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Upskilling, Reskilling and eLearning in times of pandemic

Pandemic crisis will be a unique opportunity to outline a concrete path towards the development of new skills.

We've talked before about the extreme importance of **skills development** today.
This is even more true in the current context, where the covid-19 pandemic has brought with it extreme job uncertainty. According to the study by Cornerstone People Research Lab, a global provider of people development solutions, " A License to Skill: Embracing the Reskilling Revolution", 76% of employees, 88% of HR managers and 91% of management are convinced that the difficulties brought by the crisis will change the daily work experience, but will also bring a unique opportunity to outline a concrete path towards the development of new skills.

According to Cornerstone On Demand "the increase in volumes regarding professional elearning recorded in the lockdown period" is also due to the strong interest in upskilling and reskilling that has been evident for some time. In fact, "Covid-19 has been a strong accelerator even for initiatives that were already planned." Distance learning (in both the corporate and academic sectors) saw record numbers in 2020, as did the demand for eLearning content and solutions, people trained, and access to platforms compared to periods of "normal" healthcare.

Companies boost professionals' skills with eLearning

Companies are using online learning to help employees adapt to smart working and enable them to become more productive and efficient (while safeguarding their health). According to the research, "while top management and employees unanimously recognize the value of competencies, they do not show the same confidence in the effectiveness of competency-based learning programs: only 60% of employees believe the company is truly able to help the team develop new skills for the future, and about 40% rate the tools provided as ineffective." What are the causes of this gap? There are a number of factors at play, but the most influential ones are time (61% of participants), money, orientation and availability of educational content. However, nearly 50% of participating employees are concerned that their role may change dramatically over the next few years, and 30% are concerned that the job they currently do will no longer be needed. In general, there is a strong awareness of the importance of learning and improving during this change, and it is clear that users are increasingly looking for new learning experiences that align with their needs.
The lack of certainty and diminishing motivation represents an opportunity for managers, who are called upon, now more than ever, to create a culture of well-rounded learning in the workplace. To do this, they need to offer customized training to employees and improve the user experience. It would be the companies themselves that would have to transform managers into coaches, providing them with the tools to get to know individual employees better (for example, by identifying an in-depth profile of skills, interests, personal and professional aspirations) and thus create experiences that take into account the whole person.

Distance learning in EU

The number of users of online training courses from mobile devices is increasing, especially in the countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Italy saw a 435% increase in access to online training;
- Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands saw a nearly 3-fold increase in online course enrollments.

The trend is significant, but you have to consider that there is a lot of knowledge and skills that we need to acquire in order to adapt to any form of new reality, even when it comes to learning how to manage work or a remote team for the first time: it was critical for many people to gather best practices for communicating virtually with colleagues or tips for managing time, stress, digital tools or their own health (physical and mental) while working from the couch. The study shows that employees autonomously sought out this kind of learning (even if not imposed from above) and did so to meet an immediate need, but in a flexible way, according to schedules and format preferences dictated by themselves, without constraints associated with the

office environment.

Training and technology

Companies are confidently looking to technology to enact employee skill development (upskilling and reskilling). According to employers, what are the priorities and methodologies for employee growth?

1. technology to initiate and enhance skill development (42%) and technical training in STEM disciplines (42%),
2. improving workflow learning (41%),
3. leadership development (40%),
4. social learning opportunities (38%).

"Training should have a real impact on people's development. The advice is to do surveys to understand how people are learning to make sure you offer the formats and training plans they need, remembering that learning is an accelerator of adaptability."

So it's critical to offer employees learning that helps them cope with all aspects of work life. Therefore, training must have certain characteristics:
Be available on any device and delivered within the workflow in the tools used for the job. If the training is offered in different formats (social collaboration, microlearning), it becomes quickly assimilated and easily applicable; memorization is greatest when employees feel the need for the training (it is not imposed on them) and can immediately apply it to a real-world situation;
be personalized: it is important to make it easier for employees to find the most appropriate training. Technology can help present targeted opportunities to employees, based on their skills, experience, aspirations and preferences. In any case, for companies to adapt quickly, they need to promote concrete and incisive training, and this requires repetition, reinforcement and consistency. In fact, authentic training always leads to change (in mentality, behavior, results).

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