

ALWAYS-ON LEARNING

How Digital Technology is Democratizing Learning

An NRI Series on Digital Learning - Part 1



Democratization of Learning

Developing people, regardless of how it is called, has been around for ages. From the time of the Apprenticeship and Guilds in the Middle Ages to what we now call Talent Development, the need to train and develop others remains constant.

What is constantly changing, and is now changing rapidly, is what people can learn and how they can learn them.

We at Nomura Research Institute Singapore Pte. Ltd. Manila Branch conducted a study this year on the global trends and best practices in Talent Development of US-based companies. This study reveals significant shifts and relatively new best practices that are transforming Talent Development. Our general finding is that the direction to which these trends point out is towards the democratization of learning and the shift in the role of Talent Development from content creator and trainer to being an enabler of such learning democratization. One of the driving forces behind such a shift is Always-On Learning.

What is Always-On Learning About?

Always-On Learning is about being able to access desired learning materials when you need them and where you need them.

Learning is now at one's fingertips as learners have easy access to readily available curated digital learning materials and courses.

The emergence and the fusion of technologies such as Learning Management System (LMS) and mobile applications that enable video streaming of bite-size learning like LinkedIn Learning, YouTube, or Ted X, gave rise to what is called Always-On Learning. Advanced applications like Edcast, Fuse, or Degreed enable learners to create their own content playlist and learning pathways and even share them with others.

Today's learners have greater freedom and a wide array of choices on what to learn and how to learn them, which is the essence of what we mean by the democratization of learning.



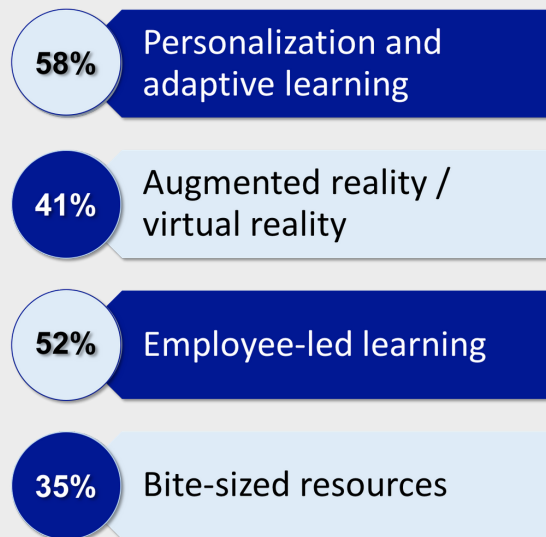
Implications of Always-On Learning to Talent Development

In general, Talent Development practitioners need to adapt quickly and digitally.

Talent Development Practitioners Need to Become Digitally Savvy

New skills set required among Talent Development professionals have rapidly emerged. Based on the CompTIA Workforce and Learning Trends 2020 published by the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) (2020), L&D professionals are trying to rapidly learn emerging technologies and approaches.

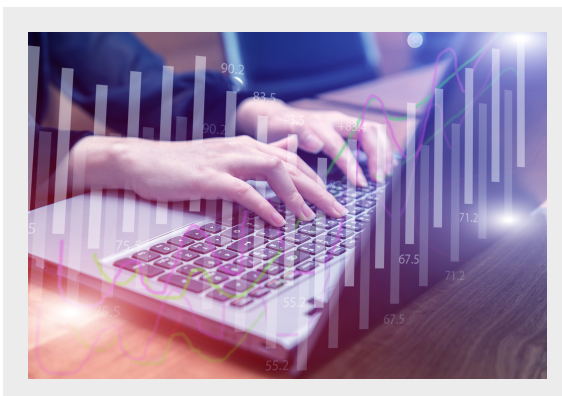
Emerging Technologies and New Approaches that L&D Professionals are Most Excited For



Source: Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) (2020): 'CompTIA Workforce and Learning Trends 2020

The selection and effective use of the right learning technologies to design an engaging digital learning experience for learners has become imperative for Talent Development practitioners.

Designing Digital Learning Experience



Talent Development professionals now need to be adept in designing or managing the design of both e-Learning content and Digital Learning Experience (DLx).

