**upskillist** Pro

# How to develop a strong Company Learning Culture

A STRATEGIC GUIDE
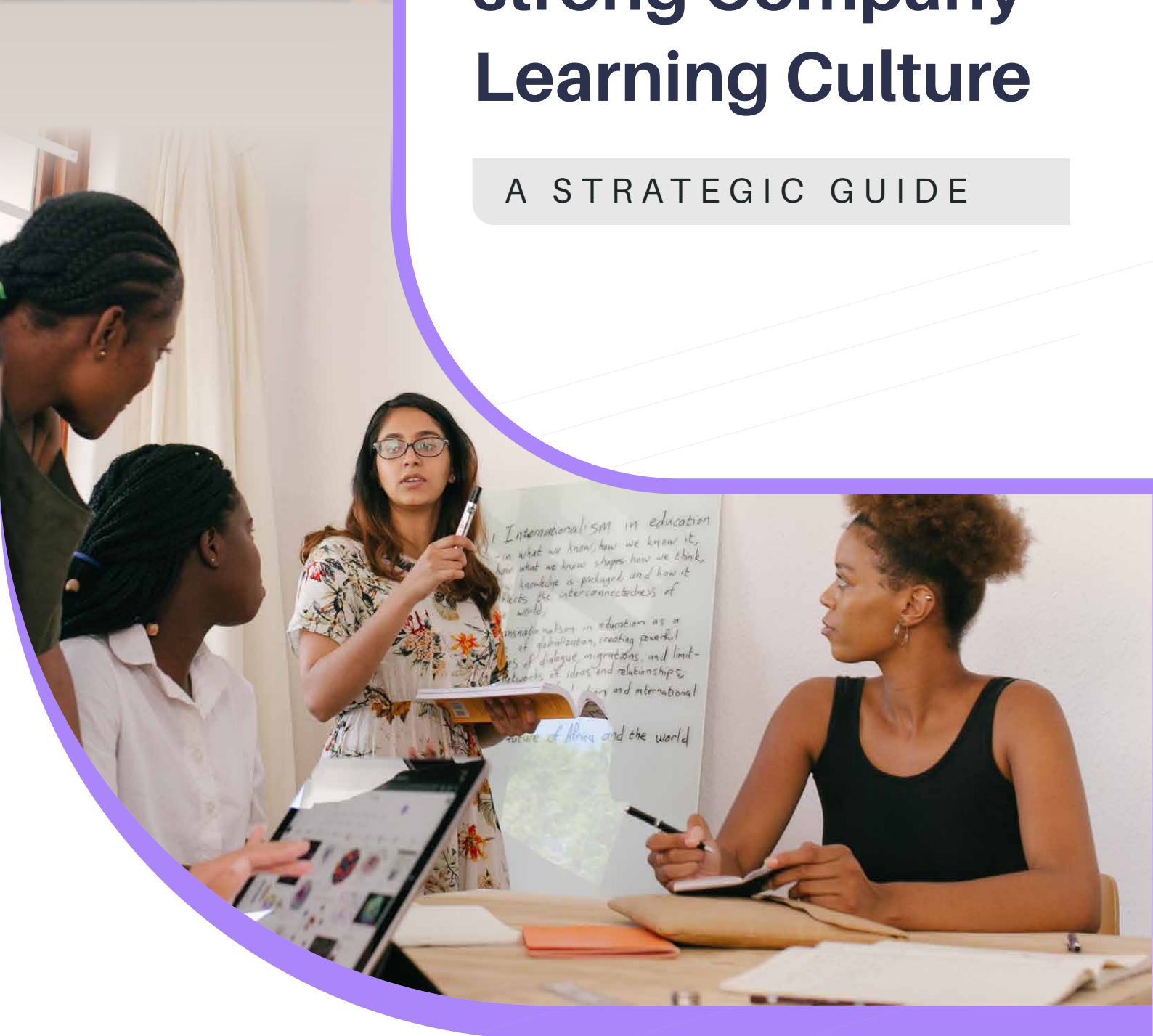
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# Introduction

Organisational success can be attributed to many things including, strong leadership, hard work, adequate funding, good planning, forward-thinking, and many more. But these elements applied individually do not necessarily lead to success.

