The ways in which organisations assess the fitness for purpose of employees, as well as how employees go about maintaining that fitness, are being influenced by the way on-the-job learning continues to be turned inside out by the internet.

Many of these changes involve gamification techniques of the kind increasingly finding their way into business management. Right now, many providers of training are taking their content and converting it for a variety of formats so that students can essentially compete with others, or themselves, to reach knowledge acquisition targets. Short, sharp modules are the key, with firms in this space eulogising the greater knowledge retention rates that they say result from such an approach.

Digital workplace learning solutions provider International Workplace calls such short modules ‘spaced learning’ to be accessed ‘little and often’. When the firm’s managing director David Sharp, in his role as an IWFM awards judge, was considering the attributes shared by the best-performing FMs across the years, “I came up with the idea of testing their ‘DNA’, to see if there was something in their skills, attributes and attitudes that made them all successful.” An associated workshop “got me thinking in a much more granular way about how we identify, promote and measure desired personal development outcomes.”

This approach has underpinned development of Workplace DNA, a continuous learning service based around a cloud-based digital platform and born of an acceptance that the way students learn has fundamentally shifted. It’s more about acquiring knowledge at the time and point of demand, with employers using engagement and impact as the new metrics of choice.

Workplace DNA uses structures such as leaderboards – an option for employers when setting up the service up – to introduce a gamified element to the learning experience. The system notes a user’s engagement with the product’s learning resources, reporting the user’s progress in the form of a ‘DNA score’ – “a simple measure of engagement that reflects their knowledge and understanding of workplace management”.

The trick here is that the DNA score isn’t always headed upwards; failure to keep up with resources
Adding a reward component to training has been made easier through the use of apps. In 2018, VINCI Facilities Singapore launched its “Safety on the Go” app to improve health and safety awareness among service staff. It comprises a safety procedure field guide, a hazard identification guide, check and trend analysis of hazard type and causes per site to enable decisions on how to improve site safety, and a quiz function. Staff that perform poorly on the quizzes get one-to-one coaching before retaking the quiz. “Leaders can communicate with a large community at one time and we can later report hazards on the go as they spot them,” explains Ho Chee Kit, senior director at VINCI Services Singapore. “What is of tremendous value is that hazards can be reported and rectified quickly.”

Many studies document the benefits of using apps to engage users because of the high usage of mobile. “The idea is that more and more mobile devices are in use,” says Ho. “The rewards (in the form of vouchers) are an added sweetness to sustain engagement levels to a point of course.”

However, they do not, however, necessary. Employees are just as motivated by recognition from peers, management and clients for their commitment to safety culture, says Ho. The team is currently working on a rewards and recognition framework using a combination of good job cards, nominations for annuity safety awards and promotion in internal design considerations for new buildings to motivate and reward behaviours.

“Rewards should be sustainable, without raising too high a level of expectation to a point where employees are often let down psychologically,” says Ho. “Organisations need to look at empowering employees, fostering organisational awareness and intrinsic motivation, and a culture of high-performing learners that take personal responsibility in their learning and career development.”

Training employees in this way also yields a lot of useful data related to health and safety. Too many hazard reports indicate a site suffering from a poor safety culture. Too many hazards become an obvious site and likely inadequately safety because of them.

“Through these trends employees can develop a safety profile of each team leading to back-to-back achievement. With these baseline data, the future of predictive analytics of any potential incident is possible.”

Smarter apps to gamify training

While points and reward systems are an important method to engage users because of the high usage of mobile, smartphone technology can also create a diverse, engaging learning environment which caters for different preferences and learning styles.”

“Ultimately, it won’t be the mobile app alone that brings gamification in training,” says Matthew Hyett, the firm’s smart places manager, VINCI Services Singapore. “It’s not necessarily what people want – to be monitored – but you get a word answer.”

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