Content-wise, the trend is now towards micro-learning. Designing bite-sized digital learning materials that can be completed within two to five minutes is key to engaging the current generation of learners.

Beyond content, providing an engaging Digital Learning Experience (DLx) is another key ingredient for effective digital learning. At the basic level, incorporating Interactive e-Learning strategies is a must for designing DLx. Both the content and the experience go together in creating a Dynamic Learning environment characterized by constant change, activity, and progress, as opposed to just Static Learning.

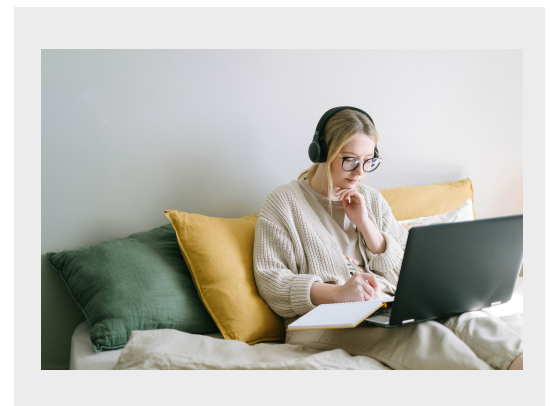
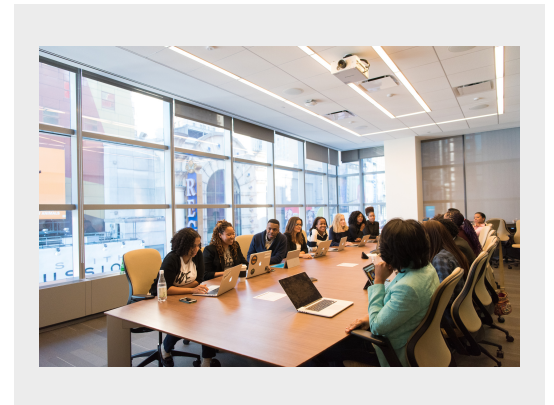
For more advanced organizations, Talent Development practitioners need to learn how to incorporate the use of new tools for Immersive Learning like Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Mixed Reality (MR), to provide a visually appealing experience for learners.

Becoming Digital Marketers

Corollary to such a trend, Talent Development professionals now, more than ever, need to learn the skill of marketing digital learning programs to digitally engage the various generation of learners. The concept of Digital Marketing is no longer the sole domain of Marketing. The need for Digital Marketing within Talent Development was highlighted in LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. As the report showed, there is a need for Talent Development professionals to "think like a marketer." What the LinkedIn report showed is that while there is already significant use of digital marketing tools and technologies, there is still a huge opportunity for Talent Development to increase their time in using these digital technologies to promote employee engagement with learning.

Corporate Best Practices

- **Intel** invested in providing its employees with paid premium access to Degreed, a platform that enables learners to create learning pathways and search for available online resources that they can access on-demand 24/7.
- "**Kellogg** invested in online learning to empower their 10,000+ employees to learn what they need when they need it, and grow their careers." (2019 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn)
- To encourage Always-On Learning, **Google** introduced what is called Whisper Course. A Whisper Course is a form of bite-sized, micro-learning materials that allow managers to quickly apply practical knowledge to address real-work needs.



Conclusion

There is a clear imperative for the Talent Development profession and its practitioners to quickly adapt to becoming enablers of learning democratization to effectively engage the Always-On generation of Learners.

More and more, Talent Development is expected, not just to provide the dynamic learning content and experience, but to enable an environment where Always-On Learning can thrive in an organization.

When employees are empowered to pursue Always-On Learning on their own, where they can create their own learning pathways aligned to organizational goals and use the right digital technologies, then we can say that Talent Development is performing its role of democratizing learning.

About the Contributor



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Jun's expertise is in HR and Talent Development, Agile Practices, Design Thinking, Quality Management, and Corporate Performance Management. Jun also has extensive hands-on leadership experience in diverse disciplines which include HR, OD, Quality Management, Risk Management, Strategy, and Corporate Performance Management, which he gained from his 28+ years of working in various companies locally and abroad.

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