

# From A to Z

## Corporate learning for the digital world



The global technological revolution is transforming business models and the way we think about management. Is the learning and development community ready to face the changes?

By **Valery Katkalo, Martin Moehrle, Dmitry Volkov**

**W**e live in an era in which digital technologies are integrated into virtually all spheres of human life. This technological revolution is fundamentally changing business models and our approaches to management.

First, professions are materially changing. While robotics and artificial intelligence will replace or augment many traditional jobs, roles such as data scientist, specialists in sales of complex products, engineers in robotics maintenance and biological engineers will be in high demand.

Second, the new key competencies in companies are speed (time to decision, to product and to market) and flexibility (ability to adapt quickly).

Third, experience is becoming more popular than ownership and companies are shifting from promoting their products to optimising the customer experience.

Finally, social networks and media are becoming the primary source of information for a new generation of consumers.

All these drivers have a significant impact on how we manage talent.

The regularly stated lack of talent does not mean a lack of people around the world but rather a mismatch between demand for and supply of skills. Organisations and society will require new skills and the demand for traditional skill sets will decrease. At the same time, the demand from employees and enterprises for alternative work arrangements will grow.

Information distribution and consumption is changing formidably. Generations Y and Z demonstrate a desire for individualism and high-tech multitasking, for example the desire and ability to readily switch attention between media platforms such as laptops, smartphones, tablets and TV.

The amount of available information is growing rapidly, as is ease of access to it. As a consequence, content becomes obsolete very quickly. In addition, it becomes increasingly challenging to find access to a desired target audience since there is much more choice and personalisation of content based on the user's needs and preferences.

What do all these shifts in business and society generated by the digital revolution mean for corporate learning?

First, businesses require not only skills development to solve current and future business problems but learning experiences for the rapid mastering of new skills, the shaping of new mindsets and lifelong learning. These must be proactive (reducing time to competence), personalised (data-driven), utilise relevant technologies (digital) and, finally, be cost-efficient and transparent.

The focus of corporate learning functions in the digital world is shifting from portfolio management to educational experience management, from being a learning provider to becoming a learning enabler.

Corporate universities can become one of the key drivers of digital business transformation if they establish a strategic partnership with the business and increasingly co-operate with management in identifying areas of strategic development.

The extension of the learning and development (L&D) toolkit to provide organisational diagnostic services or the transformation of corporate universities into knowledge hubs is not possible without identifying the company's development paths. Therefore, the L&D function should not only be a "partner to" but also be "inside" a company focusing on learning impact, the achievement of existing business objectives and personal career goals of the learner. Hence, corporate universities should ensure a seamless process of assessing learning effectiveness thereby connecting learning analytics with performance and talent management.

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Corporate universities must prioritise proactive and rapid design and delivery of learning solutions for acquiring new skills and mastering new professions. And they must strengthen the culture of “a learning organisation”, which is a key capability for a successful adaptation to the challenges of technology.

They must also cultivate an educational ecosystem and the acceleration of its development in line with business strategy. The boundaries of corporate learning are expanding and beginning to follow the key directions of business development, namely suppliers and customers, new areas of business and potential employees. Thus the corporate university is now becoming a strategic marketing tool, especially for the companies that are moving towards platform-based business models.

Given these social and technological changes, corporate learning has to embrace the informal learning that it has long ignored. This implies the design of learning experiences that directly reflect the needs of learners and their work context.

Digital-age learning also means a comprehensive digitalisation of learning processes, which again requires shifts in the roles and qualifications of learning professionals. A basic prerequisite for an effective self-service learning marketplace, where employees can choose the most relevant solution, will be a distinctive learning culture. Corporate universities have a role to play in shaping habits of experimentation and feedback in a safe environment.

To summarise, the new model of corporate learning in the digital world implies the following transitions:

- from an educational services provider to a catalyst for the development of a new generation of executives, managers, employees and value chain partners
- from content development to content development and curation
- from the focus on quality content to focusing on customisation of learning solutions to meet customers’ needs
- from combining in-class and distance learning to the combination of formal and informal learning (social, collaborative, experiential)
- from the standardisation of training to the personalisation of learning
- from the transfer of knowledge to the building and certification of skills



The digital revolution in corporate learning is leading to the emergence of new technologies, methods, models and concepts. The L&D professional language is being enriched with a multitude of new definitions and terms that often stem from other professions. We are witnessing an unprecedented acceleration of renewal in the field of corporate learning. But how can we understand this new language permeating the profession?

A first step has been the reference dictionary *Corporate learning for the digital world*, developed and published in late 2017 initially for a Russian readership by Sberbank Corporate University (the only Russian CLIP-accredited institution).

The purpose of the dictionary is to establish a unified conceptual understanding of modern corporate learning technologies and to provide a concise overview of advanced approaches and methods. This edition consists of 57 entries, including three appendices, recording more than 270 basic terms on special aspects of corporate learning in the digital world.

Although these concepts (such as microlearning, e-textbook, flipped classroom, gamification, virtual simulation and so on) are already becoming mainstream, most of them were



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rather exotic just a few years ago. The book is also aimed at broadening conceptual and practical knowledge and stimulating innovative insights and actions by those involved in the design and delivery of new learning solutions.

In developing this reference dictionary, the authors used material from analytical reports and conferences by leading global associations in corporate learning, including those in which Sberbank CU is either an active participant or a member of governance such as EFMD, ATD, ECLF and GlobalCCU.

Another important source of inspiration has been the success of 20 sessions of EduTech, a series of monthly methodological seminars organised by Sberbank CU since September 2016 (with up to 1,000 learning experts from the corporate world and academia attending in person or online).

In addition, the dictionary contains examples of methodological and technological learning innovations at Sberbank and some other top European companies with CLIP accreditation. Partnerships with EduTech companies were also very helpful in preparing the publication.

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community and elsewhere, notably among the many hundreds of learning professionals who participated in the annual international conference “Beyond Just Learning”, which Sberbank CU and EFMD have been jointly organising in Moscow since October 2016. Leading international experts, with whom the concept of this dictionary was discussed, encouraged us to consider publishing it for a global audience.

Today we are happy to announce that EFMD and Sberbank CU will jointly publish the first international edition of the dictionary in English in early 2019. We hope that this international edition will be useful and relevant for the professional learning community around the world. Although many cases and examples in this dictionary come from Russia, we have tried to give a global, universal and impartial view of the subject.

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#### About the Authors

*Prof. Valery Katkalo is the Dean of Sberbank Corporate University and the Vice-President of EFMD (corporate services); vskatkalo@sberbank.ru*

*Dr Martin Moehrle is a management consultant based in Frankfurt and an Associate Director of EFMD. He was Global Head of Talent at UBS and Chief Learning Officer and Global Head of Development at Deutsche Bank. martin.moehrle@efmd.org*

*Prof. Dmitry Volkov is the Director for Advanced Learning Technologies of Sberbank Corporate University; dvolkov.cu@sberbank.ru*