



**HOW TO BUILD
THE L&D PROGRAM
YOUR EMPLOYEES
AND COMPANY
ACTUALLY NEED**

Southern
New Hampshire
University



CREATING AN L&D PROGRAM

The building blocks of best-in-class learning and development programs

With more jobs than ever requiring college degrees and the talent market becoming tighter, companies in all industries are turning to internal learning and development (L&D) programs to develop and retain the employees they have. New technologies and economic conditions are pushing the boundaries of what companies can accomplish — and setting new milestones that every company must reach to keep up — so a strong L&D program is essential to corporate strategy.

However, L&D that cultivates a dynamic workforce isn't simple. This e-book features experts giving actionable advice on planning effective L&D programs, calculating return on investment and choosing educational partners. You'll find

several profiles and examples showing how incorporating learning and education into your organization is a powerful way to attract top talent, set your employees up for success and take your business to the next level.

Naturally, each organization's L&D program will be unique, but the best have a few principles in common.



42% of millennials ranked learning and development as the most important benefit when deciding where to work.¹

¹ <https://about.udemy.com/ideas-and-opinions/2018-millennials-at-work-research-report/>



1. Define organizational needs and pathways

When Scott Doggett came on board as Holiday Inn Club Vacations' senior director of learning and development, he promptly interviewed executives to identify the biggest company goals and obstacles. "If I just sat in a vacuum and tried to develop training that I thought was cool and engaging, we wouldn't be successful," he said. "It has to be directed toward the bigger goals of the company."

For Doggett, this included taking a hard look at the competencies required for each job and deciding how to train for them. The team identified 6 core competencies for each of the 5 job families within the organization. These competencies are evaluated in the hiring process, and training and other learning resources target those competencies in order to fill the internal hiring pipeline. (See sidebar.)

Employees should also be made aware of how L&D offerings fit with the career paths available to them, said Haley Glover, strategy director at the Lumina Foundation. She recommended making it clear what opportunities can be opened up to an employee if they take specific training or earn a specific credential.

"The learner, in taking that leap to expose themselves to learning and new opportunity, should understand in context what it's going to mean in terms of their career," she said. "Their pathway shouldn't just be left to chance."

What do they need to learn?

Job categories and essential competencies at Holiday Inn Club Vacations

- **Team Member** — frontline employees
Customer service, functional performance, initiating action, managing work, quality of work, teamwork
- **Professional** — corporate services and administrative support
Adaptability, communication, customer service, functional performance, initiating action, quality of work
- **Leader of People** — managers and supervisors
Adaptability, building trust, coaching, communication, customer service, decision making
- **Functional Leader** — VPs, senior directors, directors
Building partnerships, building a successful team, building trust, communication, decision making, developing others
- **Senior Leader** — executive VPs and senior VPs
Building organizational talent, cultivating networks, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, establishing strategic direction, selling the vision

2. Invest for the biggest impact

Where will L&D dollars make the biggest impact within your organization? Glover noted that addressing retention and turnover costs is one major area in which organizations can most effectively use L&D — particularly on the front line.

Some organizations may worry that if they invest too much in tuition assistance and college credentials for frontline workers, those employees will then go on to greener pastures, but Glover noted the opposite is actually true. Employees who are higher up in the organization, she said, are more likely to be poached after they've used education benefits to get additional credentials.

“If you want your resources to be used in the best way, you will be better served by targeting the right level of the organization.”

— Haley Glover, strategy director at the Lumina Foundation

“That right level is very often the front line,” Glover said. “You’ve created a highly promotable, high-retention group of individuals who are committed to the company and committed to pursuing long-term careers with the company.”

3. Design for equity

How will decisions be made about who gets to participate in L&D programs or tuition assistance benefits? Does the approval process lie in HR or with unit managers?

Glover recommended centralizing the administration of L&D spending in order to ensure that everyone is treated equitably. “Putting judgment in the hands of individuals rather than in policy almost always results in differential treatment for populations,” she noted.

Centralized administration helps ensure that all employees can take advantage of opportunities, regardless of the potential implicit bias of a supervisor.

Organizations also need to implement an effective awareness campaign. Senior employees may be more likely to hear about or seek out educational opportunities. Frontline workers may not be on the lookout for them.

