The HR Speak

Social Learning: Your Ticket To Brilliant Workforce Transformations

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Innovation stems from experiences that provide us with the access to perspectives foreign to us. Mettl has spent the last year conversing with the crème-dale-creme of the HR industry. After listening in on intense discussions from an assortment of 25 HR industry pundits, 3 panel discussions spread evenly across the year, we thought to bestow our avid readers with these gold mines. After all, we cannot let you be, right?

Over the next few months, we will pursuit to deliver bite-sized specimens that will bring these valuable insights right from the horse’s mouth to your desktops. As you want it. The HR Speak Series.

With renowned speakers from industries like SAP, Oracle, MTS and the likes, we hope to bring you the resolution to all the HR conundrums you can dream of. Be it Talent Acquisition, Quality per Hire, Metric, Head Hunting, Talent Measurement, Learning & Development. You name it, we have it. So let’s propel forward to the first one on our list. Here’s Mr. Warrier, ex-CHRO SAP tete-a-tete with Mettl.
Believe in Learning & Development. The IBM Story.

“Most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action.”. Social learning theory explains human behaviour regarding continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences.

Latha Raj, who is a transformation leader at IBM, has graciously agreed to spare time from her very busy schedule to learn insights about social learning. A mould which is setting off conventional classroom learning experiences and is seeing a movement towards experiential learning, which encompasses multiple technology touch points and enables better engagement for new incompetence, as well as your proven performance.

Social learning emphasises the role of observation and imitation of others in the learning process. Latha talks about several key insights on social learning and applications. She even delves into how IBM does it. Here’s a small prescribe of what we have to offer to your desktop screen this morning.
The Natural Behaviour

Latha starts at learning because she believes that being social is something that we have inherited naturally. Nobody needs to teach us how to be social. It comes as natural behaviour.

What’s the big thing about learning?

Look at social learning or learning to be a part of your life or invest your time only when you want to get back something. That’s in your personal life. Let’s move on a little bit on to the right side where we talk about becoming top performers. Most of us want to be leaders in our domain, and we want to be either a management leader, or a business leader, a successful entrepreneur, or we even want to be a successful technologist. We want to be on the top; we want to be getting there, so how?

When you’re hungry, you need someone to feed you, and when you are in pain, you need someone to help medicate and care for you. That’s the same thing we’re going to do even in our professional lives.

Recognition is not all about to be the end, you’ve got to be ready for it because you need to continuously create opportunities.

- Opportunity to get the right level of business.
- You create an opportunity for a new policy.
- You create an opportunity for a new process in your organisation.
- You continue to keep inventing new ways of doing things.

Then creativity and performance are not going to be all about that’s going to take you to the next step, but you need to share because the moment you start sharing is when you become a domain expert.
How does IBM do it?

Latha looks at the way Thomas brought in the think ‘culture in the organization.’ She explains that he built it as a culture in IBM because every employee starts thinking in terms of creating something new and that’s how they’ve been able to move on in becoming a successful enterprise.

The Take Away

When training new employees, act out the procedures to which they’ll be adhering. This will enable employees to envision themselves carrying out the task, and empower them think and ask questions.

Imitation Isn’t Just Flattery

In our conversations with Latha, she points us in the direction of the 70:20:10 formula, whether informal education is as successful as formal, whether it is a classroom, or a webinars, or a seminars, or just a get-together. Or is it a complete block?

Being disruptive doesn’t comes naturally to everyone. You have practice it everyday. You have to create disruptive prototypes when it comes to building the creative products, solutions and ideas. You must make it a part of your life.
How does IBM do it?

Now, how do we get our employees to get skilled and bring learning as a culture as they deliver, right? We needed to transform the learning experience for IBMers because the technology is changing, the organisation is transforming its business model, and we have our clients who have a lot more expectations.

The Take Away

It’s very important for you to reflect back on what worked then and what actually works now. You can do this by participating in community discussions, collaborating with viewers and subject matter experts, talking to your leaders and colleagues.

Socialite Or A Key Learner

A lot of things cannot be learnt in a classroom, creativity and interaction breed learning. What you may never learn in a boardroom can catch your attention over a coffee table. Interaction with the stake holder, constructive imitation of the same value structure. These things are rare, but when we actually get down to the brass tacks. They help.

And then Latha invigorates, then why have organizations got it so wrong for so many years?

It’s so out there that you will obviously learn better in a social context. Why aren’t we getting it right now?

The decision is yours. You need to know, you got to invest your time to learn something and which is the best medium for you to learn and what’s the value it’s going to add.

"Nobody wants to have the infrastructure. Everybody wants an absolute agile space for the organization, where their employees focus more on delivering the product and solutions and the rest of their IT infrastructure is somewhere else" - Latha Raj
How does IBM do it?

The employees can quickly connect and say, “Okay the organisation is not moving towards cloud technology, but moving into mobile technology, so I need to change my direction of educating myself on mobile technologies and let me work on that.”

Take Away

The organization needs to be transparent about its goals, so much so that the employees understand what they need to do the help achieve them. That’s how you get to succeed.

Diagnostics Is A Problem

Big enterprises don’t seem to crack innovative ideas or a solution at the pace newer startups and the medium sized enterprise. It starts with believing that they have a unique characteristic of delivery model and their product or solution is unique. They need to start believing that.

How does IBM do it?

