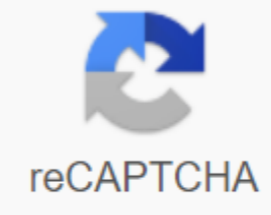




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It is time to move beyond traditional approaches to executive education. To successfully meet the challenges of today's business world, the organizations and people who manage them must make greater use of online learning resources and networking opportunities. SAVE SHARE BUY COPIES To understand how the cloud of personal learning is changing the way companies think about developing leadership talent, HBR editor Amy Bernstein and senior editor Daniel McGinn spoke with three L'D leaders. Sankararayanan Paddy Padmanabhan is executive chairman of Tata Business Excellence Group. Samantha Hammock is American Express's chief training officer. Nick van Dam was previously a global director of training at McKinsey, where he is currently an external senior adviser; he was recently appointed Chief Teaching Officer of IE University. (Disclosure: Three firms are or have been clients of HBR's parent company, Harvard Business Publishing, which sells executive development programs.) Edited excerpts follow. HBR: Paddy, how is the development of leadership at Tata changing? Development has gone far beyond class: Today it's more of a conversation. Sankaranarayanan Padmanabhan Executive Chairman, Tata Business Excellence Group Padmanabhan: Back in the 1960s we created the Tata Management Training Centre, and for many years this has been the main way to develop leaders. But over the past 15 years, we've gone beyond that. For very senior executives - C-level people in our business, and often to the next level down, we look at external institutions including Harvard Business School, Stanford University, University of Chicago, Indian Institute of Management and London Business School. We nominate people for development programs in these schools, and employees are ready to participate. Since Tata is a \$110 billion holding company with dozens of operating companies, we are also launching a cultural culture management program. It is very important that people are exposed to different companies in Tata, so we send executives to spend two or three days in different parts of the group. They dive, meet people and create informal networks. We also do a lot through webinars. Development has gone far beyond the classroom: Today it is more of a conversation, with a greater emphasis on creating a network of knowledge. Samantha, what are the biggest changes in American Express? Hammock: Traditional learning and development has gone from instructor-led classroom training to virtual, global, scalable options. We did it because the work has changed. Companies are not only more global; they are more virtual. More and more people are working from home, making it impossible to study in the classroom at all times. The virtual approach also gives people the flexibility and to the fact that they want to learn to learn. Some employees do programs at night. Others want to do them during working hours. The biggest thing we get from virtual programs is that people can fit them into their lives. Nick, what about McKinsey? Van Dam: We work in the field of intellectual capital, so we need constant development and training. This is a central part of our core talent strategy. McKinsey is often referred to as a factory-leader; we have more than 440 graduates working as executives of multibillion-dollar companies. The biggest change in the last five years is the growth in demand for development. Our culture is now very inclusive in this regard: we look at all 28,000 of our people to determine how they can develop themselves. This requires expanding and deepening our capabilities. Customers expect us to be at the forefront of thinking and making and sharing ideas, so we need to accelerate the development of people's capabilities. With careers becoming less linear, is it hard to know what skills people need? Padmanabhan: When you have a flatter organization and fewer career ladders, growth can become a problem. We are coping with this by creating a competency system that will address the challenges required for each leadership role. If you are going to be the head of our American business, it outlines the opportunities and attributes that you should have. If you are going to be a motor plant manager, you need different skills and attributes. These frames are only 50% or 60% perfect. Attitude, behavior and human presence also matter, so we give people the opportunity to develop them. As ladder promotions become less common, career growth happens through the movement through our group companies. This is not a C-suite problem; it becomes a level or two down problem when people have 10 to 15 years of experience and are ready to become the head of the unit or take the VHS property. That's where bottlenecks can happen. Is anything lost as talent development programs shift online? The virtual approach appeals to the fact that people want to learn differently. Samantha Hammock Chief Educational Officer, American Express Hammock: You can never replace face-to-face interaction. Feedback from our great sessions shows the value of bringing people together. But it is no longer possible or effective to have that to be 80% of your model. Technology creates more efficient ways of virtual learning. People can join from anywhere and feel like they're in class together. Has the combination of soft and hard skills changed in your programs? Van Dam: It's hard to cite a percentage because a lot of development isn't