WestNet

HR's Ultimate Guide to
Scale Training and Reduce Liabilities

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The State of Learning and Professional Development

HR's Ultimate Guide to Scale Training and Reduce Liabilities

Professional development in the workplace has always been an important aspect of promoting a strong and skilled workforce. The most recent Association of Talent Development State of the Industry report indicated organizations invested an average of $1,273 per employee in 2016, and this is expected to increase. The learning environment is also rapidly changing with the introduction to mobile learning, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence -- amid added corporate compliance requirements. How will employers face the future of employee learning with a plan to scale up training, while remaining cost effective and compliant?

Shift towards learner-directed, on-the-go training

In a multi-generational work culture, one clear trend has emerged. People like to learn when and where they need information, at their own convenience. This shift towards self-directed learning has come about as a result of the Internet and the ease of accessing info on mobile devices.

Josh Bersin, founder of Bersin by Deloitte, shared compelling research that indicates the new organizational learning format will be on-demand and continuous learning as dictated by employees. Only around 30 percent of learning takes place by formal means (courses and learning resources), with the remaining 70 percent happening naturally on the job as employees interact with managers, peers, experts in their industry, and by making mistakes. This leads to better retention of learning and a commitment by managers to coaching employees, with additional libraries of information available when needed.

Lastly, adults of all ages have become increasingly dependent on the use of mobile devices. Pew Research advises that 95 percent of Americans now own at least one cell phone, and that one in five are smartphone only users accessing the internet by this primary means. People are increasingly turning to their mobile browsers to obtain information, so it only makes sense that learning takes place this way more and more.

Gamification, social learning, learning communities

Gamification in learning has been shown to increase learner engagement and provide an incentive to learners. This can take many forms, including interactive modules that reward learners for performing specific tasks, to the use of badges, certificates, and points. Learners often enjoy the feeling of being recognized for their achievements, and they tend to share their experience with other learners.

There can be no doubt that learning is social by human nature. In the workplace, employees can compete with one another or complete projects together. Social media expands this capability by offering accessibility to exclusive learner groups and communities. Albert Bandura's theory of social learning indicates that learners tend to modify their behaviors to fit in with peers, while cognitive skills like retention and motivation improve.

Learning communities are evolving as blended learning provides more opportunities for people to connect. From the classroom to the learning apps, people learn more effectively when they can share ideas, have discussions, and help each other.

Corporate liability challenges and resources

Human resource leaders have the responsibility to ensure that employees are educated about important compliance matters, in addition to standard on-the-job training. Compliance subjects that are mandatory in many states include HIPAA, safety, sexual harassment, and workplace violence prevention. The challenge is designing courses and delivering them on a platform that all employees can access. The other challenge is being able to update corporate training as laws change.

A cloud-based learning management system solves both of these challenges. Policy training material can be compiled and uploaded, changed, and updated. Employees can access the training from any compatible mobile device with an Internet browser. As a plus, LMS administrators can monitor and show proof of employees taking the mandatory training by use of reports. This reduces liability on the company.

Continuous performance management

Modern learning is tied directly to continuous performance management. Instead of one-off reviews that only capture a small portion of an employee's performance, learning management systems give employees the opportunity to demonstrate ongoing skill and knowledge building.

Why is this vital to business? Organizations require employees who are always learning and improving their skills in order to remain competitive. Artificial intelligence tools, real-time analysis, peer feedback and coaching are features that many cloud-based LMS are offering to support continuous performance management.

Treating learning as workplace benefit

Corporate-sponsored learning is a benefit that many organizations offer. In the past, this was optional. Now, it is part of an effort to encourage employees to focus on learning and career growth.

Learning benefits can be a powerful recruitment tool. Employees often look for additional perks outside of standard health insurance to build their value in the organization. Learning new skills can also help employees to earn higher positions and advance sooner.

Why Cloud Delivered Learning is the Best Choice

Desktop, tablet, and mobile smartphone access without an app

There are many benefits of using a cloud-based LMS for corporate learning. This can make it easier to choose a learning platform for your employees. Perhaps the most important feature of cloud-learning is the ability to access courses from any mobile device that has an internet connection. Look for cloud-technology that allows all devices to connect without the requirement of downloads.

Secure and private learning environments for students & employees

In an atmosphere of data breaches, employers must take steps to protect the information provided by employees, especially if the learning management system is integrated with other HR software. Sensitive information can be protected by way of a single-sign-on (SSO) protocol, which only gives access from a password protected platform to the LMS.

