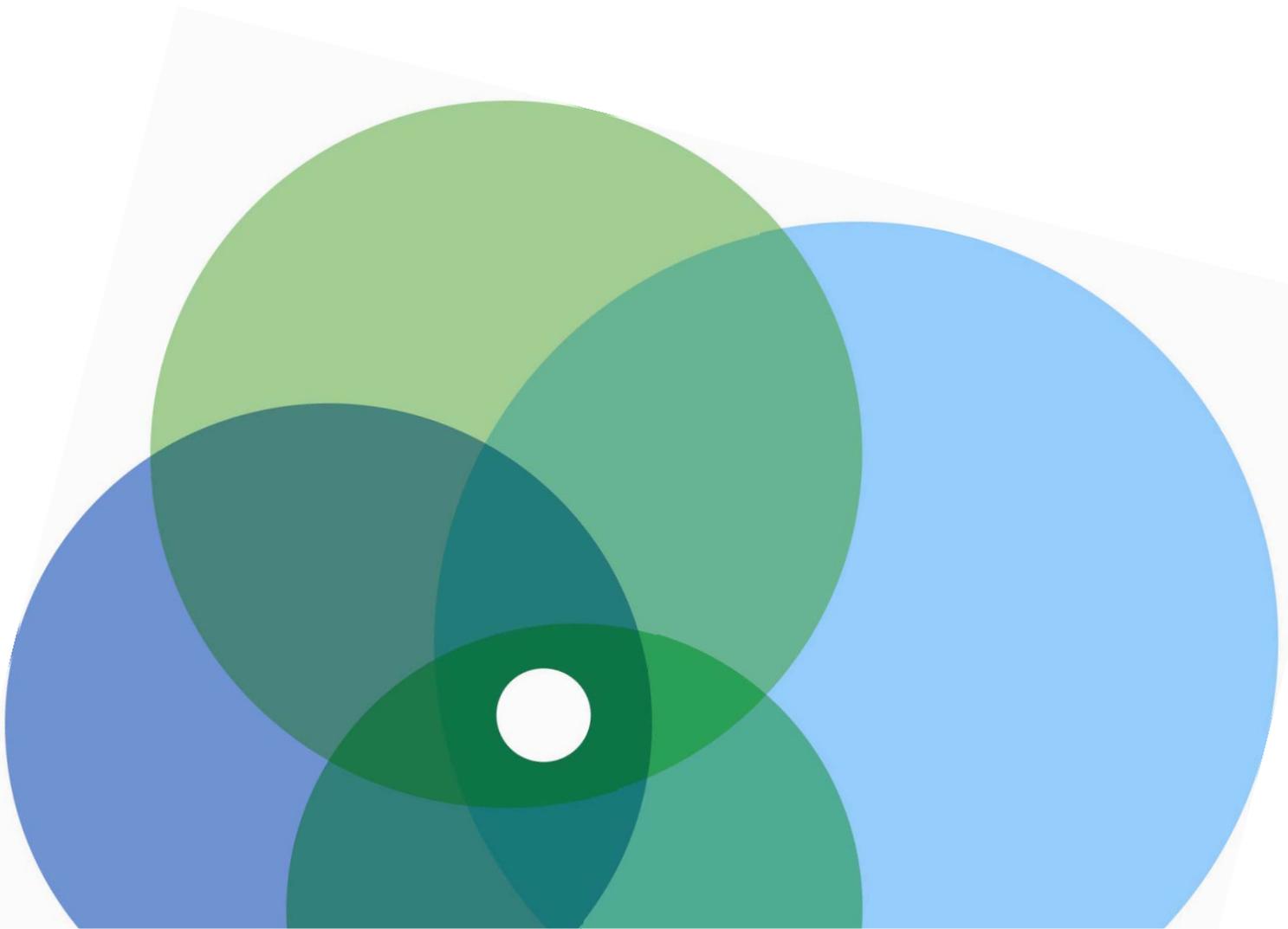White Paper

Retaining and Developing Employees with Learning Pathways

The keys to a successful roll out

Introduction

The popularity of Learning Management systems in recent years has been driven more by the need to demonstrate compliance than the desire for organisations to develop and nurture their employees. Now that these compliance needs are being met, organisations are leveraging the capability of their systems to automate tasks, deploy better online learning and to create ongoing learning programs for their employees.

