Chapter 9

Knowledge Swarms and Experiential Hives™: A Compelling Vision for On-Demand Mobile Knowledge Mentoring – Nation Building and Transforming Mentors Into Multipliers

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ABSTRACT

We stand at the dawn of the greatest evolutionary disruption in the potential for large-scale human learning and development through the rapid convergence of truly transformational communication, cooperation and collaboration technologies and capabilities. The knowledge force is increasingly made up of very diverse employee profiles with differences in not only age and gender, but changing cultural norms and values, pervasive belief systems and large disparities in educational backgrounds. Highly individualised learning styles and behavioural characteristics and a host of other potential societal learning dividers, also magnify the challenge of building truly reflexive and responsive high-impact learning organisations. This chapter introduces the pressing need for a significant step-change in the way we approach company and community learning on a large scale and attempts to offer research-based insights and empirical evidence into media-enriching solutions such as mobile knowledge mentoring which will change the nature and experience of learning forever.

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BACKGROUND

Metaphorically speaking, we are on the fluid face of a very rapidly swelling wave in a mega-surge of unpredictable change. The demands of, and on the multiple stakeholders engaged in the global organisational learning and critical knowledge transfer landscape are changing so rapidly that we need drastic transformation in the way we approach this learning, not only in the future, but right now.

The internet of everything (IoE) coupled with the exciting opportunities created by machine learning and the inexorable and accelerating convergence of modern disruptive communication and collaboration technologies present unparalleled learning opportunities. At the same time, the tsunami-like transformational forces and the mercurial new world of work, as described by the Gartner Watchlist Report (2010), present learning challenges of an unprecedented nature and scale.

Describing the modern learner as “overwhelmed, distracted and impatient”, the research by established industry leaders such as Bersin by Deloitte (2014) and infographic authors Tauber and Johnson (2014) indicates that the modern learner will both require and demand a new way of learning empowerment and enablement. Combinations of highly engaging and experientially-rewarding learning technologies and engagement methodologies will be required, providing on-demand learning solutions, anywhere and anytime.

Generational differences alone, as described by Dittman (2005) account for a significant element of the “disconnect” between the young, ambitious and socially hyper-connected graduates of today. While their senior managers and subject matter experts are generally more qualified, knowledgeable, experienced and connected, they are also far less technologically inclined and social media-oriented and will need to engage far more enthusiastically in previously unfamiliar learning tools, techniques and technologies, if they want to remain relevant.

The unacceptably high incidence of predictable, repetitive and increasingly costly mistakes in all business and public sectors, indicates that our long-cherished traditional and theoretical models of teaching, learning and knowledge sharing are ineffective and unsustainable. The traditional focus and reliance on old teaching methods and searchable chunked content in the form of policies, procedures and training manuals have just not worked. The rules and systems-oriented approach to organisational learning and knowledge exchange, which included the almost mechanistic gathering, capturing, packaging and sharing of large amounts of disconnected information without context, have been shown to offer sub-optimal learning and knowledge transfer.
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