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The limits of informal learning in companies

Informal learning is a way of training that is becoming increasingly popular in companies. Let's find out the limitations and problems with this strategy.

In today's companies, tutors and human resources professionals are encouraged to support employees' professional growth in many different ways, including alternative methods that fall under the category of informal learning. Such strategies aim to make employees active subjects of learning by giving them greater responsibility for what and how they learn.

Informal learning techniques are many and varied, but they can be said to fall under the term "**learning in the flow of work**" (LIFOW).

This model emphasizes the seamless **integration of learning into daily work activities**, enabling employees to acquire new skills and knowledge without interrupting the flow of work. However, despite its many advantages, this approach is not without its challenges. In this article we will explore the problems associated with workflow learning and discuss potential solutions.

Learning challenges in the workflow

1. Lack of guidance

Employees are sometimes unable to identify the skills they need to advance their careers. They may be able to assess their own skill levels, but they lack the experience or foresight to be sure they are **selecting the right knowledge base** and prioritizing the skills most important for self-development.

So they need more help from their managers and human resources to understand what is needed based on their experience and the demands of the job.

2. Personality differences

The most successful self-directed learners possess an intrinsic drive linked to their personal **identity** and a deep passion for a particular role or subject. This kind of motivation significantly influences their engagement and perseverance in self-directed learning, and it may be absent in certain students.

3. Relevance of content

Relevance of learning content is critical to the successful integration of learning into the workflow. Outdated or irrelevant content can hinder the learning process and fail to provide tangible benefits in the workplace.

Therefore, companies should invest in **content** curation and **continuous updating**. Regularly updating and customizing learning materials to align with the latest industry trends and specific employee needs is essential to maintain relevance and ensure learning effectiveness.

4. Technology barriers

Integrating learning into the workflow relies heavily on technology, such as learning management systems (**LMS**) and digital resources. Not all employees may be comfortable or have easy access to these tools. Outdated or complex systems can be a barrier to effective learning integration.

For this reason, organizations must ensure that the **technology** used for workplace learning is **easy** to use, compatible with mobile devices, and accessible. There is a need to provide training and support to employees who may not be technology savvy. Offering offline options can mitigate connectivity issues, ensuring that learning opportunities are available to all. There may also be language barriers, lack of background knowledge, and inadequate information literacy that hinder the path. The design strategy of the learning environment is crucial in addressing this issue.

5. Resistance to change

Resistance to change is a common challenge in any context, including workflow learning. Employees may resist adopting new learning methodologies due to fear of being inadequate, **discomfort** with change, or simply **lack of motivation**.

To overcome resistance, companies need to **clearly communicate the benefits of learning** in the workplace, emphasizing the importance of new skills to employees' job performance and career growth. Leaders and managers can lead by example by actively participating in learning initiatives and thus inspiring employees to follow them.

6. Measurement and evaluation

Employees often struggle to understand how their long-term career goals can be pursued using a self-directed strategy. Assessing the effectiveness of informal learning in the workplace can be complex. Traditional metrics such as test scores and completion rates may not accurately capture the real impact of learning in the workflow.

Therefore, companies should implement a combination of **quantitative** and **qualitative** assessment methods. Employee feedback, peer reviews, and job performance metrics can provide a more complete picture of the impact of learning in the workplace. These approaches offer a more accurate assessment of how learning contributes to individual and organizational success.

7. Time constraints

One of the most significant challenges in implementing workflow learning is time constraints. Employees often have busy schedules and face constant demands to meet deadlines and complete their core work responsibilities. Integrating learning into these commitments can be a challenge. So, organizations should promote the concept of **microlearning**, in which employees engage in short, focused learning sessions that can be completed in minutes. This approach allows for learning without significantly disrupting work activities. Moreover, fostering a culture that appreciates and supports continuous learning can assist employees in prioritizing their learning needs throughout the workday.