



Career Elevator

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Understanding Adult Learning



Adult learning involves different principles than child learning. Understanding adult learning concepts can allow you to focus on how you learn best and can, most importantly, help you succeed in your career. If your current or future role involves public speaking, presenting, educating or training peers at your organization, recognizing how adults learn in the workplace can equip you to educate fellow co-workers or even customers more effectively.

Being aware of the concept of adult learning can help you ensure any work materials you develop are relevant, engaging and retainable while expanding your emotional intelligence.

Overview of Andragogy

Andragogy refers to adult learning principles and recognizes the distinct ways adults prefer and are able to learn most effectively.

Andragogy is the science and practice of self-directed adult learning.

Andragogy is built on these five assumptions:

1. **Experience**—Adults need to build on their experience.
2. **Self-concept**—Adults need to feel responsible for their learning.
3. **Readiness**—Adults are ready to learn if the training solves an immediate problem.
4. **Problem orientation**—Adults want their training and learning to be problem-focused.
5. **Motivation**—Adults learn best when motivation comes intrinsically.

Adult Learning Vs. Child Learning

Tailoring training and education specifically for your audience is essential regardless of the type of workplace learning and development initiative. Successful adult education is often future-centric and involves purpose-driven applications. In contrast, children generally learn by moving on to the next stage, and their motivation comes from external sources, such as parents, teachers or a sense of competition.

Takeaway

Ask your employer how you can incorporate adult learning strategies into the workplace or focus on integrating these principles into any content or training you are responsible for.

Although everyone is different, knowing these general adult learning principles can enhance your own learning and allow you to better understand how you communicate with others. Consider how you can apply the concept of adult learning to your day-to-day work routine.

New Study Reveals Employees Want On-the-Job Learning and Short-form Content

A recent survey from learning content provider Go1 asked respondents from multiple generations about what best prepared them for their current role, how they learn most effectively, and their preferred learning methods and channels.

In general, the survey found that employees prefer on-the-job experience or short-form content for learning and advancing their careers.

Work Experiences Prepares Employees for Roles

More than half (61%) of employees said work experience best prepared them for their current roles, followed by formal on-the-job training (41%) and life experience (37%). Only 25% said higher education best prepared them for their role, and almost half (46%) of employees believe that university failed to prepare them for their current jobs.

These findings show that employees value work experience as they learn how to succeed at their jobs and prepare to advance their careers.

Learning Preferences Vary by Generation

While the survey found that each generation learns differently and has unique preferences for format and channel, most employees prefer short-form learning content and hands-on experience.

Here are some key takeaways from four generations:

1. Generation Z (defined as born 1997-2012) is most frustrated by learning not being personalized (28%), only ticking a box for their company (27%) or taking too long to complete (26%). This generation generally prefers shorter learning methods or hands-on experience.
2. Millennials (1981-96) want to learn mostly with mentor training (46%) and short videos (46%) compared to other learning methods. Millennials were also the generation most open to using AI-generated learning materials.
3. Similar to millennials, Generation X (1965-80) wants to learn with mentor training (48%) and short videos (44%).
4. Almost 60% of baby boomers (1946-64) employees prefer on-the-job learning. This generation was the most opposed to using AI-generated materials for learning.

Learning That Works for You

If you prefer on-the-job learning or short-form content, know that you are not alone. This survey shows that no matter which generation you are a part of, finding development opportunities that work for your unique learning style is important. These findings showcase that hands-on experience is one of the best ways to grow your skill set and advance your career. This means finding initiatives you can volunteer for, joining projects, and seeking out learning and development opportunities.

Your employer may offer learning options in different formats. Take the time to look at what resources are available or consider asking your employer for learning and development opportunities that align with how you learn best.