Individual learner information is also secure on the cloud, which also uses the highest level of encryption and security measures. Only authorized administrators have access.

Blended learning (classroom combined with online and video)

In some industries, the ability to combine traditional classroom learning with video and online learning is critical to success. Cloud LMS honors the different learning preferences of employees by adapting to all forms of

content. This can include bringing in existing ILT content so that it can be utilized alongside online content. For example, an eCourse may consist of taking online lessons that simulate tasks and then meeting with peers to perform the actual tasks. Feedback and encouragement from other employees can support the learning experience.

In every organization, there are often silos of employee-created training information that need to live in one place for all to access it. Videos, presentation slides, worksheets, and more can be organized in the resource section of each course. The LMS can become a repository for all learning materials, a living library of future professional development opportunities.

Affordability and flexibility of cloud technology

Cloud technology offers a more affordable and flexible option for many organizations. In most cases, pricing is dependent on a businesses size and needs. Many cloud based LMS offer a brief period of free service, which allows for a "try before you buy" experience, then low price points for limited features. As the organization grows and learning needs become more advanced, premium features can be obtained by paying a larger fee. Cloud LMS also provides greater adaptability of learning resources and tools, custom reporting, and ongoing support.

Integration with agile business and talent management

The agile organizational model puts people first. When dealing with changes, which is a constant in many industries, how well people can respond makes all the difference. This requires a skilled workforce that is supported by readily-accessible learning.

A [2015 Human Capital Institute survey](#) revealed 74 percent of organizations wanted to create a learning culture. This included delivering learning content using more agile systems, allowing employees to share content, and giving people a chance to learn by making mistakes and self-correcting. Agile content management is a shift in direction, however it makes sense to encourage the sharing and collaboration of learning materials as technology and processes change rapidly.

Features to Look for in a Cloud Based Learning Management System

Administrative tools, reports, and resources

Certain features can make a cloud based learning management system much more efficient and practical for use. As an administrator, having access to tools to manage learners, course content, and analytical data is critical. Look for intuitive tools that are included in a central administrative dashboard. Also, consider the level of technical training and support that is available to both admins and learners.

Other features that are important include custom reporting, which allows administrators to make use of data in many ways. In corporate compliance training, for example, it is important to be able to narrow down what training has been completed by employees during certain time periods (such as onboarding or annual). The LMS should make it easy to set up a custom report in minutes and save the settings for future use.

In many organizations, there are career paths that require being able to track users through learning cycles. This can include sets of courses that must be completed in order to advance or be promoted. Administrators can share this information with management if a user attempts to skip modules or courses, or simply stops participating in the learning activity.

A cloud-based learning management system can also provide proof of learning in the form of a report or certificate, when this is needed for liability and compliance matters. Being able to demonstrate that a required training has been completed by all employees is an added benefit to human resources.

Fully brandable and customized learning experience for users

According to the Association for Talent Development, on-the-shelf training is moving aside for customized training experiences for employees. This includes carefully branded learning environments that make for a seamless experience. Employees expect that every encounter they will have with a business will be branded to match the culture, therefore having them sign into the company website and then access their training in a coordinated learning portal supports the value of learning. This branding also supports integration with peers as they become part of the community.

The branding elements most often expected by employees include the company logo and colors, website navigation, content tone and industry language, course consistency, and ease of access from one device to another. Supplemental learning materials like workbooks and printables should also reflect this corporate brand.

Since the employee experience is centered on branding, human resource information systems are also branded to synch with learning management systems. New hires often move directly from completing employment forms to being registered for onboarding classes. So too, departing employees may move from the training center to an exit interview and offboarding in one system.

Industry certifications, badges, CEUs, and standards compliance

Credentialing is proof that employees have the skills and knowledge that can help organizations remain competitive and HR compliant. This takes place in the form of industry certifications and continuing education credits (CEUs) that apply to certain areas of knowledge. Employers can submit courses for approval with industry associations that set the standards and establish credentials.

In a modern world, more credentialing is issued in the form of digital badges that can be displayed in social profiles and shared more easily than traditional certificates. A cloud learning system should offer this option, as well as have a way of tracking CEUs for employees. When employees can share their achievements, this promotes learning and further advancement.

Ready-made and custom eCourses

HR may be concerned about utilizing existing learning content, particularly if there is a great deal of material across the organization. It's important to use a cloud based LMS that provides opportunities to upload existing course content that can be updated as needed. Other learning resources can be stored for further use by employees.

