

# 4 Ways to Tie Learning Directly Into Business Needs

*Learning vs. Business Goals?  
It's Not an Either/Or.*



Still thinking of employee learning and business needs as separate – or competing – entities?

Your employees want targeted training that's ready when they are, and they also want to be rewarded for developing new skills. Companies also want to provide learning, but only if it shows results at the lowest possible cost.

So how do you reconcile the two? By adopting the mindset that offering professional development and achieving organizational goals aren't an either/or proposition. Companies that align broader business objectives with learning opportunities for their employees achieve higher levels of engagement, retention, and success in the marketplace.



## 1 Connect training to specific business goals.

First, strategize how you'll align your business needs with employees' training aspirations. For example, if the C-level wants to prioritize bigger deals, then provide training to sales reps on how to expand the sale or negotiate better.

Next, involve your key stakeholders, from execs to department heads, so your training goals are business-driven, not HR-led.

Third, use a tool (i.e. a chart or a spreadsheet) to communicate priorities and progress to your team. This will help keep the focus solely on business goals and eliminate distractions that don't achieve your desired results.



## Use Big Data to create strategic learning plans.

Your CRM, LMS, and other tools are data-rich, yet they're often kept siloed. Unify this data to quickly highlight the cause-effect relationship between learning initiatives and business success.

*Are we teaching the right things? Is training effective?*

For example, improve call center service by measuring performance of employees who received training, and also of those who didn't. Track this in your LMS, then compare their scores based on your CRM records to determine if the training was effective at improving the customer experience.

### Get more from Big Data by:

- starting with a goal in mind
- collecting as much data as possible (via data warehouse, LMS, CRM, etc.)
- validating the data
- translating complex data into simple visuals – plots, charts, graphs – for decision-makers



## Let customer feedback inform learning initiatives.

Smart companies use customer needs and feedback to create employee learning plans. Get started by:

- truly listening to your customers' input and using that data to guide your strategy
- building an employee learning plan that's directly tied to customer insights
- linking customer loyalty scores with a reward system to motivate employees

One global consumer transactions firm (ATMs, cash registers, etc.) successfully implemented these. Clients complained their engineers often lacked the ability to fix broken machines on their initial visit, which led to extended service delays. They responded by providing engineers with access to maintenance data. This led to more same-day repairs and happier clients. The company created employee training modules that increased customer satisfaction and retention.



## Use career development planning to increase engagement.

Employee engagement is linked to career development. Managers who have ongoing discussions with employees about their aspirations – and support those goals – create sustainable engagement.

Employees are accountable for managing their own careers, but supervisors have a responsibility of providing learning opportunities and performance reviews to help maximize their team's capabilities.

Business and learning alignment occurs when your employee training is directly connected to your company's goals. First, you'll have to build a strategy involving all your stakeholders, and then create a clear communication process to the team showing how you'll execute it. Organizations should also embrace Big Data analytics to inform learning opportunities. The training you offer also needs to be driven by customer feedback. Finally, supporting your employees' career aspirations through development will increase engagement and productivity.

The result of alignment is a stronger workforce whose training goals drive your company's goals.

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