Looking at the top-performing companies, such as Apple and Tesla, we find another key to success - a culture of continual learning.

Apple, the 2022 top-performing organisation, is described as creative and innovative. The culture focuses on maintaining high levels of innovation that involves workers' creativity and a mindset that challenges conventions and standards. They depend on cultural support and coherence which impacts competitiveness and industry leadership.

Tesla on the other hand is regarded as an innovative problem-solving culture. The culture motivates employees to develop profitable solutions to current and emerging problems in the target market.

With both companies, the contribution of collaboration and continual learning to overall success, is evident.

**In this short guide, you will gain insight into some of the most efficient strategies to help you build a solid learning culture within your organisation.**

# Why cultivating a learning culture is essential

> *A learning organisation is a group of people working together collectively to enhance their capacities to create results they really care about'*
> *Peter Senge*

A learning culture describes an environment that cultivates and inspires continuous learning and development not only for employees but for the organisation as a whole. Individuals are constantly challenged and inspired to grow. This improves performance and ultimately allows the company to move forward, achieve business goals and innovate as a collective.

# What makes an effective learning culture?



In his book, The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge suggests that there are five characteristics of a learning organisation. The author notes that a truly effective and healthy learning culture is created when all five characteristics work together to form an environment that cultivates continual learning, innovation and growth.

# Five characteristics of a learning organisation

## ⚙️ Systems thinking

Systems thinking, recognises the need to collaborate and work together. Divisions are seen as interdependent and their knowledge, skills and abilities contributes to and supports the growth of others.

## ⭐ Personal mastery

Personal mastery denotes that individuals each take responsibility for their own growth and development. Such individuals are inspired and eager to learn, which cultivates a lifelong learning mindset that constantly seeks to innovate and improve.

## 🎯 Mental models

We all have our preferred methods and comfort zones. A learning organisation promotes an open culture of inquiry and trust, where these mental models can be challenged to encourage innovation. This ensures flexibility and acceptance of change allowing organisations to adjust quickly to market trends.

## 👁 Shared vision

Learning cultures usually consist of a flat leadership structure. Employees are encouraged to share experiences and opinions and contribute toward the company's vision. This promotes an inclusive culture with forward-thinking leadership.

## 👥 Team learning

Team learning encourages the transference of knowledge among employees. Within a learning culture, teams lean on the individual strengths of all employees to improve performance, and encourage the development of weaker areas through collaboration.

# What are the benefits of a great learning culture?



In today's competitive labour market, a great learning culture is a strategic advantage to achieve innovation and excellence. The following are some of the benefits you can expect to experience:

- Attractiveness to new employees
- Retention of top employees
- Improved employee performance
- Higher levels of employee engagement
- Increased productivity and quality output
- Innovative goals and strategies
- Improved creativity and collaboration
- Improved decision making and flexibility to move with market trends
- Increased customer satisfaction

# Strategies to improve your learning culture

The following strategies can be implemented to build and improve the five characteristics of an organisation's learning culture.

## Ensure learning speaks to and involves employees at all levels

An effective learning culture promotes learning at all levels and in various forms. Learning cultures embrace interdependencies. Individuals are open and willing to learn from the opportunities, victories, failures and challenges of others. Similarly, individuals are willing to share their victories, failures and challenges as opportunities for others to learn.

To cultivate a culture of learning on all levels, some key strategies include:

- Conducting training needs assessments to ensure learning priorities and plans are well aligned and supportive to company goals and targets
- Expanding your learning portfolio to include soft and hard skills development, wellness training and leadership development to cater for the needs of all levels of employees
- Frequently reviewing the quality and relevance of formal learning initiatives to eliminate any time wasters
- Looking beyond formal training sessions to create fun, interesting and interactive learning sessions. This could include lunch and learn sessions, inviting guest speakers or creating a list of suggested influencers to follow on social media

### Additional resources

| | |
|---|---|
| Causes and solutions to soft skills gaps | Read More ↗ |
| Hard skills vs soft skills - what's the difference | Read More ↗ |
| Benefits of soft skills training in the workplace | Read More ↗ |
| How to build a successful upskilling programme | Read More ↗ |

## Cultivate a culture of open communication

Communication is an essential skill to encourage growth. It allows individuals to challenge thinking in a non-threatening manner. It enables individuals to hear and accept criticism, debate and challenge ideas, voice concerns and present opportunities.

