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3 WAYS TO DEVELOP A CARING CULTURE AT WORK

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD DO TO PROMOTE SUPPORT AND SECURITY

By **LOUISA DEVADASON**

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FINDINGS consistently show that a leader's ability to empathise is positively correlated with subordinate job performance. Paternalistic behaviours are particularly powerful in promoting support and security that lead to higher job performance, especially in high-power distance cultures (such as Malaysia).

While empathy, or rather the display of empathy, is more natural to some – leaders can still cultivate this behaviour consciously. Researchers have repeatedly stated that empathy is in fact a learnt behaviour. Organisations can certainly encourage a more empathic workplace by first empowering their managers and heads of departments to heighten their empathic ability in a few simple ways:

1 MAKE EMPATHY A TALKING POINT

Managers need to know empathy matters to you and why. Managers, naturally, are more task-oriented in their leadership because they need to assist in executing a top-down vision. While this is important, in an age of increasing freedom and equality, nurture and emotionality is just as important.

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Empathy lays the foundation for equal and more collaborative workplace environments

It's important to educate managers as to how empathy in management can enhance performance and certainly makes you seen as more effective as well as easier to work alongside.

2 TRAINING

As previously stated, empathy is a learnt skill and some people may have come from backgrounds that left them unexposed to much empathy in practice. That's why it is important to train

managers and employees to learn things like active listening, feedback sandwich and i-messages, for example. They all make up practical and easy things people can learn to do to communicate and conduct themselves with an empathic mindset at work.

3 PICK THE RIGHT PEOPLE

When hiring, look for empathy in your candidates. Test their people skills.

Some modern companies hire candidates for a one week paid test period where they're given a project to complete with existing members of the company.

This gives the employers some insight into how the candidate they're considering really works. It also opens more opportunities for feedback from existing employees – making the hiring process more collaborative.

These are simple ways leaders can be more proactive about creating an empathic workplace. It is essential for a future-minded leader to take these ideas on board and embrace the people around them.

We are heading to a more equal and collaborative work environment, and visionaries who get on board with that will see their companies become more innovative and resilient.

By **PREMA JAYABALAN**

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THE digital era has long arrived, and is taking the world by storm. Why? Because it's accessible and fast.

A study on *E-Learning: Fact or Fiction?* retrieved from the SMC Business Council states that United Airlines had dramatically reduced its training time for e-ticketing from 40 hours to just 18 hours simply by converting their classroom-style training into a digital learning format.

More significantly, top scores from classroom participants were still lower than the worst scores among those who had participated virtually.

This is how learning is evolving, and digital learning has opened up a world of opportunities to convey digitised learnings for personal and professional development among the masses. Hence, it's imperative for organisations to stay *au courant* with the latest digital learning trends that create a more effective learning avenue for their people. Let's take a look at some of the current digital learning trends:

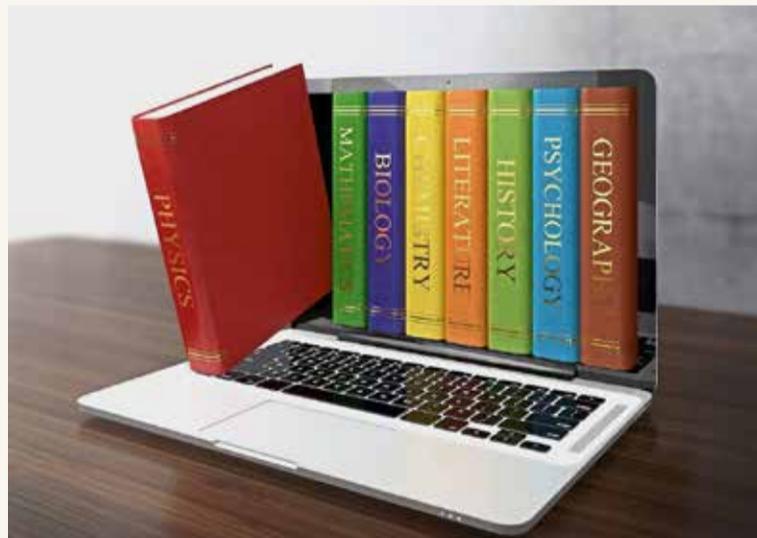
GOING MOBILE

It is a given that today, almost all employees in an organisation have smartphones. This group of people are accustomed to getting near-instantaneous information, through the use of their devices.

The massive expansion of mobile learning is due to the fact that it's accessible, convenient and it follows

TRENDSETTERS IN DIGITAL LEARNING

CREATING AN IMPRESSIVE BASE TO YOUR ORGANISATION'S LEARNING PATHWAY



you wherever you go. An example of this would be a UK-based utilities company – Utility Warehouse – that required the usage of mobile learning, simply because 46,000 of their distributors needed to learn while they were on the move, meeting with clients and being on-site.

GIVE ME GAMES

Gamification is a definite emerging theme in digital learning. This means incorporating game-like functions such as challenges, points and badges, into learning. These elements are imbued in the content to increase

traffic and motivation, ultimately pushing participants to complete the course.

Gamification makes content more attractive as well as interactive. While this trend can be costly, affordable illustrations can also be integrated to create a good balance.

LEARNING ANALYTICS

A lot of data on a learner's progress gets accumulated as a result of learning activities that take place on the digital platform. Detailed data can provide organisations valuable information on their learners and their

developments based on the courses assigned to them.

Branching information from these analytics also enables employers to assess their employees and decide on specific training programmes for each one of them.

The data also helps employers uncover learning patterns that have an impact on their overall return on investment. Moreover, data is compiled in a structured and simplified way that allows a company's human resources arm to save time and energy from compiling information manually.

PERSONALISED LEARNING

As opposed to a one-size-fits-all, digital learning lets you have personalised learning based on your competence, designation at work and level of authority.

Personalisation not only makes content more interactive and dynamic; it improves the learning outcome. Learners can also access their own data, leverage their strengths and continually develop themselves.

VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY

Virtual and augmented reality are two technologies that are rapidly evolving. I mean, just look at the *Pokemon Go* craze! A number of

organisations are actually leveraging on these technologies – particularly virtual reality – to create simulations based on real-life scenarios. These make a lasting impression on learners as they interact with the digital sphere. Real-life scenarios motivate learners to take on challenges and give their best, and they involve heavy interaction from both sides, as opposed to just being on the listening end.

IN A NUTSHELL

It's definitely an exciting time to be a part of the digital learning world. And it is high time to take advantage of the tools that would allow digital learning to make a lasting impression on your organisation's learning and development.

■ *Prema Jayabalan is part of the Digital Learning team at Leaderonomics. She believes that positive change can take place only when we step up and take that first step by ourselves. She loves the fact that the Leaderonomics Digital Learning platform provides an avenue for people from all walks of life to gather valuable insights that will enable them to grow in their professional and personal domains. To find out more about Digital Learning offered by Leaderonomics, e-mail us at learn@leaderonomics.com*