The very reason why many organizations choose cloud LMS is to save money in the learning budget for the production of custom courses. Whether created pulling from existing materials or designed from scratch,

custom courses can be built in other platforms and uploaded to the LMS. This gives HR an opportunity to test the course and perfect it. Future updates are just as simple. Custom content is valuable and proprietary and needs to be kept secure behind a cloud based server.

In learning organizations, employees and departmental leaders are encouraged to work together to generate their own learning content. Technology and industry changes in the agile business environment require continual reviews and updates to learning content. A cloud LMS allows for sharing of this new content, as well as suggestions and feedback to be left on existing courses.

SCORM compatibility

A cloud-based learning management system must be fully compliant with Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM). This allows for the ease in file sharing and management across multiple systems. Content is organized as 'objects' that can stand alone and as part of course components. This allows for course objects to be shared, modified, and organized according to each course goals.

Course data is sent in what's called a SCORM package, which is a, "file that contains every piece of information required by the LMS to import and launch content without human intervention. This file also contains XML that describes the structure of a course both from a learner's perspective and from a physical file system."

What this also enables is that files in the SCORM package can be individually edited and updated, without the need to recreate the entire course. Administrators will find this feature to be very convenient and efficient.

Different price levels for business sustainability

When selecting a cloud-based LMS, it's important to consider the sustainability of the product. For example, as the company grows, does the price per user remain affordable?

Another consideration is reducing waste in learning technology. Where does this come from? Too much time spent trying to learn how to use the LMS. Too many errors and lags in support response. Lost files and frustrating experiences that learners can do without. The cloud LMS needs to be efficient and tested and updated often.

Live support and training resources for users

A simple system that has 24/7 live support and training for users is invaluable when it comes to a product. While some developers brag about the features they offer, they don't have the training and support to make it useful. Seek out a cloud LMS that provides access to on-demand learning resources, and live technical support. This will save HR many headaches when an employee is trying to take a course and runs into a problem outside of regular business hours.

Strategies for Launching a Successful Professional Development Program

How adults increase knowledge and skills at work

Launching a successful professional development program takes careful planning and support. Choosing the right LMS is half the battle. In a job market where nearly fast-growing organizations are facing serious talent shortages, knowledge has become the new currency of candidates. Therefore, to attract and retain a valuable workforce, organizations must embrace learning and make it part of their cultures. This is also how organizations remain competitive and competent.

Creating a positive culture of learning

One of the challenges that businesses face involves negative attitudes about HR training, particularly where it relates to compliance. When employees are told they must participate in mandatory training, they don't understand what's in it for them? HR can soften their requests by first encouraging all employees to participate in learning as a benefit of their employment. The second approach is to explain why compliance training is important to their safety and well-being. Providing incentives can often make learning more enjoyable.

Internal learning resources and the LMS

To facilitate the professional development process, be sure to capture internal learning content found around the organization and integrate it with ecourses. This repurposes what is already working for many employees, without restricting its access.

Using intuitive tools and resources for learning

Corporate learning isn't all about enduring long and complex lessons. Instead, use the cloud based LMS to make learning simple, fun, and meaningful for employees. This will help them to retain more information when it matters the most.

Job specific eCourses, bundles, and curriculum tracks

Course content can also be designed for job-specific tasks and roles within the organization. Break down the responsibilities of each job type and focus on improving skill subsets that provide the most benefit for employees, while reducing liability. For example, a course on customer service may be narrowed down to specific tactics to use on the telephone with clients.

Mobile accessibility - challenges and opportunities

Cloud-based learning has its own set of pros and cons in a professional development program. Being able to access learning on-the-go with any mobile device can seem like a major positive. However, this may pose as a challenge for some employees who are not technically savvy or have certain disabilities that need modification. Employers may find that a blend of instructor led classroom learning and mobile learning provides the right solution. Look at this as an opportunity to improve learning for all employees.

Connecting learning to performance

All professional development should be directly linked to employee performance management. Give employees the chance to line up their goals with corporate performance goals. Not all employees have management in their sights, but they can learn skills that will enhance their professional performance on a daily basis. Effective training is learner-centric and therefore the more closely aligned employees' goals are with the future of the company, the better prepared your workforce can be.

Aligning learning with corporate objectives

One question that a lot of organizational leaders forget to ask is, "Do my employees understand the importance of learning?" If employees believe that they are just going through the motions, they are less likely to benefit from professional development.