To promote open communication, the following strategies can be implemented:

- Prioritise conflict resolution and communication training for all employees
- Promote a culture of recognition - giving praise where praise is due without prejudice or favouritism
- Critical reviews of management and leadership skills to irradicate discrimination and cultivate a safe working environment

For more inspiration on how to cultivate a culture of open communication, consider the following resources:

### Additional resources

| | |
|---|---|
| GROW Coaching Model Pros and Cons | Read More ⬈ |
| How to improve teamwork skills with communication | Read More ⬈ |
| The use of soft skills training to manage conflict in the workplace | Read More ⬈ |

# Encourage innovation and change

Learning organisations thrive on change because the change itself sets the stage for learning. Innovation comes from trying new ideas and testing theories, which is improbable if no one challenges the status quo.

An innovative culture is promoted by open communication as well as continual learning. In addition, the ability to manage change is of utmost importance.

The following 'Managing Complex Change' matrix can help inspire change and ensure there is no resentment or resistance.

| Vision | + | Skills | + | Incentives | + | Resources | + | Action plan | = | **Change** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | + | Skills | + | Incentives | + | Resources | + | Action plan | = | **Confusion** |
| Vision | + |  | + | Incentives | + | Resources | + | Action plan | = | **Anxiety** |
| Vision | + | Skills | + |  | + | Resources | + | Action plan | = | **Resistance** |
| Vision | + | Skills | + | Incentives | + |  | + | Action plan | = | **Frustration** |
| Vision | + | Skills | + | Incentives | + | Resources | + |  | = | **False start** |

To further promote innovation, the following strategies can be applied:

- Introduce informal feedback sessions as a way to gather new ideas and perspectives on long-standing traditions
- Recognise opportunities to learn and grow in daily activities and involve a variety of individuals to participate or observe
- Create space for research and learning in a work week
- Welcome and provide constructive feedback for the purpose of encouraging individual development

## Additional resources

| The importance and benefits of professional development | Read More ↗ |
|---|---|
| Should you always involve your team in decision making? | Read More ↗ |
| How to build resilient teams | Read More ↗ |

## Drive vision through learning

Learning should promote and support the business position, vision and mission. While innovation and change may affect the immediate goals, the organisation's identity will likely stay the same and should be embedded in learning initiatives.

- Compile a learning repository to encourage learning on topics that support the organisation's culture and vision
- Move beyond professional development and incorporate learning that builds values and promotes a lifestyle that aligns with that of the organisation

## Welcome technological advancements

Technology is constantly improving and aims to optimise the working environment, customer experience and ultimately increase the company bottom line. Even if you are not a tech company, invest in the technical ability of your staff to drive innovation.



- Encourage social media interactions
- Investigate technologies that can enhance business performance
- Make development and technical courses available to all employees to cultivate a mindset of forward-thinking
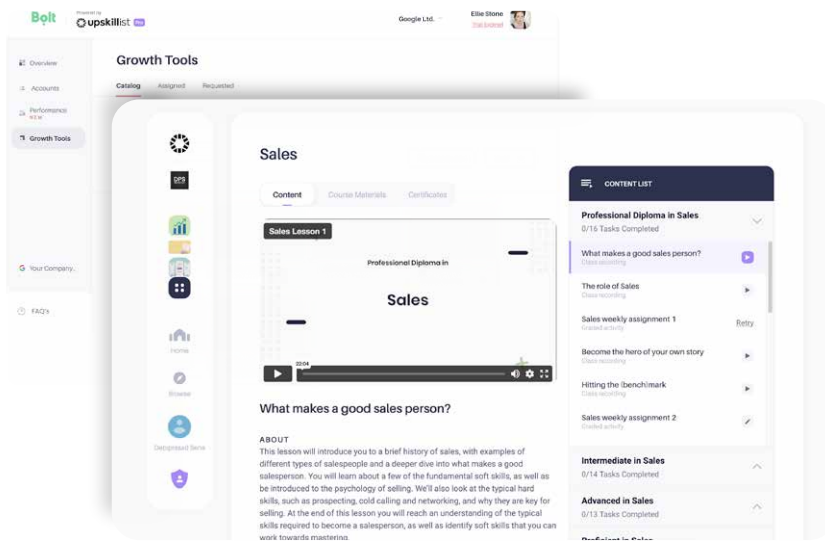
### Additional resources