about what's going on in the classroom or on the digital learning platform. Leadership development is an ecosystem. There's learning on There is customer experience, there's a staffing schedule, a schedule, Mentoring. Each of them is a building block. So is our culture of execution. We have very clear expectations of people at different points in their careers and we give extensive feedback that delivers current development goals. This allows people to personalize their development; we call it Creation's own McKinsey. The goal is to ensure that people lead their own careers by exploring what they want to do and make their own choices. We give ownership of the development to individuals. Hammock: In terms of tough and soft skills, they may change in the future, but I don't think they've changed dramatically to date. What has changed is how quickly rigid skills can become obsolete, especially in technical roles. People are struggling to stay ahead on the technical side and they tend to have reactive expectations to see how the technology is evolving so they know they need to learn next. How difficult is it to personalize talent development? Van Dam: There are problems. One of them relates to how you define people's career paths. Experience development will vary depending on the career path, and different roles require different competencies. Even in a classroom environment, different people will require different levels of knowledge. When it comes to digital learning, we oversee content that we think is best suited to people's empowerment. Our people would like to know what is expected of them and they don't want to spend a lot of time trying to figure out which of the 50 digital learning objects might be right for them. They want us to direct them to the best, most relevant content. Some people would like to learn by watching a video rather than reading a PDF. This is another level of personalization. Finally, personalization is also about how much time people can devote to training programs. When employees learn virtually, how important is it to form relationships with other participants? Hammock: Cohorts are crucial. Even with virtual work, the main factor of success is a comprehensive, diverse cohort that helps people feel involved. We take great care in assembling these groups to ensure that our employees have a positive experience. With the transition to digital learning, are you worried about whether people are taking time to participate? Padmanabhan: For mid-level and lower employees, most knowledge comes through digital media. Each company has its own method. Take a store manager to a retail chain. This person will receive content on their smartphone, which is focused on creating the capabilities needed to manage the store. This kind of content is pretty much about convenience, so there can be 15-minute modules. Convenience increases For people in their 25s or 30s who have grown up on YouTube and online, this form of learning is common, so use is not a problem. For people over 45 and older, digital not so often. For them, leadership development continues in the classroom and at work, in part because it provides the best networking opportunities. How do you measure L'D's success? Padmanabhan: For CEOs who run about 100 Tata Group businesses, we evaluate them based on their performance. In the few years after the move to the job, can the CEO manage several stakeholders? Is it convenient for the CEO in this role? Much contributes to the way each CEO develops, but we look at whether training and development programs and rotation jobs have contributed to the creation of an effective CEO, CXO, or group leader. It is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of these programs for leaders. At lower levels, there are more measurable skills - communication with performance or improved customer satisfaction. But at a high level, it is difficult to attribute leadership to the effectiveness of learning in any systematic manner. There's a huge opportunity to turn the workplace into a learning place. Nick van Dam Retired, Director of Global Learning, McKinsey and Van Dam: For us, it's a question of how we can make sure we can have a greater impact on our customers and how we can expand our reach. Can we make it better? We can only grow if we have more partners in the firm, so one of the measures is how well we develop people to become partners. We also see the value of investing in LDO when attracting people. Today, more people are deciding to join the organization because they believe it is a place where they can take their skills to the next level, so L.D. is associated with recruitment. No one at McKinsey will ever ask me to make a purely financial return on every dollar we spend on training and development: You can't do that. But we know that there is a ROI and a huge customer impact. We also know that formal leadership development is just one piece of cake. All over the world and in various industries, the typical person spends something like 40 hours a year in official training programs, from 1,800 hours to work. So there is a huge opportunity in many organizations to promote workplace development by turning the workplace into a learning place. Is it difficult to justify the cost of talent development when people can leave the firm for their next job? Hammock: We spent a lot of time discussing this, especially last year when we made a big investment in our flagship leadership program. In the end, we decided that we wanted