HR can help employees to connect learning with the business growth and mission of the organization. First, identify the key values of the organization and where learning fits into things. Second, discover what each employee has in terms of career goals and plug them into courses that address these desires.

Video and learner resource library building

Professional development initiatives gives HR an opportunity to gather all learning content under one roof. In a cloud-based system, this is simplified by creating a central location where learning content lives. Employees should be given access to upload, share, and download a variety of learning medium - including videos, presentations, demos, and more. Some LMS include ready-made video learning libraries or access to relevant complimentary content based on artificial intelligence.

Feedback, engagement, and analytics in learning

HR can use cloud-based LMS for effective management of individual learners. User activity and progress through courses can be tracked, new courses can be scheduled, and more. All of this creates new data about learners, which can be used to measure the success of programs. Metrics such as learner engagement and increased productivity can be measured using LMS reporting.

Learning management systems may also provide a direct way for learners to share feedback and post comments. This can help administrators to improve the experience and quality of learning. Analytical data can be used to justify the return on investment of the time spent developing new courses.

Future Professional Development Considerations

The future holds great promise for many organizations, especially those that take a proactive role in developing a skilled workforce. Yet, one question comes up often. The Dell Technologies' Realize 2030 report estimates that 85 percent of jobs won't be invented until the year 2030. If this is the case, then how can companies plan for training in technologies that don't exist yet? This is where learning will be leveraged even more by companies, in fact the human ability to learn gives us the advantage.

It has been projected that the top skills employees will need include many of the soft skills that are important today. For example, being able to collaborate with other sources of intelligence, including emerging technology like AI, will be important. Being strong problem-solvers, compliance-minded, and creative will remain as desirable skills.

Winning the war for talent with training

Due to rapid advancements in technology and a historically high employment levels, talent and skill shortages are only expected to get worse in the near future. Employers that wish to remain competitive have two choices. Either they can keep trying to lure passive talent away from competitors, or they can train the talent they already have to take on new roles. Ongoing training can help to maintain a strong workforce because it is adaptable and sustainable.

Intelligent training (AI and Virtual Environments)

New and emerging technology such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics and other forms of automation are disrupting the workplace. It is transforming the way tasks are performed, in some cases replacing the need for humans, while simultaneously increasing the need for humans who can work with these technologies.

A Pew Research Center and Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center poll revealed that 52% experts in technology said more jobs would be created than lost as a result of robotics and other automation. The learning industry is also benefiting from new technology, but it can never replace the human brain's capacity to learn and apply knowledge, while adapting to these changes.

More automation, personalization, and experiential learning

Changes and improvements in learning environments are a necessary aspect of keeping people employable as the workplace changes. Cloud-based learning management systems are just the start. When combined with AI and virtual reality, cloud-based learning can prepare adults for the labor force of the future.

The easier it is to learn and use modern LMS, the more effective employees can be in their new roles. Rapid learning methods can help keep people skilled and marketable.

At the same time, improved personalization of learning can make the experience of learners more pleasant and productive. For example, being greeted and encouraged by one's progression through each lesson makes for a more personal experience. Automation tools streamline and make things easier for both admins and learners.