Our research has shown that a major factor in employee churn is a lack of development opportunities or visible training programs that will help enhance job skills. The fact that sometimes development opportunities *do* exist within the organisation, but aren't easily accessible or visible to employees shows that organisations are still struggling to internally market and distribute learning.

The high cost of on boarding and training new employees means this is an area that needs to be addressed.

Visible, easily accessible and well planned *learning pathways* act as excellent internal PR for new recruits and demonstrate that the hiring organisation intends to invest time in their development.

[1] For the purpose of this document we will define a learning pathway as a series of learning events (formal and/or informal) in a variety of formats. Learning pathways are designed for specific jobs roles or to enhance specific soft skill areas.

Retaining and Developing Employees with Learning Pathways

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Author: Adam Wright

Common Themes to Success

Make it easy

Using a Learning Management System (LMS) will make it quite simple to roll job specific learning into a curriculum that is assigned to employees upon commencement.

This should guide the employee through all required learning to get them up to speed initially. Additionally it is important to provide *optional* training which may develop soft skills or provide learning that may advance the employee in other areas of the organisation.

Make it visible

A good LMS should allow employee to easily see their required learning pathway(s), including completion status. Optional training paths should also be easy to see and access.

Make it Relevant

Consideration needs to be taken into account around approval processes (i.e. there is no point making learning visible that certain employees will not get approval to attend) and above all it should be relevant. Using pre-requisites adds another layer of logic that will become apparent to the employee, avoiding a training 'free for all'.

Path to success

The keys to a successful roll out are:

1. Having well designed training programs in place (whether instructor led or online)

2. Create a matrix by job role, listing all *required* learning programs (in the order in which they should be taken)

3. Group the training into categories, such as compliance, system training, product training, soft skills training etc

4. Identify which programs need refreshers over time

5. Identify pre-requisites

6. From this, create sets of *core* curricula that apply to large populations of the organisation. These curricula should form the learning pathways catering to the largest job families within your organisation. Your LMS should be able to make the learning pathways visible only to relevant audience types, which will cut down 'overloading' employees with too many options.

7. Train your staff in the use of the pathways (this can be as simple as a short online piece around 'Development in x Organisation' or other means. There is no point building the pathways if it is unclear to the employee population in how to utilise them.

8. Market the pathways to managers and ensure that they can talk to their employees about them in an informed fashion, both at performance review time and throughout the year.

9. Avoid unnecessary complexity. This can arise from creating hundreds of curricula to cater for every single type of employee within the organisation. This will confuse the issue, clog your LMS, and the complexity will become burdensome very quickly, particularly when you wish to add a program across certain sets of employees.

We have seen organisations try to cater to every possible job variation only to fail due to complexity. Also when staff members who have designed the curricula leave, they often take much of the knowledge with them, leaving a convoluted set of pathways within the LMS, and confused employees.

When training programs are removed or adjusted, this can then lead to administrative overhead in editing every learning pathway that contained that course.

Established learning pathways should cater to *core* streams of knowledge and development within the organisation.

Creating curricula based on short term needs (i.e. a program that needs to be quickly rolled out to the entire employee population) proves ineffective as its usefulness will expire. Instead, try different methods of automatically enrolling all employees into the program thus eliminating the need to create pathways that later need to be discontinued. The ability to do this will depend on the technology you use.

