

Improving the Employee Learning Experience

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Transcript

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Hi, I'm Krissy Schilz, and this is my MDS 495 capstone project. In the last four years, I've personally met with every new employee on their first day of employment, to welcome them to our company, acquaint them to our purpose, vision, and values, and share with them the various training resources provided during onboarding. Over those years, I've noticed that our new and existing employees often have trouble locating training within our online Learning Management System, or LMS. For my capstone project, I set out to improve the employee learning experience at Western States Equipment by making it easier for them to locate training within the LMS. Our leaders have provided us with a set of critical success factors that they feel must go right for the company to meet its goals. My project directly related to two of those.

With these CFSs in mind, I spoke with the leaders of our four largest departments about the pain-points they feel when training new and existing employees. Then I met with our LMS administrator to learn about tools I may be able to use to make things a little easier. I witnessed this struggle with new and existing employees, but I also had personally experienced the frustrations of trying to find training in our LMS. At a time when I was looking to transition roles, I had a very difficult time locating training to help me develop the skills necessary to be successful in the new role. This awareness of my own desire to drive development, and the knowledge that others struggle with the same dilemma, drove me to finding a solution. I considered the struggles that our leaders may have in ensuring that their teams have the skills necessary to do their jobs, and I was surprised to find that each department had very similar needs. They were looking for a way to have easier access to training materials for new employees, to have skills development training available for existing employees, and resources for employees looking to advance their careers into leadership roles or transition to other departments.

In preparing for this solution, I found an online community group of other LMS administrators who have the same software platform. Through exploration of that site and communication with others who have similar problems, I was able to roll out some of my early ideas, based on their trial-and-error experiences. I learned about a new functionality that had recently been added to our software via an update, but had not yet been implemented. This new functionality allowed for the creation of workspaces, much like small websites within the LMS, that could be uniquely tailored to house and categorize training content. This unique solution had never been used before in our LMS, and was such a new feature that even the provider didn't have any instruction, documentation, or use-case scenarios for using them.

In creating the first workspaces, I really focused on keeping it simple, keeping it clean, and keeping my learner in mind to make sure that it would be easy and intuitive to use. But I realized that someone would need to maintain them, so that triggered me to create a training manual to give to each department, so that they can build the skills they would need to add, remove, or replace content. My capstone project focused on four large departments. Each had the need for resources for new employees, existing employees looking to grow their skills, and employees

looking to move to other departments or grow in a leadership role. But that left me with a problem of how to get them to it.

Having the resource there still needed to be easy to access. So, I partnered with the LMS administrator to do a full refresh of our LMS homepage, including prominent links to the new department-specific workspaces, where our employees could easily find them right from the homepage. To measure the success of my project, I surveyed my stakeholders from each department. I wanted to make sure that they were satisfied with the workspace that I had created for them. So, I asked for their level of agreement that they would recommend the workspace to another department. All 13 stakeholders indicated that they would promote the use of a workspace. That tells me that they found value in the tool I created for them.

I also wanted to know if the training manual I created gave them the skills needed to maintain their workspace going forward. So, 11 of 13, or 84%, indicated that they strongly agreed they had gained those skills. The remaining two agreed, but less strongly. The successful implementation of these workspaces gave my stakeholders the ability to take ownership of the training available to their teams. They'll no longer have to wait for an LMS administrator to provide that content. This gives them the ability to be flexible and adjust to training needs as they arise.

According to a 2019 infographic on the seven keys to employee turnover, 69% of employees are more likely to stay with a company if they have a good onboarding experience, and 72% of job seekers are driven by career advancement opportunities. These department-specific workspaces will make that training content more readily available to new employees, leading to a more positive onboarding experience, and give our existing employees the ability to drive their own career advancement opportunities.

Employees will now have an intuitive resource for locating the appropriate training for their needs at all stages of the employee lifecycle. This is going to increase engagement, reduce voluntary turnover, and as an added benefit, develop the skills necessary to do their jobs effectively, which should result in a more positive customer experience as well, both of which positively affect the bottom line for the company as a whole.

I chose to create department-specific workspaces to provide easier access to training resources within our LMS. In order to complete it, I made connections through a community work site. I used shared knowledge and experience to guide my solution, I acquired basic HTML coding skills to build the work sites, and used marketing techniques to ensure that the workspaces were inviting and intuitive to users. Lastly, I built relationships within each department, and created a network of leaders ready to update training and keep their employees' skills up-to-date for both short- and long-term department needs.

The use of workspaces to solve this problem was not only unique to my company. As an early adopter of this new workspace feature, the LMS software company has asked us to use this solution as a use-case for other companies looking to implement these workspaces and their systems. The successful completion of the project will benefit not only my employees, but also provide valuable feedback and example to other companies looking to solve similar problems worldwide. This is a listing of my references used during the research and development stage of my project. I thank you for taking the time to listen.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.