“You’d be surprised at how few employees know that a program exists,” Glover said. You can’t have an equitable L&D program if the culture of your workplace is “you have to know to ask.”



4. Market benefits to students and stakeholders

In addition to making all employees aware of L&D activities, effective internal marketing will also promote the benefits.

Beth Eacret is vice president of education and safety for Grifols Plasma Operations, which offers Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) College for America programs to its employees as part of its comprehensive Grifols Academy. They take care to highlight individual success stories in communications they send to employees and in the monthly updates they send to leadership.

Eacret emphasizes Grifols' tuition assistance program and the flexibility of the degree offering through biannual marketing campaigns at the beginning of each term. Along with email messages, posters in every center and information on the internal employee portal, Eacret holds webinars with Grifols Academy staff and the SNHU Workforce Partnerships team during which interested employees can learn about the program.

At Holiday Inn Club Vacations, also an SNHU partner, Doggett and his Academy of Learning and Development team get the word out about learning opportunities through the award-winning Certified Academy Trainer (C.A.T.) program, which identifies a few employees in each of the company's 26 resorts to deliver and promote trainings.

"We found that this is a great group to get the word out and help us promote all these programs," said Doggett. He added that the C.A.T. program itself illustrates the value of targeted, active learning and development. Participants in this developmental opportunity have, as a whole, about a 20% promotion rate within the company.

Takeaways: Critical steps to L&D that works

- Define needs.
- Define pathways.
- Establish metrics and a measurement plan.
- Target investment for biggest impact.
- Design for the front line, not just managers.
- Remember the unique learning needs of working adults.
- Develop partnerships with education organizations.
- Turn your employees into advocates.
- Distribute awareness broadly, but centralize administration.

5. Choose the right educational partners

Companies don't need to go it alone when it comes to educating their workforce. Many companies find success partnering with outside educational organizations. That might be certificate or degree programs at their local community colleges, or it might be vendors of off-the-shelf leadership programs. Other partners might include course-building software vendors who provide the instructional design expertise while the employer provides the content.

Whether forming a new partnership with a college or considering an off-the-shelf training program, Doggett does his homework to ensure that the program's values are a good match with his organization's core ideals. "It is a courtship, if you will," he said. "I want to make sure they are a good cultural fit for us."

Eacret and her Grifols Academy team particularly value being able to work with an institution that can act as a true partner rather than as a vendor.

“SNHU has helped us understand what other organizations are doing, how our students are doing, and they helped us move forward and promote the program.”

– Beth Eacret,
Vice President of education and safety for Grifols Plasma Operations

"They're really trying to understand what our business needs are," Eacret said.

6. Go beyond PowerPoint

Make the most of your L&D investment by ensuring employees are actually retaining the knowledge they learn. Doggett recommended getting away from traditional classroom lecture-style trainings and moving toward something more engaging.

"We've had a lot of success with thematic adventure learning experiences," he said. One example is a Wild West-themed leadership class called Real Resolution, which uses storytelling and role playing to teach team members about resolving guest issues.

He also recommended organizations consider a blended approach to delivering learning. "I say the classroom should be about 10% of the development," he said. "The rest comes through identifying great coaches and mentors and through real-life experiences."

That includes getting people involved in specialized task forces, cross-training, job rotations, short-term assignments and volunteerism.

7. Design for long-term success

Talent needs, workforce demographics, skill set requirements and organizational direction all change on a regular basis. That's why a strong L&D program should be designed with adaptation built into the system, said Lumina's Glover. "Making a program that is evergreen but not set in stone is really important."

She recommended companies review their L&D programs at least annually to keep them fresh and effective, such as

taking a closer look at how well competencies match up with job requirements. Members of leadership should also check in with and speak to employees regularly to ensure that they are both aware of L&D opportunities and that the programs continue to meet everyone's needs.



Aligning L&D with business results

Finding the perfect individual for a job description is getting tougher as the unemployment rate is at historic lows. Companies in all industries are trying to design strong L&D programs that don't just benefit new employees but are also a powerful growth tool for retaining talent and nurturing the company's future leaders.

But it isn't enough just to have an L&D program on the books as an employee benefit or to cover compliance training. It needs to be designed with intent in order to achieve the desired business results. A strong L&D program is deliberate, focused and accessible in order to achieve a positive outcome for both the money and time invested.