Evolvement of the human mind and capacity for training

It is expected that human learning will evolve along with technology. And technology will evolve as humans digest information at a faster pace. People will continue to become more comfortable with technology, learning how to harness it to reach their goals. Just a few years ago, the idea of being able to interact with instructors and take classes on a smartphone seemed like the stuff of fairytales. Now it's the norm. Communities of learners are growing rapidly, and this is projected to continue as a major part of human learning. Cloud-based learning management systems are at the forefront of learning technology and this will continue to influence the way human beings learn.
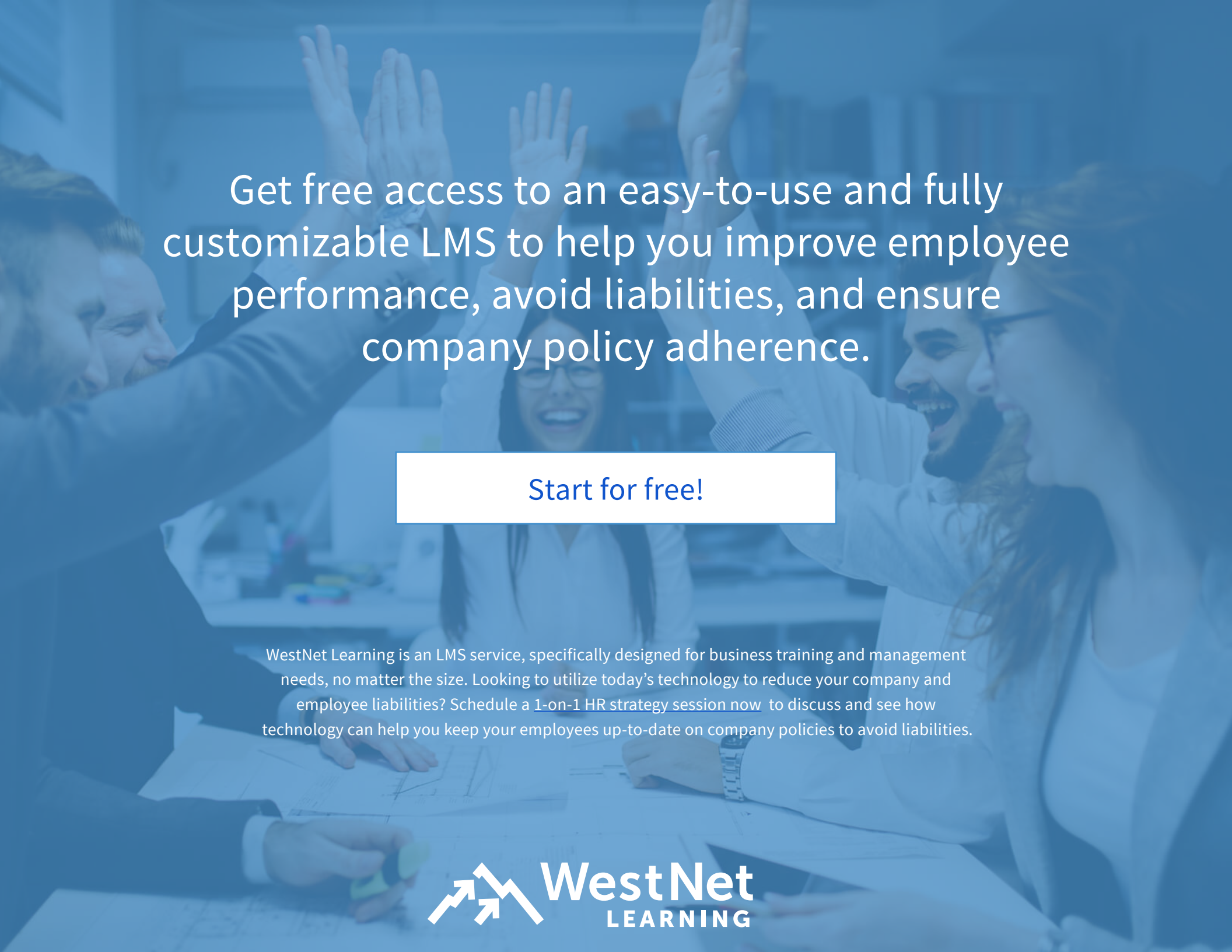
For the first time in history, people are living longer and retiring later, which means multiple-generations in every workplace. The impact this can have on professional development and learning programs is something that HR needs to consider. At the same time, people tend to have different learning styles and preferences. HR can facilitate learning by finding a common ground that all learners can embrace, training based on individual abilities, and focusing on strong team building.

Measuring the success rates of learning and development programs

In the near future, professional development goals may be very different than they are today. Instead of focusing on specific areas of performance, individuals may be tasked with continuous improvement over the life of their careers. We may change jobs more often, which will require more

skills and knowledge of more areas. Employers will guide learning, and it will be viewed as less of a perk and more of a requirement of remaining employed in a knowledge economy.

So too, the way that organizations measure the ROI of learning may have to adapt. Employers could be rated by how well they deliver learning experiences as employees expand their knowledge. The satisfaction of the learning itself may be included in this report card, along with how responsive the system is to the learning needs of employees.

Get free access to an easy-to-use and fully customizable LMS to help you improve employee performance, avoid liabilities, and ensure company policy adherence.

Start for free!

WestNet Learning is an LMS service, specifically designed for business training and management needs, no matter the size. Looking to utilize today's technology to reduce your company and employee liabilities? Schedule a 1-on-1 HR strategy session now to discuss and see how technology can help you keep your employees up-to-date on company policies to avoid liabilities.

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