

Align Learning With Business Goals

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Too often organizations realize that their day-to-day operational issues are driving their learning. This is especially true when line managers drive most training requests or when catalogues form the basis for training decisions. That's not to say that day-to-day issues are not worth addressing. It means that learning initiatives are reactionary rather than visionary. It also means that training may not be aligned with the business goals of the organization.

"Learning initiatives are reactionary rather than visionary."

Learning as a business strategy

Although day-to-day issues reflect business realities, they may not reflect where the organization is going and what it wants to achieve. That's why organizations are starting to take a more strategic approach to learning. They are asking themselves: *What does the organization need to develop? Who needs to develop their skills? Where is our knowledge lacking? How does our training help us meet our business goals?*

The role of learning in achieving goals

This more strategic approach means giving learning a place at the executive table. Larger organizations may create a Chief Learning Officer (CLO) position on the executive team. Smaller organizations might bring the learning specialist into their strategic planning meetings. As business direction and goals are set, it's important to determine how learning can help the organization achieve its goals.

The role of learning is two-fold:

1. To drive initiatives that help the organization meet its business objectives
2. To respond to training needs by ensuring that learning solutions support business goals.

Aligning training initiatives

As organizations decide to align their training to business goals, they undergo a radical change in practice and orientation in order to make achieving business objectives their priority. Organizations have changed the way they identify training needs, the way they implement training, and even the way they manage the training budget. Parameters are put in place that ensure all training initiatives are aligned to business goals and measured against those goals.

The process can be difficult as people are forced to re-evaluate the systems they have painstakingly put into place and move into new uncharted territory. If the business goals are sound and leadership is supportive, it can result in some creative and innovative new ways of ensuring that training plays a vital role in an organization's success.

