of the variety of training sessions that can be created. By using short, self-paced modules, employees can view typical scenarios and engage in periodic assessment of their personal choices. A dynamic repository of frequently asked questions and best practice answers can also augment the training.

Soft skills rely on social interaction. The newest and most influential way e-learning can have an impact is via the social learning capabilities. Employees can contribute to discussion forums and blogs etc, with peers, colleagues and experts and see how soft skills are applied in the field. As a result they gain more from the training.

HR solutions that integrate talent and analytics will help your organisation to make the link between the sales and customer satisfaction ratings from the field, and the soft skill development initiatives. These metrics will help to determine which employees are highly competent and which need to supplement their skill sets.

2: FUNCTIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This targets 'hard skills' such as software or accounting. Companies cannot provide products or services if the workforce doesn't maintain the appropriate tactical

skills to efficiently carry out tasks. Often, companies concentrate heavily on such skill development in the time directly following the execution of a new job or task. However, because these tasks are generally on-going, e-learning courses can provide a variety of functional training to supplement experience at each stage in the project.

Using e-learning to train on functional skills, you can identify the level of knowledge with diagnostic assessments and screenings. Then you can assign specific learning programmes for each employee. These may be a series of refresher courses or training to develop new skills. Then you can easily check comprehension with interactive exercises or post-training assessments.

Mobile learning is one of the best ways to provide on-the-job functional skills. Mobile devices can store and deliver job aids and abbreviated courses, anywhere and at any time. Giving employees this option will reinforce the methods that should be used to complete specific tasks.

Functional skills are important for the smooth flow of daily operations. The ability to easily identify employees that have mastered certain skills helps the company to target the right people for promotion, succession or relocation. As functional skills are quantifiable, companies can test prospective employees during hiring and recruiting and check for improvement at regular intervals thereafter. This will also come in handy as part of the performance review process. Integrating a workforce system with an e-learning solution means that only the people with the necessary

skills would be scheduled to complete specific tasks.

3: COMPLIANCE DEVELOPMENT

Compliance training includes safety, harassment awareness, and/or diversity training. While compliance-based skills may include soft or functional skills, they tend to be particular to a company or industry, and support regulatory and legal requirements. E-learning tracks the training and keeps a record for future reference. For some organisations, the management of compliance needs is in itself justification for automating learning.

In many highly regulated industries where compliance training is on-going, e-learning is extremely helpful for reminding employees to take new courses in the allotted time, or for versioning existing courses to reflect updated materials. A learning management system that tracks training completions proves that the company has taken the proper procedures to prevent costly mistakes and breaches of law.

As compliance training is so important to many companies' legal ability to operate, managers can use goal and benefits administration to tie completions directly to employee expectations and rewards. Part of keeping employees motivated to finish their tasks is to empower and incentivise them. The strategic view of nurturing talent includes prioritising and defining development plans based on the needs of both the individual and the organisation. Ideally, this takes into account the following:



- Key organisational objectives are cascaded across the enterprise
- Individual performance goals are linked to organisational objectives to ensure focused direction
- Competencies are defined and used as the basis for job profiles
- 360 feedback from peers and managers highlight competency gaps and additional focus for individual development
- Skill gaps identified from job profiles and talent profiles highlight other potential deficiencies
- Learning priorities and development plans are based on these jointly developed performance goals from the identified skill and competency gaps
- Learning includes blended solutions (e.g., web-based, mobile, social) to meet the diverse development needs of different roles
- Learning content management enables subject matter experts across the organisation to easily contribute to learning courseware
- E-learning includes personalised learning paths to provide the most needed

development on demand (just in-time)

Taking the cycle a step further, learning and development objectives can be tied directly to compensation and incentive programmes to reinforce the links between training and key objectives. Learning can also be linked to succession planning to ensure successors are ready, and that bench strength is adequate to meet future leadership needs. A holistic view of organisational learning is key and should incorporate a variety of components to ensure it plays a strategic role.

- Development priorities must be linked with performance goals and organisational objectives
- Courses need to be aligned with competencies for effective learning automation
- All behavioural assessments should be linked to individuals and their positions, and related through a competency framework

This competency framework provides the basis for various talent systems to support an integrated process. Functional skills are characterised by the same rules, regardless

of industry, company, circumstance or colleagues. In contrast, the rules for soft skills change, depending on the company culture and calibre of individuals. Companies, industries or agencies may enforce diverse rules to which your employees must comply.

Each of these skills needs to be assigned, taught and measured differently, to achieve the desired performance.

Simply tracking learning participation and effectiveness is not enough to meet the C-suite goal to drive business performance, impact the bottom line, and increase shareholder value. Successful organisations are leveraging human capital management solutions to align goals, performance, competencies, compensation, development and succession planning.

By linking these critical components, your organisation can better manage, motivate, reward and improve the skills of every employee.

*Steven Rees-Pullman is VP Sales EMEA at SumTotal Systems, a Skillsoft Company
www.sumtotalsystems.com
Twitter: @SumTotalSystems*



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020 7713 7179
enquiries@mediatraining.ltd.uk
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