

BUILDING LEADERS

LEADERSHIP TRENDS FOR L&D TO CONSIDER



In the context of the theme for this issue (and so we're all on the same page), what distinguishes a fad from a trend is staying power. With this distinction in mind, here are three practices we see garnering undeniable momentum with major implications for corporate learning and development (L&D) professionals:

1. HIRING CULTURAL FITS

With ever-increasing regularity, organizations are developing imaginative ways to test employment candidates for cultural compatibility. How? They start with their company's mission statement and core values. Then, they accept the fact that no traditional interview setting will give them what they desire most (the ability to see the candidate respond to a set of circumstances in real time and under stress). Then, they get creative!

IS LEADING ANY DIFFERENT IN THE C-SUITE THAN IT IS ON THE FRONT LINE? IN SOME WAYS, YES, BUT IN MANY WAYS, NO!

For example, we have a mutual acquaintance who hires sales professionals by admittedly "putting them through the ringer." He makes appointments and cancels them at the last minute. He reschedules but then makes sure he is called away right when the candidate is beginning to get comfortable. When he finally sits through a full meeting, he

intentionally avoids eye contact and acts preoccupied. In his own words, he shares:

"We have built our business based on our customer responsiveness. Our prospects are busy people. I like to see for myself that job candidates have what it takes to remain persistent and professional in the face of rejection and emergent challenge."

2. MANAGING THE WAVES OF CHANGE

Change comes in waves, a fact that most of us are already aware of. We also know that those waves are crashing onto the beach with ever-increasing regularity and intensity ... with no end in sight. When those waves hit, one of three things typically happens:

- **Survival:** Most people work through the discomfort, adapt, adjust and continue on their journey.
- **Surfing:** For some, change presents an exhilarating opportunity. These people see the wave forming, paddle like crazy, get in the curl of the wave and ride it!
- **Moving On:** Some, for any number of different reasons, see the wave and get out of the water (voluntarily or otherwise).

In general, we see organizations becoming far more directive (and proficient) in managing this process. The first order of business is to determine whether employees are "in" or "out." Organizations are dedicating less energy to ushering in change and more energy to the timely execution of the new reality.

3. LEADERSHIP IS LEADERSHIP

The primary reason frontline employees are promoted into management is because they have demonstrated technical mastery of their functional role, whatever that role may be. Although this transition takes place early in most people's careers, it's a significant change (i.e., a shift from "doing the work" to "getting the work done through others"). Typically, these new managers receive training in:

- Providing direction and guidance
- Listening and collaborating
- Empowering
- Aligning their leadership approach to the particulars of their influence opportunities

Upon further (and frequent) review, the content alignment between the training received by new managers and the executive coaching provided to C-suite leaders is unmistakable. We conclude that, when it comes to preparing leaders for the future, L&D functions should prioritize building layers of depth beneath core, common and critical content, as opposed to creating experimental breadth. Is leading any different in the C-suite than it is on the front line? In some ways, yes, but in many ways, no! 🙌

Marshall Goldsmith is the world authority in helping successful leaders get even better. Sam Shriver is the executive vice president at The Center for Leadership Studies. Email Marshall and Sam.