



The New Hire or the Not-So-New Hire: Where Should We Direct Our Limited Learning Investment?

Description

It's rare to find an L&D department that doesn't think hard about how to best accommodate the demands of new hires. There are even action plans for each subgroup—Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials. While these terms are useful, we need to understand demographic shifts and ensure we are able to focus on each group's specific needs. Though this focus on new hires is essential, are we neglecting other equally important groups?

Our organizations are a layer cake of great people, the new and not-so-new, all working and contributing to the success of the business. To focus the lion's share of our learning investment on the newer hires is at the expense of other groups—important groups where a carefully crafted development initiative, with clearly defined objectives and measures to evidence the business impact, could lead to a significant positive change in the workplace.

Consider one group where a relatively small investment could make a big difference. This group is often referred to as the “the clay layer,” “the concrete band,” or even “the organizational permafrost.” None of these are positive or complimentary terms, but they all describe a well-recognized phenomenon.

Let's imagine a new hire who joined our business a decade ago.

Our new recruit was a graduate who joined us positively bubbling with the energy and enthusiasm to change the world or at least the business. Their self-confidence was high, their self-esteem strong, and their can-do attitude evident for all to see.

Fast-forward to ten years later.

Things have changed. Life has caught up with the bright-eyed starburst (not-so-new) hire. She or he has met someone special and set up a home. They are probably having to deal with a mortgage and the demands of being a homeowner. Perhaps a child or two have arrived. Adult responsibilities are an everyday reality.

Their view of their career has altered. Perhaps they have less belief in their ability to change the world or make the career advances they had once assumed. You might say they have become more realistic but with that realism has come a different relationship with the business. Their level of engagement has dropped, and while they are not actively disengaged, they offer less by way of discretionary effort. In short, they give less of themselves, and it is evident for all to see.

Thawing the Permafrost

In our organizations this group could represent a very significant population—our “organizational permafrost.” They are good people who have become stuck. Mostly unintentionally, but sometimes intentionally, they represent the greatest blockers of change—obstacles of strategic messaging coming down and strategic feedback going up. Uninspired and uninspiring, they slow the business down when it really needs to speed up.

How do we balance the need to invest in this group, as well as our new hires, and other deserving groups? How do we optimize the learning investment that is under constant but understandable budgetary pressure?

In short:

Digital: Delivering learning experience and workplace application.

In the past, traditional, face-to-face, multi-modular “leadership programs” may have been the answer. However, in a world where we enjoy global connectivity, work in remote teams, and seek to make environmentally aware business decisions, we should obviously be embracing technology—a lesson brought into sharp relief by the COVID-19 outbreak.

However, we must retire the generic and dull eLearning (which we have all had to endure at some point in our working lives) and create exceptional learning ecosystems that deliver truly democratized learning experiences to everyone.

Tailored Learning: targeted at organizational issues, personalized to the individual.

I advocate investment in organizationally relevant learning. This is the only way to deliver measurable, strategic, and tactical returns to the business unit, to the enterprise, and to the employee. They should be able to enjoy personalized learning supported by diverse and live (virtual) mentors and coaches.

Learning Governance: The data and tools to manage costs and returns.

Learning provision that is designed around a defined learning governance framework to justify the investment by showing real business impact.

Is this a fantasy? Can we really target the permafrost layer and attend to the needs of new hires in a commercially sensible model? Can we provide digital learning that drives workplace application and performance? Can we create learning that caters to more diverse needs? Can we provide access to a broad range of fantastic and affordable coaches to help our people apply the learning back into the workplace?

Ready to see how you can meet your organization's learning and development needs? [Learn more](#) about the unique digital learning environment of [Kaplan Performance Academy](#).

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