

Strategies to encourage lifelong learning across a multigenerational workforce - HR Executive

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the challenge of fostering lifelong learning across multigenerational workforces in modern organizations. The author argues that HR teams must tailor learning strategies to meet the distinct needs of different generations, with Baby Boomers and Gen X seeking digital upskilling and career pivots, while millennials and Gen Z prefer interactive, tech-enabled learning formats. Key evidence includes successful implementations at organizations like GroupM, which achieved over 1,500 certifications in three months through gamified learning, and DBS, which used Appreciative Inquiry to build confidence among senior employees. The article presents specific strategies including two-way mentoring programs, removal of learning barriers, and tailored training formats. The implications suggest that organizations must create inclusive learning cultures that leverage generational strengths while accommodating diverse learning preferences to remain competitive and retain talent across age groups.

Key Insights

1. Different generations have distinct learning preferences: older employees need digital upskilling support while younger employees require strategic thinking development from senior colleagues
2. Two-way mentoring programs create mutual value by allowing senior employees to share experience while learning digital tools from younger colleagues
3. Gamification and competitive elements can drive engagement across generations, as demonstrated by GroupM's achievement of 1,500 certifications in three months

Practical Takeaways

- Implement cross-generational mentoring programs that facilitate bidirectional knowledge transfer between senior and junior employees
- Create multigenerational learning teams that support each other throughout development journeys and incorporate gamification elements to boost engagement

Frameworks Mentioned

Two-Way Mentoring — Bidirectional mentoring approach where senior employees share strategic experience while learning digital skills from younger colleagues

Appreciative Inquiry — Organizational management approach focused on driving positive self-change by building on positive past experiences

Critical Analysis

The article provides practical corporate examples and actionable strategies, making it valuable for practitioners. Strengths include specific case studies with measurable outcomes (GroupM's 1,500 certifications) and concrete implementation approaches. However, the article relies heavily on a single expert source and lacks diverse perspectives or critical examination of potential drawbacks. The evidence is primarily anecdotal rather than research-based, and there's limited discussion of implementation challenges or failure cases. The generational categories may oversimplify individual learning preferences.

Organizational Practice

Organizations like GroupM create multigenerational teams with gamified learning systems achieving 1,500 certifications in three months, while DBS uses Appreciative Inquiry to build senior employee confidence in learning environments. Companies including Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Proctor & Gamble, and Maserati implement two-way mentoring programs.

Strategic Implications

Organizations are moving toward generation-specific learning strategies that balance technological adaptation with experience transfer, suggesting a shift from one-size-fits-all training approaches to more nuanced, collaborative learning models that leverage generational diversity as a competitive advantage.

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