| | |
|---|---|
| How developing your team's tech skills can benefit your organisation | Read More ↗ |
| Tech skills development | Read More ↗ |

# Implement an effective learning platform



eLearning allows seamless integration with day-to-day activities. It is accessible beyond the workplace and caters for a variety of topics.

Where learning is provided on a well-structured easy-to-use platform, learning is embraced by all, including those who are not natural learners.

Learning platforms, in addition, cater for different learning styles and a variety of topics, inspiring each individual to pursue personal mastery.

## Additional resources

| | |
|---|---|
| The best learning management system (2022 Update) | Read More ↗ |
| 5 most important features your LMS needs | Read More ↗ |
| How to analyse ROI for corporate learning programs | Read More ↗ |

# Shift focus to employee wellbeing

As a learning organisation it's important to recognise individual values, needs as well as professional strengths and weaknesses.

To create a culture where employees are valued and perform at their best, investing in skills such as management, leadership, coaching and mentoring is absolutely essential:

- Implement programmes that develop great leaders who inspire and bring out the best in their teams
- Invest in wellness initiatives
- Implement 360 and performance reviews for all levels of employees, as part of a development strategy
- Create awareness around mental illness, wellbeing and diversification through learning
- Allow employee and customer input to shape learning strategies



## Additional resources

| | |
|---|---|
| How to protect the wellbeing of your hybrid workforce | Read More |
| How HR & People leaders can support employees | Read More |
| Ways to prevent employee burnout | Read More |

# How Upskillist can help you develop a strong learning culture?

Cultivating and maintaining a learning culture can be challenging. Still, in partnership with Upskillist, it's possible to effortlessly integrate learning into daily activities, and take strategic steps toward cultivating a culture of learning that is cost-effective and sustainable.

The Upskillist Learning Platform is intuitive and easy to use. It offers a wide variety of intelligently designed content around the most in-demand skills and most talked about topics, for your growth and development. In addition, its impressive training needs analysis features, including skills assessments and reporting, will ensure that learning initiatives remain profitable and impactful.

## Additional resources

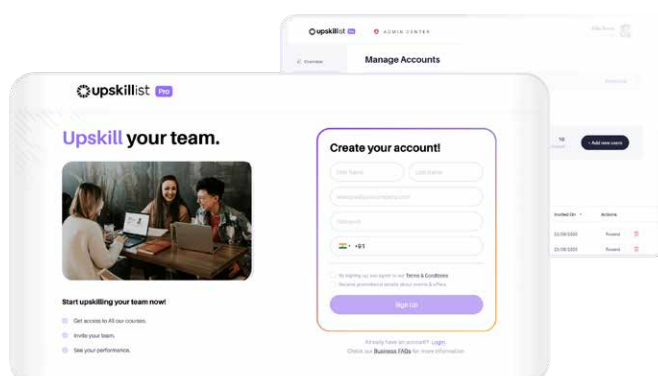| | |
|---|---|
| Why L&D is a strategic function in an organisation | Read More ↗ |
| How to develop a culture of continuous learning | Read More ↗ |
| The value of employee training | Read More ↗ |
| How to analyse ROI for corporate learning programs | Read More ↗ |

## Test the Upskillist Learning Platform for FREE today.

Try for free

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