

Chapter 92

The Impact of Emerging Technology on Leadership Development

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ABSTRACT

Through an exploration of research and practical literature, this chapter examines the impact of emerging technologies on leadership development. First the authors discuss how technology has changed organizational approaches to training and development. Next, the authors address the benefits of leveraging technology for organizational learning and leadership growth. Then simulation and gaming, social media, and blogs are discussed for their particular strengths as key options for leadership development.

INTRODUCTION

Digital and technology disruption necessitates shifts in planning and execution of leadership development. Workforce needs have changed, and more importantly, technology has stimulated, and in certain cases, created new, or eliminated industries. The culmination of these factors establishes the business case for new skills and new strategies to meet market demands. This means that well-trained leaders must exist. Without properly developed leadership competencies to meet the current, and constantly shifting market demands, organizations risk market decline or shrinking market share. Many organizations have embraced the need for structured leadership development training and experiences with formal leadership and career development programs. Technological advances have helped organizations reduce costs through electronic processing, increase collaboration through virtual teams, and enhance work-life balance through expanded telework opportunities. However, technology shifts are not always considered in the implementation of leadership development initiatives.

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BACKGROUND

Organizational learning professionals are adjusting to the emergence of technology as a dominant factor in training and development (Ladyshevsky, Geoghegan, Jones, & Oliver, 2008). Early research identified the limited integration of technology into training and development, with most technology infusion focused on sales, marketing, or technology content. It was a time when integration of advanced technological approaches into training and development mainly focused on sales, marketing or technology content (Webber, 2003) and the landscape was too new to draw any real conclusions about its impact (Arbaugh, 2000; Cini, 1998; Vicere, 2000). Over time delivery models shifted to account for technology's larger organizational significance and calls for more dynamic training and development needs (Riha & Robels-Pina, 2009). While organizations have begun leveraging technology for more skill-based needs, the full impact of learning technologies as a key to leadership development have not been fully explored.

Slow adoption of technological advances into leadership development is not surprising. Technical utility often outpaces non-technological organization practices. In recent times, organizations leveraging technological advances have redefined how we share photos, raise money (crowdsource funding), access transportation (ride share networks), and secure travel accommodations (peer-to-peer short term rentals) while multiple, previously long-standing business models became obsolete (McCafferty, 2016). The disruptive nature of technology has led to consistent calls for its further integration into routine practices of developing leadership, management and other critical soft skills for organizational success (Adams, 2007; Shelley, 2015). Potentially the most challenging obstacle of technology disruption to leadership development is the people factor. Developing clear objectives, adopting appropriate strategies, effective deployment, and routine evaluation pose considerable challenges for organizations as they scramble to simultaneously manage emerging technologies and evolving leadership needs. With those considerations in mind, the authors recognize much attention has been given to the theoretical considerations at the intersection of technology and leadership. However, even researchers who delved into this area concede it warrants more consideration for implementation and execution rather than theory (Standifer, Thiault, & Pin, 2010). This chapter explores the impact of emerging technologies on leadership development, with specific discussions of organizational learning and effectiveness, leveraging technology for leadership growth, and promising strategies for leadership development.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leveraging Technology

Leadership Growth

Training and development has continuously evolved as a critical driver of organizational growth. Research has shown digital advances technology disruptions spawn new expectations for learning experiences (Boyce, LaVoie, Streeter, Lochbaum, & Psotka, 2008; Cercone, 2008; Ladyshevsky, Geoghegan, Jones, & Oliver, 2008). Numerous factors must be considered to fully embrace a more digital, technologically savvy model for leadership development. Primarily, organizations need to address their strategy to de-

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