The top portion of the image shows a bright office environment with large windows in the background, letting in natural light. The scene is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the text overlay.

# The Ultimate Guide to Improving Employee Productivity Rates



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# Introduction

A photograph of a group of people in a meeting room, overlaid with a blue tint. In the foreground, a man with glasses and a beard is seated at a table, holding a smartphone. Behind him, another man is seated, and to the left, a woman is seated. In the background, another woman is standing. The room has whiteboards and papers on the wall.

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Employee productivity is a vital indicator of an organization's success. Certain internal and external factors contribute to increased productivity, and others can negatively impact things. In this particular publication, we will explore what's happening with companies who are facing additional challenges in 2019 and beyond. We will also examine what influences productivity, and what human resource leaders can do to start improving things. Additionally, we will look at the connection between learning and productivity, best practices in boosting employee productivity (with 25 actionable take-action tips!), and discuss what the future may bring in this critical area of business.



A modern office environment with large windows overlooking a city. Several employees are working at desks with computers. One man is standing and talking to a woman. The office has a brick wall and a blue tint.

Employee productivity:  
Where organizations  
stand now

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Employers are working on ways to maintain high levels of productivity while considering the current talent market. On the one hand, there are ready sources of internal talent and increasing contractors that can be developed. On the other hand, jobs will be changing so rapidly with technology it can be difficult to predict what skills will be needed in the next few years. How will employers measure employee productivity now vs. in the future?

## Defining productivity in the workplace

Since this can be a complicated subject, let's first start with the basics of employee productivity, so there is zero confusion. Productivity in the workplace is, "how efficiently your workers accomplish your company's goals and produce goods or services for customers," as defined by [Bizfluent](#). This critical human capital metric can be measured by labor productivity levels, sales output, or even the amount of tasks performed per employee per shift. Different organizations have their methods of tracking productivity because there are various factors and priorities at play.

## Why employee productivity matters

A highly efficient workforce produces the most profits; it's just the mathematics of things. If a business wants to remain profitable, it must continually recruit a highly skilled workforce and then support it so that it has no barriers to being productive. This takes continual monitoring of productivity levels, careful screening, and evaluation of incoming candidates, and a culture that motivates employees to be their best. It's a cycle that requires direct management between human resources and other leaders in the organization.





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Of course, there are many other reasons why employee productivity matters in an organization. For one, the employee experience can be improved by an efficient system for recruiting, hiring, training, managing and promoting employees. If any of these areas break down, it can quickly turn an otherwise productive employee into a disengaged one. Employees who show up to work daily but don't contribute to the goals of the organization has become an epidemic in some industries. According to [Gallup](#), only around 15 percent of the global workforce is engaged in their job.

## Factors that are influencing productivity

While most agree that employee productivity should be aligned with corporate goals, both external and internal factors are influencing productivity. Industry-wide, data-driven technology continues to disrupt the way that businesses manage all of their processes, including employee performance. Real-time and Artificial Intelligence platforms are available to measure and evaluate how employees are doing, so adjustments can be made quickly and strategically. The problem is that too many organizations are turning to old and outdated methods of tracking employee productivity. Employees and managers “go through the motions” of required employee performance reports and surveys, which have no real impact at all on the overall productivity outcomes of the business.

The technology used on the job can reduce employee productivity levels. [Barbara Bean-Mellinger](#), who writes for Chron, says, “Before you wonder what is bothering your employees enough to affect their performance, make sure they have the technology and any other equipment they need to do their jobs.” Breakdowns in equipment performance can drastically reduce productivity. She also recommends taking time to, “find out

what's new in your field that could make your workers' work easier or faster.” A tablet computer, for example, could make it easier for field sales employees to process customer orders. New software may create a process more streamlined.

The relationship that employees have with their immediate supervisor has a direct impact on productivity. A “bad boss” who never gives feedback, never recognizes the contributions of employees, fails to keep promises made, blames other people when things go wrong, and never says anything positive negatively impacts all his subordinates.

And while we are speaking about negativity, the attitudes of colleagues, customers, and leadership can play a massive part in productivity metrics. If an employee with some influence in the workplace develops a lousy attitude and starts grumbling to others, you can bet that this will bring others down. A customer encounters this employee, and it's a reflection of the entire company. This could be a big customer too, and one that pulls their business out and affects the financial well-being of the company.

