THE CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES®

THE GLOBAL HOME OF SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP®



SKILLING TALENT: A FRAMEWORK TO UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING TALENT

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INTRODUCTION

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Upskilling and reskilling may be buzzwords, but they're critical in today's business world. Today's ever-changing business landscape requires organizations to upskill and reskill their workforce in order to keep up. Yet, in many cases, skilling talent is siloed to the onboarding experience.

Historically, when new employees join an organization, they participate in onboarding to gain new knowledge of company policies and processes, as well as learn how to perform in their new role. Throughout the onboarding process, new hires receive training, coaching, mentorship and feedback as they learn how to navigate their new position. However, once onboarding is complete and learners leave the classroom, that's usually where learning and development (L&D) ends.

Event-based training as a one-time event won't keep up with today's rate of transformation. L&D must extend beyond onboarding to keep pace with the emergence of new skills, capabilities and even technologies. According to Deloitte, the half-life of a skill today is about five years and dropping quickly, and IBM estimates that to be even shorter for technical skills.



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Without regular skills development, employees' skills will become obsolete. World Economic Forum estimates that more than 1 billion jobs, almost one-third of all jobs worldwide, are likely to be transformed by technology in the next decade. Jobs are changing, and organizations must be prepared to equip their talent with much-needed skills for today and in the future.

Prioritizing upskilling and reskilling not only works to keep pace with new capabilities, but also close skills gaps. Skills gaps arise when employees lack the skills needed to perform their jobs. Research shows that nine out of 10 executives and managers face employee skills gaps or expect new gaps to emerge in the next five years.

In this e-book, we'll examine how building a continuous learning culture can empower employees to drive their own development, close skills gaps and keep pace with the rapidly aging shelflife of skills.

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SKILLING TALENT

Prioritizing L&D is not just a nice-to-have in today's business world, it's a must-have—for both the business and employees. Employees want to work for organizations that invest in their growth and development, and organizations need to ensure their employees have the capabilities and skills needed to innovate and be successful in their roles. Research shows that skilling initiatives boost employee retention and engagement levels, thus increasing a business's profitability.



Skilling talent can:

- Ensure that employees have the necessary skills to excel in their roles
- Emphasize the importance of developing leadership skills throughout the employee experience
- Reduce time to proficiency
- Positively impact communication, engagement and collaboration by helping employees understand their roles and responsibilities within the organization

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There are two approaches to skilling talent: upskilling and reskilling.

- Upskilling is the process of building upon employee's existing skills and strengths to enhance their skills sets. Upskilling talent can increase internal mobility within an organization, boosting loyalty and long-term commitment
- Reskilling is the process of developing and training employees to fulfill job functions and tasks outside of their current role and existing skill set. Reskilling talent can help organizations remain competitive, avoid layoffs and cut recruiting costs

Ultimately, skilling talent works to keep an organization in sync with ongoing changes in the business world. Organizations need to ensure employees are ready to meet new challenges and adopt new capabilities.

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CULTIVATING A CONTINUOUS LEARNING CULTURE

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So, what does this mean for L&D departments? To maintain a skilled workforce, L&D leaders must cultivate a culture of continuous learning that prioritizes and invests in the development of their employees.

Organizations need to adopt a learning architecture that supports continuous learning and enables learners to get the training they need at every stage in their careers. To accomplish this, L&D leaders need to establish a learning culture that redefines and realigns organizational goals and operations around continuous learning, equipping leaders with the information they need to effectively deliver the right training to the right employee at the right time.

Following a framework like the Situational Leadership® Model helps establish a common language around performance, allowing upskilling and reskilling initiatives to flourish. This equips leaders with the tools they need to provide continuous support and feedback to meet learners where they are on their learning journey.



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HOW THE SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP® MODEL SUPPORTS PERFORMANCE

Top-down leadership is not effective in today's fast-paced business world. With goals and skills constantly changing, multidirectional leadership is needed to become more agile and responsive to change.

The Situational Leadership® Model is based on the relationship between leaders and followers and provides a framework to analyze an individual learner's Performance Readiness® for performing a specific task, function or objective.

Let's examine three ways this framework can help organizations create a culture of performance to maintain a skilled workforce.



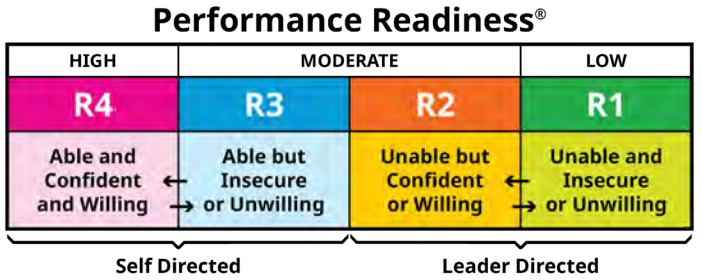
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TAILORS THE LEADERSHIP APPROACH



Leaders must be able to accurately diagnose a learner's Performance Readiness® level for a given task, and then match their leadership approach to support their specific learning needs. A leader can do this by asking questions, observing their performance or using formal assessments.

Based on a leader's assessment, employee readiness for a given task can be classified into four levels:



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Based on a learner's Performance Readiness® level, a leader will adopt one of four leadership styles:



STYLE 1: TELLING

The leader makes decisions and closely supervises execution.



STYLE 2: SELLING

The leader still makes decisions but provides background and context and engages with the learner to reinforce buy-in and continued progress.



STYLE 3: PARTICIPATING

The follower makes decisions with the support from the leader.



STYLE 4: DELEGATING

The follower is trusted to not only make task-related decisions, but to suggest strategies for improvement.

Matching leadership style to performance level increases the chances for learning efficacy and better outcomes. By having the ability to understand where an employee is related to their performance on a specific task, leaders can more effectively discuss performance needs and identify areas for improvement.

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ESTABLISHES A COMMON LANGUAGE

When performance is measured at the task-level, leaders can provide more specific and targeted feedback to improve the performance of a learner. For instance, a learner new to a task should be met with an S1 leadership approach that provides specific direction and step-by-step guidance for the task.

Having a structured approach to uncovering performance gaps allows leaders and followers to engage in more meaningful conversations that can lead to performance improvement. Using the same language allows leaders to quickly understand the needs of a learner and tailor their leadership approach to meet those needs.



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EMPOWERS EMPLOYEES TO OWN THEIR DEVELOPMENT

Performance improvement is a two-way street. Leaders alone should not shoulder the responsibility of employee performance. Employees must play an active role in their own development and understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Using a common language around performance allows employees to communicate their learning needs to their managers and other leaders across the company. This allows for more meaningful and productive conversations to occur, establishing clear expectations around performance and allowing employees to drive their own growth and development.



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CONCLUSION

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L&D leaders must prioritize upskilling and reskilling in their learning offerings to ensure their workforce's skills sets align with evolving business needs. In today's world of work, new skills and technologies are increasingly emerging, making continuous skills development a necessity to stay competitive and achieve business objectives.

Learning shouldn't be siloed to the onboarding experience, but instead should follow an employee throughout their entire learning journey. To encourage this shift in mindset, L&D leaders must invest in ongoing training and personalized feedback to foster a culture of performance.

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For more than 50 years, The Center for Leadership Studies (CLS) has been at the forefront of leadership training and organizational development. CLS is the global home of the original Situational Leadership® Model—the most successful and widely adopted leadership training model available. Using this research-based model as the foundation, our influence-focused courses enable leaders to engage in effective performance conversations that build trust, increase productivity and drive behavior change.

Learn more at situational.com.

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