to raise great leaders, and we want American Express to be known for it. For example, we encourage employees to list the certificates they earn their LinkedIn page, even if it increases their visibility beyond. Ideally we want them to find the next opportunity internally, but we know that some of them will move on, and that's fine. That's all right. There are three reasons for meeting the needs of organizations or individuals. (2) Suppliers do not develop the soft skills the organizations need. (3) It is often difficult to apply lessons learned in the classroom to the real world. Solving a growing range of online courses, social platforms and learning tools from both traditional providers and check-ins helps close gaps. The need for leadership has never been more pressing. Companies of all kinds understand that to survive in today's unstable, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, they need leadership skills and organizational capabilities, different from those that have helped them succeed in the past. There is also a growing recognition that leadership development should not be limited to the few who are in or near the C-suite. With the proliferation of collaborative problem-solving platforms and digital ad hocery that emphasize individual initiative, employees across the board increasingly need to make consistent decisions that are consistent with corporate strategy and culture. It is therefore important that they be equipped with appropriate technical, relational and communication skills. However, the leadership industry is in a state of turmoil. The number of players offering courses to give the hard and soft skills required of corporate managers has increased dramatically. Yet organizations that spend billions of dollars each year to train current and future leaders are increasingly frustrated with the results. Several large-scale industry studies, along with our own in-depth customer interviews, show that more than 50% of higher education leaders believe that their talent development efforts do not adequately develop critical skills and organizational opportunities. Senior training staff believe that traditional programs no longer properly prepare managers for the challenges they face today and those they face tomorrow. Companies are looking for the communicative, interpretive, affective and insightful skills needed to conduct consistent, active collaboration. But most executive education programs, designed as an extension or replacement of MBA programs, focus on skills based on discipline, such as strategy development and financial analysis, and seriously underestimate important relational, communication, and affective skills. Unsurprisingly, CLOs say they are having trouble justifying their annual training budgets. Leadership training programmes also do not fall away from their own stated purpose. Lifetime learning has been a buzzword in corporate and circles for decades, but it's still far from reality. Traditional executive education is simply too episodic, exclusive and expensive to achieve Goal. Unsurprisingly, leading business schools, including Rotman and HBS, have seen a significant increase in demand for individual, cohort programs that address the special needs of companies in talent development. Corporate universities and the cloud of personal learning - a growing mix of online courses, social and interactive platforms, and teaching tools for both traditional institutions and upstarts - are filling the gap. There are three main reasons for the disparate state of leadership development. First, it's a gap in motivation. Organizations invest in the development of the executive for their own long-term benefit, but people are involved in improving their skills and advancing their careers, and they do not necessarily stay with employers who have already paid for their tuition. Second, the gap between the skills that build executive development programmes and the skills required by firms, especially the interpersonal skills needed to thrive in today's flat, networked, increasingly collaborative organizations. Traditional service providers bring deep experience in learning cognitive skills and measuring their development, but they are much less experienced in teaching people how to communicate and work with each other effectively. The third reason is the gap in the transfer of skills. Simply put, few leaders seem to accept what they learn in the classroom and apply it to their work, and the further the locus training is removed from the locus application, the more this gap becomes. In order to develop key leadership and management talents, organizations must bridge these three gaps. One of the biggest complaints we hear about leadership education is that the skills and opportunities developed do not apply to work. This challenges the very foundation of executive education, but it's not surprising. Research by cognitive, educational and applied psychologists dating back a century, along with later work in neuroscience training, shows that the distance between where a skill is learned (locus acquisition) and where it is applied (locus application) significantly affects the likelihood that a student will put that skill into practice. Indeed, it is much easier to use new skills if the locus acquisition is similar to the locus application. It's called almost transmission. For example, it is easier to learn the aluminium industry's map as a value-related activity chain than it is to develop a semiconductor industry (far-transfer) or strategic consulting (further transfer) analysis. Of course, when we say distance, we don't just mean physical range. New skills are less likely to be applied not only when the locus application is far from the locus acquisition time and space (as in MBA MBA class applying skills years later at work), but also when social (Who else is involved?) and functional (What do we use skills for?) Contexts are different. Unofficial data on skills transfer show that only 10 per cent of the annual expenditure of \$200 billion in corporate training and development in the United States yields concrete results. This is a staggering amount of waste. What's more, it raises the urgency for the corporate training and development of the executive industry to rethink their learning experience. The good news is that the growing range of online courses, social and interactive platforms, as well as learning tools from both traditional institutions and upstarts, which make up what we call the Personal Learning Cloud (PLC), offers a solution. Organizations can select components from PLC and adapt them to the needs and behaviors of individuals and groups. PLC is flexible and immediately accessible, and it allows employees to pick up skills in the context in which they should be used. In fact, it is a 21st century form of learning at work. In this article, we describe the evolution of leadership development, the dynamics of change and the ways in which the emerging PLC is managed for the benefit of both the firm and the individual. State leadership development Traditional players in the leadership development industry - business schools, corporate universities, specialized training companies and consultants - have joined a host of newcomers. These include human resources advisory firms, large management consulting companies such as McKinsey and BCG, and digital start-ups such as Coursera and Udacity. It's a fast-paced landscape of service providers, but it's a world we've learned intimately as educators, consultants and executive education leaders at Rothman (in the case of Mihnea) and Harvard Business School (in Das's case). And to understand all this, we built a table that compares players (see below). As the demand for executive education increases, which is configured, tracked and markedly effective, new competitors emerge. Business schools, consulting companies, corporate universities and digital platforms struggle to provide skills development programs, and each player has certain advantages and limitations. ADVANTAGE CONSTRAINT Business Schools with Open Programs Big Store of Intellectual and Educational Capital Limited opportunity to provide contextualized business school training with individual programs Can adapt content to the challenges facing the customer organization and provide the transfer of basic skills Inadequate follow-up when the setting reaches the field of personal learning and design Strategic advice Highly contextualized approach to skill transfer and development technologies and know-how And Feedback Human Resources Consultants can identify core participants skills to create fully customized coaching and development lack of experience in appropriate functional areas Corporate universities can deliver content that is immediately relevant to the organization, and in a context in which skills will apply limited ability to measure skill acquisition and application remote personalized training platforms Low-cost alternatives to programs that transfer functional and technical knowledge limits to contextualized learning and development , affective and collaborative skills We are now seeing powerful trends changing the industry and fueling the emergence of PLC as a network learning infrastructure. First, PLC has reduced the marginal cost of creating its own learning environment and has allowed the chief human resources officers (CPSO) and the Chief Training Officers (YPG) to make more discerning decisions about the right experiences for people and groups in their organizations. The Unicon study reports that the number of corporate universities that provide education in-home, on-demand, and, often, at work, has exploded to more than 4,000 in the United States and more than twice as many as worldwide. However, we believe that in the future, while firms will offer training opportunities to more managers in all their organizations, a change in the cost structure resulting from the digitization of learning environments will result in only a small increase in leadership resources. The second trend is the decline of standard training programs for the development of the executive branch, such as those offered primarily by business schools and universities. Most organizations require prior and post-graduate acquisition and application of appropriate skills, such as communicative competence and leadership acumen, which traditional programs have never been designed to implement. A third trend is the growth of customized learning environments through platforms and applications that personalize content in accordance with student roles and the needs of their organizations. The dominant platforms are now editing millions of participants on individual courses and tens of millions of total users. These trends are interconnected and form a cohesive model: as learning becomes personalized, socialized and adaptive, and as organizations become more sophisticated in assessing the return on investment in talent, the industry is moving from