Poor health can be a contributing factor when it comes to employee productivity. There is a problem in American workplaces of presenteeism, which is when employees are expected to go to work when they are feeling sick. The cold season can create havoc on productivity levels. A better policy is to send sick employees home, so they can recover to their former productive selves (and not get other employees sick).

External factors can be a problem too, such as a weak economy. When organizations go through changes, such as closing down departments or downsizing offices, this response creates much tension. If a new law

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changes a process, this can be frustrating for employees who have to adapt. Poor employee morale is often the result, and this shows itself through low productivity levels.

## **What causes productivity problems?**

There is not just one cause of productivity problems, as evidenced by the above. Any number of factors and changes can cause employees to become disconnected toward the company goals, and career aspirations. Employees can become overworked, overwhelmed, and stressed, which breaks down their ability to be productive.





A photograph of three people in an office setting. In the foreground, a man with a beard and glasses is looking at a computer screen. Behind him, a woman with glasses is also looking at the screen. To the left, another woman with glasses is looking at the screen. They are all sitting at a desk with a computer monitor and keyboard. The image has a blue tint.

# The learning and productivity connection

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Employee productivity and learning are intricately connected. A skilled workforce happens because of an employer who prioritizes professional development and continual education. As new technology drives the need for new skills, companies must find ways to make learning more accessible so that all employees can participate. Cloud learning management systems (LMS) support this goal. Each business is challenged to encourage employees to keep learning through more interactive learning platforms, gamification, and social tools.

## **Performance plus knowledge equals productivity**

In the first chapter, the reason that employee productivity and profitability go hand-in-hand was briefly touched upon. Here we will dig deeper, and tie in why learning is the key to increasing both.

Learning is a low-cost investment. Of all the areas you can focus on in, introducing cloud-based education is very cost-effective. Employees who have access to training material that they can take on-demand can then immediately use these new skills on the job to be more profitable.

Learning can improve attitudes. Often, employees may feel ignored or undervalued by management. Or they may fear that their skills will become obsolete. When [leadership makes employee learning a priority](#), this demonstrates that they do care about employees, which results in better attitudes and morale.

Supports internal promotions. Hiring new employees with the desired skills is always a challenge, and it's getting more costly as the talent pool



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shrinks. It's much more economical to train and promote employees from within, using modern learning resources.

Increases team building and collaboration. When employees participate in learning, a magical thing happens. They begin to share their experience with the teaching itself, bonding with other employees who have also attended. This brings more people together, communicating and collaborating on projects -- which grows teams of knowledgeable employees.

Learning increases employee trust. Employers can place their faith in employees who take it upon themselves to learn new things that can enhance their performance. When a new technology comes along, those who immediately jump on learning opportunities become the go-to sources of knowledge in the organization, and they demonstrate their commitment to the company goals.

The above connections between learning and performance increase the performance of employees. Management can put their faith in a workforce that actively seeks out new knowledge. More capable teams are created, with higher performance goals set. Learning is a smart investment in employees because it's cost-effective when compared with recruitment fees, and it puts the attention on developing employees who have already proven to be loyal.

## Benefits of cloud learning tools

Cloud applications in the learning space have now made it possible for more companies to offer training on-the-go at affordable rates. Whether

a small company has decided to convert existing instructor-led training to online modules, or a large organization needs to convert a vast library of learning content into a central learning platform -- cloud learning tools make this possible. Cloud applications allow employees to locate learning content on-demand, and they can learn at their own pace so they can become more proficient in their jobs sooner.

## Making learning more effective with gamification and social tools

Relatively new on the scene, but growing in popularity, are the use of gamification and social tools in workplace learning. It seems that when a little healthy competition is introduced to the professional learning environment, it produces better results. Employees felt more challenged and inspired to earn high achievements (like electronic badges and certificates), and this leads to higher productivity.

Gamification can also help employees to work out problems and try new tasks in a virtual world where they can feel safe. This builds skills and confidence, which makes them better when they get to performing things in the real world. Some studies even suggest that gamification aids in retaining information because it happens in micro-bursts, which is how the brain learns the best.

In terms of social tools, taking this one step further and involving peers in the learning process makes sense. Employees can try to out-learn their peers, then show off their new credentials to others. Stacking up badges and including them in social profiles, in posts, and even in email signatures

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can boost learning participation. This also increases job satisfaction, because each employee knows he is working towards career growth.

