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Peer education in corporate training

Peer-to-peer learning: How to help employees learn from each other?

According to a 2016 study conducted by Degreed, when it comes to learning a new skill, the majority of workers turn first to their colleagues (55%) - and then to their bosses.

What is peer education

Peer learning (**peer-education** or **peer-to-peer learning**) is a learning context in which an appropriately trained person (peer educator) undertakes training activities with other peers, i.e. similar in terms of parameters such as age, working condition, gender, status, cultural background or experience. It is a form of social learning, such as **collaborative learning**.

Peer education in the company

Peer education can be a powerful tool for business development, but not all organisations have a formal structure for peer learning. The results of a McKinsey survey, reports that, according to those responsible for training, "*while classroom training, experiential learning and the application of skills at work are tools regularly used in learning, less than half of organisations have established any kind of formal **peer-to-peer** learning. In addition, one in three respondents said that their company does not have a system for sharing learning among employees*".

According to the book " *The Expertise Economy: How the Smartest Companies Use Learning to Engage, Compete, and Succeed*", managers' reluctance to set up formal peer-to-peer learning systems is mainly due to the perception that experts from outside the company are more valuable teachers than experts from inside the company and that peer-to-peer programs have to be split into several sessions. The common perception therefore seems to be that it is more profitable to have employees participate in a single day of intensive training held by an external expert.

This is not always true and, in any case, one thing does not exclude the other. Peer-to-peer learning draws on **your company's existing and internal expertise**. In every company there are talents and people with different experiences. How much could be gained if colleagues shared their skills with each other and learned how to build new skills?

Peer-to-peer learning is perfectly suited to our way of learning which, in any situation, allows us to acquire new skills through the four phases of the "learning cycle":

1. acquiring knowledge,
2. practice applying this knowledge,
3. get feedback,
4. reflect on what has been learned.

It is very useful to use peer-to-peer learning in combination with formal learning, for example with regard to new hires and training in corporate values, relationship management, communication and leadership modes and much more.

An example of peer-to-peer learning about corporate values? Let's take the case of a training program in which a section of the program focused on "difficult" conversations: each participant was asked to identify a "difficult" work conversation from real life (especially one that could be avoided), after which participants confronted each other openly about their similar views and experiences and practiced with each other to hold conversations in real life.

Some results? One of the participants brought the case of a difficult conversation with a member of his team about some missed deadlines. In the real-life case, the discussion he set up had a negative impact on the team climate (he felt uncomfortable and the team member got defensive). After sharing and discussing the case, everyone in the group - not just the protagonist - reflected

on what they had learned and concluded that they had become more confident as they had much clearer ideas on how best to handle a similar situation in the future. Later the group members indicated that their "difficult" conversations in the real world had actually become simpler and more productive.

Article from HardvardBusinessSchool4

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