

NEWS BRIEFS



L&D set for 'radical reinvention'

The more digital our workplaces become, the more human we need to be as workers, according to the director of Swinburne's Centre for the New Workforce, Sean Gallagher. "Workers understand that social competencies – such as collaboration, empathy and entrepreneurial skills – are uniquely human and less vulnerable to being displaced by sophisticated artificial intelligence and automation technologies," he added. Gallagher's comments came as a new report by the centre found that digital disruption of the workplace would "compel a radical reinvention of how we educate and train workers for the future of work".



Employees allegedly paid £200 for training

For staff across Costa Coffee stores in Essex in the UK, training has become a point of contention. Employees were allegedly forced to pay for training themselves, at a cost of up to £200 deducted from a single payout. A wave of complaints about salary deductions at Costa Coffee reportedly began with a post on social media. Franchise owners are said to have contracts that allow for certain charges to be made against employees' salaries – and not just for training costs. Some staff claim deductions occasionally include penalties for tardiness, while one worker said she had to pay out of her pocket for till discrepancies.



How bad managers stifle innovation

Managers who shoot down ideas from their staff may be harming their organisation's ability to innovate. According to research published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, rejecting an

employee's suggestion – without regard for the person's feelings and without any explanation of the critique – may end up silencing those willing to pitch ideas. "If you want to continue to have people bring innovative ideas or help you detect errors, you do have to care about how you respond to those outcomes," said Danielle King of Rice University, who led the research.



Growing demand for contingent workers

Organisations are purportedly planning to hire more contingent talent while scaling back on employing full-time staff, research from Willis Towers Watson has revealed. The survey of more than 1,000 companies across 40 countries showed that freelancers/free agents and employees on loan from other organisations constitute 4.2% of the global workforce. "The increasing sophistication of the skills that contingent workers possess and the work expected from them, combined with the growing premium placed on speed, is encouraging more organisations to consider the use of contingent talent," the report said.



L&D not just a 'nice-to-have' for employers

With the global labour market growing tighter, companies are starting to come up with new ways to make the most of the workforce they already have. Research by B2B ratings company Clutch found that 93% of employees believe employer-sponsored programs are crucial to their success – and organisations have started responding to the demand. In the US, 77% of companies now offer some form of job development and retraining to accommodate the needs of their workforce. This includes investing in books, videos and online courses (47%) as well as training courses and workshops (46%).

How team volunteering can benefit a business

Working together outside of the office can build the connections needed to create successful teams

In the words of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, "What is the essence of life? To serve others and to do good."

Indeed, volunteering is a great way to do some good for the community and your team, according to leadership and career expert Michelle Gibbings.

"Developing and sustaining effective team dynamics requires effort and focus, and team volunteering can play a part in helping to build those dynamics," she says.

Gibbings is also the author of *Step Up: How to Build Your Influence at Work* and *Career Leap: How to Reinvent and Liberate your Career*.

She says that essentially teams are brought together to get things done, with the logic that more gets done together than alone. However, that benefit is only achieved when the team knows how to best work together.

"Effective leaders know it's critical to create a working environment which facilitates that – so the team makes progress on the right things, at the right time."

Underpinning that environment are two key ingredients – trust, and understanding the strengths and skills each team member brings to the team, says Gibbings.

The leader will usually know the skills and capability of each team member. However, often team members don't have the same level of understanding of each other.

This may be because two teams have recently been merged, and so relationships are

still being formed, or because effort hasn't been devoted to building that understanding.

"Regardless of the reason, this ambiguity breeds disengagement and distrust," says Gibbings. "It also means that team members can't leverage each other's skills as effectively because if you don't know what someone does, you don't know how they can help you, or vice versa."

While there are a number of great ways to build team understanding and connection through structured team days and facilitated team sessions, getting outside the office and

"Developing and sustaining effective team dynamics requires effort and focus"

into a different environment plays a part too.

"When team members come together to volunteer to help a not-for-profit or community group they are usually working in a more relaxed and less structured environment," says Gibbings.

"This encourages banter, bonding and camaraderie, and the experiences from the day become shared stories that help to build the team's culture."

Furthermore, it is an opportunity for team members to see each other working in a different context and applying different skills.

Gibbings says volunteering provides a range of positive benefits at an individual level. This is because when a person helps someone it elevates how they feel about themselves, which in turn aids their mental health and wellbeing.



Karlie Cremin
Director
DLPA

Fast fact

Seven out of 10 employees surveyed by B2B ratings company Clutch said they were willing to take part in job retraining if their company offered it.

■ Q&A

Selling the value of training

● Why is designing an effective training program such an important topic in 2019?

The current economic landscape is really uncertain on many fronts. The political pressures are extreme, the financial markets are under pressure, and the Australian economy is showing signs of contracting.

This results in many organisations being much more conservative with their spending. As HR is often viewed solely as a cost centre – not a value-add – it is one of the first departments to see funding removed.

In order to obtain, justify and validate the need to spend money on training and development, there must be a clear link between the strategy and the training, and an economic impact.

Where HR professionals can make the case for training on the basis of a strategic objective, and link the training to increased performance outcomes, we see them gain access to much higher budgets and also have much greater buy-in from senior management.

● What advice do you have for HR professionals on how to build an effective training program with the support of senior leaders?

- HR is a value-adding function and department. The key is articulating that value in a way other departments will understand. Strategy and economics are the easiest access point for this. Always have a clear business case for HR spend so people understand the strategic relevance and the intended return on investment.
- We tend to spend so much time on performance management, versus creating high performance. Training can and should be used in a coordinated way to increase the performance of the team as a whole, rather than individually to manage one person's performance issues or skills gaps.
- The temptation in times of downturn is to reduce training expenditure. However, this is very dangerous as it means that your workforce becomes stagnant and you are losing your competitive advantage at the time you need it most. Don't cut expenditure in a downturn; be more creative and strategic in how you utilise it, and what return you need from it.