## Blended learning for better results

Many organizations prefer to use a blended learning method for employee development and productivity. [Veronica Hunt](#) who writes for Digitalist magazine shared some of the reasons why a company might choose a blended learning model. She said, "Blended learning is ideal for conducting training programs, and it also helps boost your employees' performance and motivation, increase their productivity and encourage their interest in work." The benefits are many, including the ability for employees to have the freedom to learn in the way that most closely matches their learning style. It's also beneficial in that it can help control the costs of training -- some training is still done in-house by instructors, while other training can be accomplished with learning management software. Blended learning also helps to improve communications by using interactive learning combined with on-the-job projects. All of these factors lead to a more capable workforce.





A woman with blonde hair, smiling, is pointing her finger at a collection of colorful sticky notes pinned to a wall. The notes contain handwritten text and diagrams. The image has a blue tint.

# Trends in productivity and best practices

Media  
→ FEATURED  
IN THE  
WASH  
POST

Control  
over marketing  
materials  
Control &  
consistency over  
photography

change  
to create value  
to get clients to  
talk to you

1- WEB CONTENT  
2- WEBSITE  
3- CARDS / (SPAs)  
- WATERLOO



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Human resource and management must work together to improve and maintain high levels of employee productivity; how is this accomplished? Further, what steps can be taken to improve the culture so that it promotes productivity and ongoing learning? Leaders also have the responsibility of selecting the best possible learning management system. What are the key factors to look for in a corporate LMS?

## Managing employee productivity in a modern age

Today's training leaders have their work cut out for them. Rapid advancements in technology combined with a changing workforce have made it difficult to track employee productivity. The business goal is still the same - make money by being as productive as possible.

Some [methods that still work](#). First, every organization needs a firm handle on how productivity is defined and what metrics are available to measure it. For example, a manufacturing plant measures productivity by the volume of "widgets" made in a certain time period. An IT firm weigh productivity by the number of support tickets resolved and closed in a period. Second, the company needs to try new ways to improve productivity with test groups. If something consistently helps enhance the efficiency of a department, leaders can learn from this and implement company-wide process improvement. Last, leaders should be willing to learn from mistakes, analyze what went wrong and tried something better the next time.

## How to measure productivity

Various methods allow leaders to measure employee productivity. The traditional formula productivity = output divided by input works in some



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cases (like manufacturing and sales) but in the new knowledge economy how can one measure things like knowledge, what the value of output is, and if time is as crucial as quality?

## **A few possible ways to look at productivity determination may include:**

**Positive outcomes** - If your organization is producing high-quality experiences for customers, this is a sign of productivity. How can this be measured? Use a customer feedback system and review the data regularly.

**Knowledge of employees** - In the information age, workers are the way things get produced, and the expertise they have is the key. Therefore, one can think of output and efficiency as having a knowledgeable and well-training workforce.

**Work culture** - A positive work environment leads to higher productivity, according to a [University of Michigan study](#). In cultures where employees and leaders demonstrated “positive and virtuous practices,” the organization scored higher in financial performance, customer service, and employee efficiency.

## **Choosing the best LMS for enhanced skill building**

Since learning is a central part of creating a more effective workforce, it makes sense to invest in a learning management system. There are several features to look for in a corporate LMS, including a central administrative/student panel, secure sign-on access from the cloud, pricing plans that fit your budget, reporting for tracking progress, and full customization.

Also, the LMS should include 24/7 access to live and online support, as well as be accessible by any device. These features can provide a fully immersive experience for employees and make it simple for the learning administrator(s) to manage content.





# 25 Tips for improving workplace productivity

## 25 Tips for improving workplace productivity

Once your organization has begun the process of seeking out the best cloud LMS, there are steps that any human resource professional or manager can take to improve the status of employee productivity. Use these ideas to increase performance, but also consider creative ways to develop knowledge, team satisfaction, and more.

Managers should also be taking an active role in terms of their learning and management ability, so we've included some ideas for professional development too.

