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Excitement and Inspiration: Engaging Deskless Workers With Learning



By [Tom Schultz](#)
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When learning leaders at [Ecopetrol](#) rolled out a learning experience platform (LXP), they were surprised to find people in operations and maintenance roles—not only desk jobs—among the biggest early adopters. [This engagement from frontline workers](#) outpaced anything the award-winning L&D team at the Colombian national oil and gas company expected.

“They were looking for subjects related to their jobs but not exactly their positions. It was a huge insight,” said Monica Santos, [Ecopetrol](#) Schools Leader. “There were some things that were mandatory, and they were doing those. But they were also exploring. Some of them did it during shifts at night because there’s less activity in the plant.”

Finding new ways to engage—or re-engage—deskless workers can boost job satisfaction, keep the backbone of a business running smoothly, and take an organization in helpful new directions, [according to Training Industry](#).

And while engaging the deskless worker is often overlooked, L&D can play a big role in fixing that.

“Although **frontline workers** are largely responsible for putting the company’s broader goals and values into action, they often lack the digital tools and solutions needed to do so,” Training Industry noted.

Indeed, a Forrester study commissioned by Microsoft found **only 23 percent of frontline workers have access** to the technologies they need to do their jobs. Even when they do have access, they’re often not trained on how to use those tools.

In March, *the Harvard Business Review* explored **why frontline workers are quitting** despite a 7 percent to 10 percent wage increase since the onset of COVID-19. Among other remedies, the publication urged companies to boost learning opportunities: “Invest in onboarding and skill-building programs and give workers time to utilize them.”

Build From Within

Companies upskilling and deploying talent effectively are emphasizing internal rather than external resources. They invest in data, tools, and processes that prioritize skills and opportunity. It requires taking inventory of talent and compiling a complete picture of the skills and experiences of all their people. The next step is figuring out **future skills needs**.

Degreed’s research shows that **most employees know the skills they need** to perform better in their current roles and advance their careers. Organizations enable this by being nimble and democratic with learning opportunities.

Tenaris SA, a global manufacturer and supplier of steel pipes, gave its 22,000 employees across 30 countries more ownership of their learning and career mobility and saw immediate benefits to **engagement and skill development**. Adidas **trained a couple thousand frontline retail employees** on how to think like business innovators. Adidas solicited their ideas. The company then developed thousands of ideas, sharing them in open meetings. For some employees, it was the first time they were excited and inspired at work.

Guide the Change

A lack of time for professional development is one of the biggest obstacles to learning, according to the recent Degreed *How the Workforce Learns* report.

To address that, you can shift your people to a **learning-focused mindset**. It isn’t easy. But when Deborah Wiest, vice president of learning and development at UnitedHealth Group, sees concerns about lack of time at her organization, she offers a thoughtful response: “Everyone has time. We all have time. How are you choosing to spend it?”

Learning leaders **can be a powerful force** in guiding culture change. If people don’t feel time spent

learning is valued by their company and team, they likely won't make time to do it, Wiest said.

Ecopetrol uses its LXP to engage workers like Luis Giovanny Barbosa Arias at the Barrancabermeja Refinery, who's been given time to easily access videos, documents, and short articles to focus his learning, interact with colleagues, and share new knowledge. It's a critical part of the organization's efforts to prepare its workforce for global industry changes, shifting production away from hydrocarbons toward low-carbon alternatives.

And it's important to note a positive learning culture doesn't rise and fall on virtual options. At Fraser, learning leaders expanded beyond online learning, especially among frontline workers, said Daryl Page, leader of people development at the Canadian hospital group. The organization now sets aside time in morning huddles for workers to share new knowledge with colleagues and team leads.

Giving teams time to share their learnings during the workday shows people their organization prioritizes and encourages their learning, which helps create a more positive learning culture.

And remember: Successful upskilling requires *doing*. People need a chance to practice and master skills on the job.