Elements – Where pathways fit in your overall learning strategy
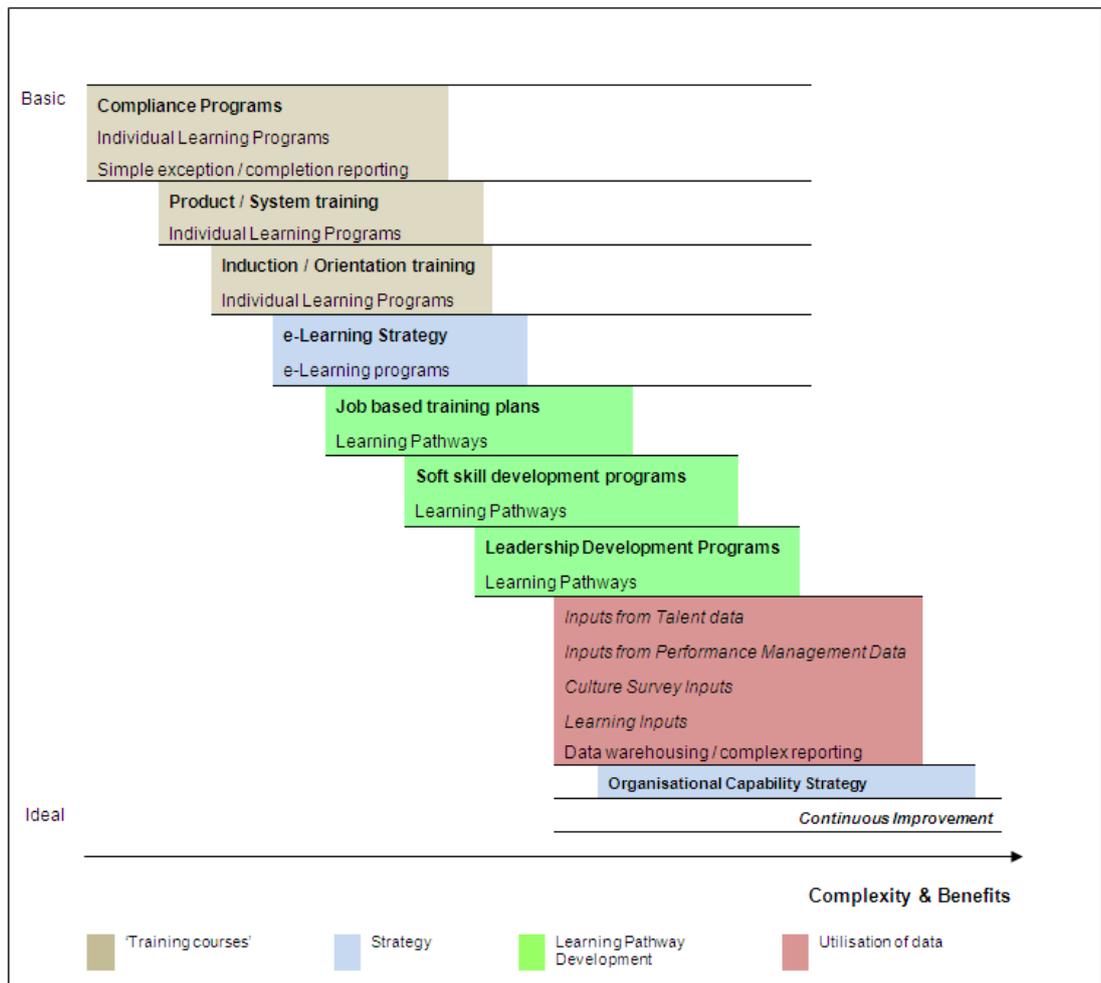
Summary

Learning Pathways allow employees, managers and L&D areas to package learning into logical knowledge areas and provide visible guidance as to where employees are headed. Very importantly it provides a sense of security for employees knowing that they are going to be developed over time in a variety of skills.

A good LMS will make the process easier for you and should be able to report on progress through pathways, uptake and so on.

Like any undertaking that affects your employee population, training in the use of pathways is vital so that benefits can be realised.

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We help people and technology to work together smoothly and efficiently, bringing out the best in each other, to achieve the highest possible return on investment in both.

We are flexible, approachable and passionate about what we do, and we pride ourselves on old fashioned customer service. Our customers trust us to provide realistic advice and solutions that work. They know that we are brand agnostic, so they get the right solution every time.

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Human Capital Solutions (HCS) Group   www.hcsgroup.com.au

Microster   www.microster.com

Australian Workplace Software (AWS)   www.aws.com.au

Ph: +61 2 9460 1933
Fx: +61 2 9460 1955

info@hcsgroup.com.au
www.hcsgroup.com.au