- 1.** Ensure all employees have cross-device access to the best technology to do their jobs well. Including learning technology.
- 2.** Consider boosting the workspace with better lighting, plants, work monitors, desks and chairs, and a corporate learning library.
- 3.** Encourage employees to take breaks and schedule "walking meetings" instead of being stuck in stuffy meeting rooms all day.
- 4.** Give employees ownership in terms of setting goals at work. This can include daily tasks, project goals, and career development goals.
- 5.** Launch new projects and courses with a company-wide celebration to let employees know everyone has an important part to play in its success.
- 6.** Stop multitasking. The human brain is not designed for this. Instead, encourage employees to work on tasks one at a time and in short periods. This includes learning new material.
- 7.** Take advantage of commute times. Use this otherwise wasted time for listening to audiobooks, including those that improve communication and business skills.
- 8.** Reduce distractions by giving employees the option to work on tasks during cell-phone/text messaging free work times. Whatever the distraction is, rule it out for at least a portion of each workday.
- 9.** Encourage teams to conduct activities off-site at least once per week. This refreshes them and brings the team together for effective work sessions, in a fun environment.
- 10.** Increase employee engagement by improving culture. Happier employees are more productive.
- 11.** Give employees more incentives to achieve their goals. Regularly recognize those who participate in learning and professional development activities.

## 25 Tips for improving workplace productivity

**12.** Support employees when they need to take time off. Burnt out and stressed employees need time to recover.

**13.** Improve the management team's ability to lead. Use coaching and professional development to make them better, more effective at bringing out the best in their people.

**14.** Use time tracking apps. Whether for personal use or professional use, time tracking can help evaluate when people are working most proficiently.

**15.** Keep the lines of communication open. While a direct dialogue is often not available, employees need a reliable manager to go to express ideas, get help, and overcome challenges.

**16.** Compensate employees well. Competitive pay and benefits with special perks that appeal to employees gives them the extra boost when tied to performance goals.

**17.** Enable more work flexibility. Research shows remote workers are known to be more productive and focused. This is also a preference for Millennials.

**18.** Motivate by purpose. Make sure your employees understand the impact their work has on the bigger picture for your organization.

**19.** Embrace the digital age. Companies that keep growing and adding new technology are more apt to attract high-performance candidates than those that become stagnant.

**20.** Streamline internal processes. Task employees with finding better and more efficient ways of managing processes and getting things done. Work smarter; not harder.

**21.** Focus on health. A workforce that is healthy, physically and mentally, can perform better than one that is unhealthy and stressed.

**22.** Offer rewarding projects that match worker skills. Hire the right people and give them projects that challenge them and keep their skills sharp.

**23.** Model the desired behaviors with an ethical management team. Give employees someone they can look up to and go to when they have concerns and new ideas.

**24.** Boost the morale of workers with rewards. Regularly take the time to thank hard-working employees and those who go the extra mile for others.

**25.** Create a brand that makes people proud. Honor the values of your people with a strong brand. Make every connection count.



A group of five diverse professionals are gathered around a light-colored wooden table in a bright, modern office setting. They are all focused on a tablet computer lying on the table, with one person pointing at the screen. Other documents, pens, and a rolled-up blueprint are scattered on the table. The background is slightly blurred, showing large windows and office furniture. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

# Future challenges and opportunities in employee productivity

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With [half of the global workforce](#) expected to be freelance/home based in the next 10 years, it's important that leaders have methods for maintaining the efficiency of remote workers, while also helping to retain the right skills for future jobs -- many that have not even been defined yet. How will your organization manage employee productivity in this new world of work?