UNDERSTANDING ROI

Measuring ROI is possible

How can you tell whether the money you're spending on L&D is making a difference in the lives of your employees, your organization's overall strategy and the bottom line? Thankfully, clear answers to this complex problem are emerging.

Haley Glover, strategy director at the Lumina Foundation, has led numerous large employers through the process of determining ROI for their L&D and tuition assistance programs. Collectively, Lumina's findings at those organizations add up to a powerful case for tuition assistance. For example, as a result of its tuition reimbursement program, Discover Financial Services realized a 144% ROI and saved \$10.9 million over four years.²

Glover recommended organizations do a solid ROI analysis in order to establish a program's effectiveness and to help guide future planning.

“**Every year you're going to be looking at cost-cutting measures, so you should be able to justify the program at every turn.**”

– Haley Glover, strategy director at the Lumina Foundation

At its core, an ROI evaluation simply involves adding up revenue-generating or cost-saving benefits and dividing that by program costs. But identifying those benefits and measuring them is much trickier.



86% of millennials said they would stay at their current company if they were offered career training and development opportunities.³



² <https://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/talent-investments-pay-off-discover-financial-services>

³ <https://www.getbridge.com/news/press-releases/millennials-are-most-likely-stay-loyal-jobs-development-opportunities>

Tracking the following metrics can help identify how employees who have taken training or enrolled in tuition assistance programs compare to those who have not. These can be proxies for decreased talent management costs or increased productivity.

- **Turnover and retention:**
What percentage of employees leave the organization within a set time frame?
- **Absenteeism:**
How many days do employees miss each year?
- **Promotion:**
How often are employees promoted to the next level of the organization?
- **Productivity:**
How many calls per minute does each employee make, or how many units per minute do they produce?
- **Waste reduction:**
How much waste is produced by each employee?
- **Innovation:**
How likely is an employee to come up with a new product, service or process?
- **Employee engagement:**
How do employee engagement survey results differ from employee to employee?
- **Customer satisfaction:**
What are the customer satisfaction scores for individual employees or store locations?
- **Brand recognition:**
How has the brand value increased because of the L&D program?

For some of these metrics (such as absenteeism, productivity or retention) it will be relatively easy to calculate the dollar amount saved or earned. Other metrics, such as brand recognition, may be difficult to measure and also difficult to attribute to a single effort like employee training.

Each company Glover has worked with had different data available, influencing what Lumina was able to measure when calculating ROI. Much of this was data from the human resources department.

“It turns out a lot of companies don’t measure at an individual employee level beyond turnover, promotion, transfer and absenteeism,” said Glover. If companies do track productivity measures, such as how many calls an employee completes per hour, it’s often done in a way that isn’t attached to an individual record, she noted. This makes it tough to track employees who have taken training versus those who haven’t.

Glover recommended setting up or reconciling data systems (such as HR, customer feedback, employee engagement and satisfaction surveys) to make sure the organization can track day-to-day output by individual people. “Bringing those often very discrete data systems together enables more robust ROI analysis,” she said.



How Grifols develops a learning mindset at work

In an industry driven by research and innovations, Grifols Plasma Operations understands just how important a mindset of continuous learning is. From early research breakthroughs by founder José Antonio Grifols Lucas to the ongoing development of life-saving innovations, the company has been on the forefront of the plasma industry since 1940. Now, they're establishing themselves as a pioneer in educating workers and future leaders in the plasma business.

The Grifols Academy was founded in 2009 with the goals of training employees of Grifols' U.S. arm (BioMat USA) and improving patient care and innovation in the industry by championing lifelong learning.

The focus of the Academy is twofold, said Beth Eacret, vice president of education and safety at Grifols Plasma Operations: keeping employees on the cutting edge of their fields and nurturing a hiring pipeline for the company. And it's working — over 50% percent of people who have graduated or are enrolled have been promoted within the organization.

Fostering lifelong learning in the front lines

Along with the tangible benefit of building a hiring pipeline, Eacret and her team are also looking for results on the individual level. "Our goal is to provide the opportunity for employees to get into the mindset of continuous improvement and learning," she said.