This can be especially true for your deskless workers brimming with ideas, looking for inspiration—and craving exposure to opportunities otherwise out of reach.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Shift From Onboarding to Everboarding



By [Fara Rosenzweig](#)
Wednesday, October 5, 2022

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WORKRAMP

Learning shouldn't end at onboarding. It shouldn't ever end. Instead, we should shift learning from onboarding to *everboarding*. About **80 percent of employees** rank professional development and continuous learning as high priorities when job hunting. And **94 percent of employees** say if an employer invested more in learning and development, they would stay longer at an organization.

Typically, onboarding occurs during an employee's first 90 days. Having a well-planned onboarding process helps new employees integrate into the organization and feel comfortable during their early days.

Onboarding prepares the new hire for success. But what happens after 90 days? Learning should not stop; it should *evolve*. *Everboarding* is a continuation of onboarding. Because a one-time exposure to information is rarely enough, everboarding is an approach for business training that focuses on knowledge retention instead of completion. Everboarding recognizes that learning is constant and transforms training from a one-and-done event to a continuous process.

Everboarding Is Crucial for Your Team

Things change quickly in the business world, so job responsibilities must evolve. If companies

evolve their strategy and expect employees to expand their skill sets, offering a team continuous learning will help prevent them from falling behind.

Jen Scopo, an instructional design manager at WorkRamp says, “The only way for a company to truly grow is for everyone to always be their sharpest and to always be willing to get better. The only way to achieve that goal is for your company to be completely invested in learning both in action and time.”

Everboarding is beneficial for your organization, especially for your employees.

- Your employees are **happier and more engaged**, so they stay with you longer.
- Your employees can keep working on personal growth while still helping the team.
- Your workforce is better prepared for changes because they are more skilled.
- Your company will experience **faster growth** because your team is always looking for something new and innovative to try.

Implement Everboarding After 90 Days

Once team members begin to feel comfortable in their new roles and understand their responsibilities, company messaging, goals, and who’s who in the organization, as a manager, you can then set goals for the next 90 days and beyond.

Creating an ongoing system that supports employees’ learning and development—whether through online courses, in the flow of work, reading material, or mentorship—will help your employees evolve their skill sets, feel supported, and build confidence in their roles. It will also help them develop a career path. Here are some steps you can take to support continuous learning:

- Create documentation that anticipates and solves roadblocks.
- House help documents in a **self-directed learning platform**.
- Tell your employees who they can talk to if they need more assistance.
- Provide resources and materials to help them achieve success.

Continue Everboarding With One-On-One Meetings

Managers should schedule regular one-on-one meetings with each team member to discuss progress toward their goals. Managers should also stay in tune with their team members’ larger career goals and how they align with the company’s talent needs so they can make any necessary adjustments to the team members’ development plan.

Maile Timon, a content strategist at WorkRamp says, “Recurring one-on-one meetings have helped me continuously learn and improve, and stay focused on my professional aspirations. My manager understands my goals and my skill set, but also knows my areas for improvement. Our one-on-one meetings are an informal way to problem-solve for any challenges or pain points, share resources to promote learning, and provide constructive feedback to help me grow, evolve,

and never settle for less than my best.”

Providing a road map for what goals to achieve and what skills to learn by specific deadlines keeps both parties on the same page. Two-way communication builds transparency, honesty, and a strong working relationship.

Everboarding and the Future

As the business world continues to evolve, so should employee skills. An effective everboarding program can help you fill existing skills gaps, and prepare for the future by training the talent you'll need to succeed. The more skilled talent becomes, the stronger they will perform, which can result in better business outcomes, as they're more likely to stay at the organization and continue to grow.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Fara Rosenzweig is WorkRamp's Head of Content and brings over 20 years of content experience. Her love for storytelling has earned her an Emmy Award, and she's been featured in many publications. When not wordsmithing or talking about learning and development, you'll find her globe-trotting while logging miles for her next half marathon.

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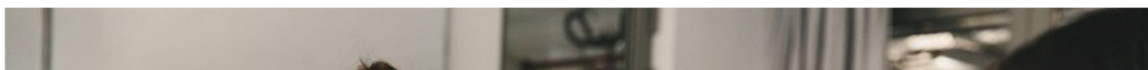
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By [Rick Rittmaster](#)
Wednesday, October 5, 2022