## Understanding the changing work landscape

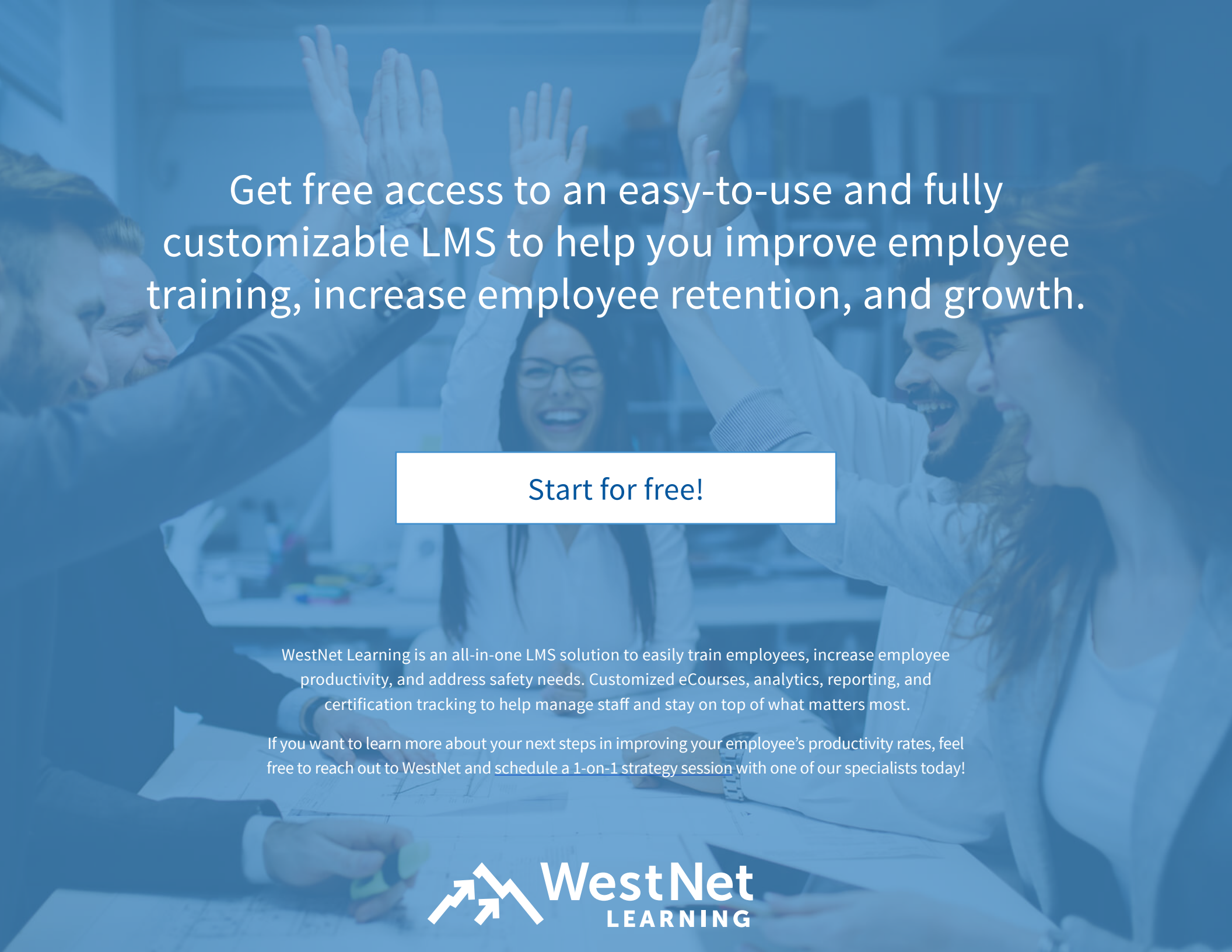
The world continues to be disrupted by developments in globalization, technology, diversity, and regulation. All of this requires organizations to adapt to changes quickly and effectively. Employees must be able to switch gears and learn new things in an increasingly agile environment. Simultaneously, it's getting more difficult to find and retain skilled employees in a shrinking talent pool.

For many organizations, their only hope is to design learning cultures that can keep up with changing job roles. According to career research company [Burning Glass Technologies](#), many jobs are becoming hybrid in nature, meaning they require many more complex skills. The research found that high-paying jobs of the future will require a multi-disciplinary skillset, using both left-brain and right-brain abilities.

At the same time, employees are expected to remain in the workforce a great deal longer than they are today, due to medical advances that keep people physically and mentally sharp. Millennials and Gen Z are rapidly replacing baby Boomers, and these are people who may work well into their 70s or longer. Their preferences for working remotely, using the best of technology, and being active learners are all factors that employers can support for a more productive workforce.

## How will employers determine productivity someday?

In the future, productivity will be challenging to measure since it will not be based on traditional models. Instead, employees will be measured on their ability to produce quality work within project requirements and under cost. The most productive employees will be those who are well-connected to sources of information and support, who actively seek out new information, and who put a great deal of effort into continual learning. Organizations that provide access to learning-on-demand focus on making the employee experience a positive one and develop a remarkable management team have the best chance of being productive.



Get free access to an easy-to-use and fully customizable LMS to help you improve employee training, increase employee retention, and growth.

Start for free!

WestNet Learning is an all-in-one LMS solution to easily train employees, increase employee productivity, and address safety needs. Customized eCourses, analytics, reporting, and certification tracking to help manage staff and stay on top of what matters most.

If you want to learn more about your next steps in improving your employee's productivity rates, feel free to reach out to WestNet and [schedule a 1-on-1 strategy session](#) with one of our specialists today!





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