“Clarity is the most crucial factor that we need to cascade back to your employees and empower them. The moment you empower them and set their goals they will go and do all the learning that they want, they will connect where they want, and they will do everything that they want to meet the goal. Provided they are clear about the goal.” – Latha Raj

Take Away

Make sure the person you’re training learns they’ve made a mistake through a benign verbal correction, a written reminder or a formal write-up, depending on the situation. This principle also goes the other way — positively reinforcing a job well done will encourage your employee to repeat the correct process.
Archaic Principles In The New Era

Now you cannot be traditional in your learning methods because this is the way it works. When you build a software or an app, you need to know who are you addressing, who are your clients and what’s the kind of experience they’re going to have by using your software or an app. That’s how you start thinking.

“Today, even your child is a potential customer or a client. When you build an app, you need to know whether it is going to a child, whether it’s going to an adult, or whether it is going to a person who is physically challenged or whether it is going for a visually impaired.” – Latha Raj

The Transformer

The most important personal goal is that you need to accept the transformation in your DNA. You need to inculcate this in your employee base, where they understand that transforming is important for them as well.

Latha points out “They need to continuously keep transforming the way they are going to grow in the organisation, because without transformation, nobody grows in an organisation.”

How does IBM do it?

Employees from different walks of life combine and interact on various dictions as well as technical levels. This interactive and on-the-job learning experience enhances their capability to undemand their job role better and learn on a much steeper curve than a classroom session.

At the same time, the stretch opportunity is a lot more challenging apart from your day to day work. The employees get an opportunity to explore new options and ideas because stretch projects are all about bringing the best creativity that you have. Here, the learning experience has changed. This is one example.

“How does IBM do it?” – Latha Raj

“The Take Away

These kinds of initiatives are the ones we keep bringing in to transform the way we start engaging with the employees. The goal that we have as transformation leaders are, how to give a better employee experience. How to give a better candidate experience for those who we interview, even before bringing them on board and how do we enhance the client experience. These are the goals.
Customers As Enablers

With new employees across the board, you do not have to view them as assignments. Rather, you have to take them into perspective about how your company grows with their development. Assigning them challenges, hitting out their grey cells and making sure that they perform well in their key interest areas are only some ways you can design your training and development model according to the new seeds coming in the field.

The Take Away

Without innovation, the organisation doesn’t succeed. That’s where the whole challenge evolves. People want to learn new things, and develop new strengths, so that’s where you need to bring and enable the teams to continuously innovate and keep them motivated. You need to give something more challenging to the employee.
How Do The Employee Transform In The Way He Thinks?

Latha insists on thinking like an entrepreneur, and that’s the culture that she needs you to build in your organisation and empower your employees to think and grow like an entrepreneur.

They need to deep dive to understand: “What is the best value that you can bring about in a particular project, product, solution, or the service model which you’re going to propose to the client?”

Bring about the culture of getting your employees to think like an entrepreneur, not make them feel that they’ve just come to do their job and finish their ‘to do ’list. Give them responsibilities and make that change in your organization right now. That’s the expectation any employee has. When he feels empowered, he performs.

How does IBM do it?

Latha continues with a rather proud tone in her voice “Everybody asks me, how the hell did you spend two decades of your life in IBM?”

That’s only because she was given an opportunity to think like an entrepreneur because she was a mere commerce graduate. Today she is a design practitioner and a talent consultant.

The Take Away

Work packets should not primarily consist of those dreadful spread sheets. They are just tools of the trade, but at the end, you need to understand the viewpoint of the employee by placing yourself like an entrepreneur. You need to give that kind of opportunity for your employees, so that they start thinking like an entrepreneur.

Cultural Impact, The Greys In White

How did learning impact the culture, then, and how is it different right now.

How do you maintain the scale at which social learning must be implemented for you to be agile, because it might become tough, and you obviously cannot quantify the challenge as there’s no number to it, but qualitatively if you could just put forth the challenges you face?
Here, when we’re talking even about a simple solution that we give it to the educational organisation on how to apply analytics on the child’s report card, we bring about the difference.

Because we cannot have a separate set of the learning experience and if that’s not addressing the client experience, then it’s not going to work. The business model is going into the drain. You need to see how the client experience is again tied back to the learning experience of an employee and what are the relevant industry topics and the technology that the employees need to be perfect for.

Believe me, if I spend even half a day with your students and make them understand a little bit more about the outside world, they know how to perform better in all their scores and then see how they can aspire.

How does IBM do it?

They measure success only based on the employee experience. Workplace experience or the digital experience that they have, and that’s how we’ve could evolve, so much regarding creating the short videos for them and transforming the workplace by getting the executives into the workplace and interacting with them.

The Take Away

You transform by your interaction with your customers. Your interactions end, you’re learning curve stagnates. Enrol your senior executives and directors in the product and learning courses. Lock them up in a room for two days to go through that leadership course that they need to impart.

Way Forward

A keen insight cited by Latha is that you must help them in building a lot more on the developmental areas than worrying about what the weaknesses are. That’s how you should try and change your leaders.

“If I have gone into a classroom, I sleep, I don’t get to remember what has been said in the classroom. And when I’m out, the world is different. I cannot practice anything that’s been told in the classroom. That’s the problem that we had.

Going that extra mile is worth it, so put on your running shoes and get ready to take off! Now that’s a wrap, and trust us this was a lot of work.

So, until next time, C’est La Vie. Godspeed.
Contributors

Latha Raj

Transformation Leader – IBM Analytics at IBM India. Her vision profile is a Talent Consultant. This is a hard target as there is no limit to learn or certify yourself in this domain. She makes her work special by taking up new initiatives and assignments. The challenging environment gives her the platform to learn, adapt & overcome any situation. She cuts across many functions, roles to realise her potential as a People’s person.
What is Mettl?

Mettl is a SaaS based assessment platform that enables organizations to create customized assessments for use across the entire employee lifecycle, beginning with pre-hiring screening and candidate skills assessment, training and development programs for employees/students, certification exams, contests and more.