The effort starts at the front lines, which include many employees who might not have had a chance to get a college degree. The company offers employees 40 to 60 scholarships per year in addition to a tuition reimbursement program. So far, 63 Grifols students have earned degrees through College for America, with 5 of them earning bachelor's degrees.

Providing frontline workers with continuous development opportunities to help them advance personally and professionally is key not just to their personal success, but to the success of the company, according to Eacret. "The people who are doing the job know the answers better than the people at the top," she said.

GRIFOLS

How Holiday Inn Club Vacations individualizes learning plans

The biweekly email to employees of Holiday Inn Club Vacations contains more than just the usual company news. It's also where you'll find ALD TV, the TV channel of the company's Academy of Learning and Development. Each short video goes behind the scenes of a learning initiative and introduces new classes and opportunities.

ALD TV is just one of the tools Scott Doggett, senior director of learning and development for Holiday Inn Club Vacations, uses to let employees know about opportunities for advancement and development. He also promotes employee development with a standalone website, a colorful course catalog and an employee advocacy program.

Employee development is crucial — and complex — for a company with 26 resorts and 7,400 villas in the U.S. The Academy handles everything from new employee orientation and service training to designing in-person and online classes for individual departments.

Some of the Academy's courses are mandatory for a specific role, but most classes — particularly in leadership and personal development — are open to any employee who's interested in taking the next step in their career.

A defined pathway to success

The company's commitment to giving employees an opportunity to expand and grow within the organization differentiates the brand, said Doggett, and one of the purposes of the Academy program is to build a strong internal pipeline.

Holiday Inn Club Vacations has a heavy emphasis on succession planning, allowing employees to indicate roles they're interested in, whether that's a general manager, chef or sales director.

Once a year, leadership throughout the organization reviews employees to see who has expressed interest in which roles and to identify the development resources they will need. Then the Academy helps put together learning plans to fill in those gaps for individuals.

This is where degree-granting educational partners come into play. Holiday Inn Club Vacations supports progress toward a degree for its employees with tuition assistance and tuition discount programs.

Said Doggett, "We try to have something for everyone, and we want to make it possible for anybody who wants to go back to school to realize that dream."





SELECTING GOOD EDUCATION PARTNERS

4 questions to ask about education partners

According to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, 95% of the 11.6 million jobs created during the U.S. economic recovery went to workers who had college experience. ⁴

To help your workers progress toward college degrees, you may want to partner with an institution of higher education. What factors should you consider when exploring those partnerships?

⁴ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/americas-divided-recovery/>



1. How successful are they with your demographic?

A traditional college program designed for young adults with no professional experience might not be effective with your employees. Some colleges are responding by designing curricula that take into account the learning styles of older learners. For example, project-based learning modeled on real-world workplace challenges can be more effective with more experienced learners.

Consider if your educational partners are used to working with adult learners who have full-time jobs. Look for an organization that has a good track record with the types of students your organization will be sending them.

2. Does it have the flexibility your team needs?

Employees can't make progress toward a degree if they can't get to the classes because of busy work schedules and family responsibilities. A traditional full-time, campus-based program on a semester schedule is likely to be frustrating for adult learners.

Online degree programs help, but those may still be one-size-fits-all. Look for education partners who understand that the schedule of every working adult is unique.

3. How will they integrate what your employees already know?

Your employees are already experts at their current jobs. How will that expertise translate into their degree program? Some programs may give credit for past work experiences.

Ensuring your educational partners' programs integrate with your employees' work experience will maximize the benefit to your organization and to the student.

4. How will you measure success together?

You will want to be able to measure both effectiveness and ROI so you can adjust your L&D investments later.

Is your educational partner willing to work with you to set goals and identify success metrics that lead to those goals? What feedback and reporting will they give to help you understand how successful the program is?



About SNHU:

Southern New Hampshire University is a fully accredited nonprofit institution founded in 1932. We partner with employers across the country to bring a competency-based college degree program – called College for America – to their employees at an extraordinarily low cost.

Learn how to partner with Southern New Hampshire University.

 855-764-8232

 snhu.edu/workforce-partnerships

Credits:

Researching and writing by Jessie Kwak and McGuire Editorial Content Marketing Agency.

Southern
New Hampshire
University 

Workforce Partnerships
Southern New Hampshire University
1230 Elm Street, Manchester, NH 03101