



FROM TRAINING TO CULTURE

“Create a learning culture for yourself, for your team, and for the organization.”

Pamay Bassey

Introduction

For a long time, L&D spent much of its time and energy on the tactical: maintaining learning systems; planning the logistics of events; selecting individual skills or capabilities to build a course. But increasingly, we have new tools and processes that make a lot of that work far more seamless than it once was.

That frees L&D up to play a very different role. We no longer have to be the devoted custodians of creaky systems that need constant maintenance. We get to be central, strategic, and outcomes-driven. We get to expand our audiences and accessibility, and think more deeply about how learning works.

And crucially, we can turn our attention to the work of building and sustaining a culture of learning that reaches every corner of the organization. When we recast ourselves as advocates for a culture of deep learning, we become champions of learning that drives strategic growth and outcomes. Learning becomes a competitive advantage and a joyful, fulfilling embodiment of our organizational values.

This Field Manual explores what happens when we stop thinking about learning in systems and put it into the context of culture instead. It starts by looking at what happens when the CLO becomes the chief culture officer, and then examines the qualities that foster a culture of learning. We examine what it means to learn everywhere, all the time, and how we can embed learning into the flow of our lives and the lives of everyone we work with. The Program concludes with an opportunity for each of us to become both teachers and learners.

Key Questions Posed by this Field Manual

- What role do CLOs and other senior learning leaders play in building the culture of an organization?
- What does it mean to have a culture of learning? What are the keys to making it a success?
- What does curiosity contribute to an organization? Why is it so important?
- How do we define a learning experience? How *should* we define a learning experience?
- What does it look like to pursue learning “in the flow of life” as part of everything we do?

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Poll: Training and Culture

Before we begin to think more deeply about the transformation from systems to culture, take a moment to think about where things stand now. Click submit to see what your fellow learners think. Your individual responses will remain anonymous.

1. Have you noticed a recent shift in how much time your team spends on things that feel like systems maintenance versus things that feel strategic?

- Yes, we spend far more time on strategic tasks and ideas
- Yes, we spend far more time on maintenance tasks and tactics
- I have not noticed a shift in how we spend our time, but think we should
- I have not noticed a shift in how we spend our time, and don't think it's necessary

Submit

2. Do you believe your organization currently has a culture of learning?

- No, we do not have a culture of learning
- No, but I believe that we are making progress in that direction
- Yes, we definitely have a culture of learning
- I'm not sure whether we have a culture of learning

Submit

IDEA

Voices from the Field: CLO as Chief Culture Officer

The Chief Learning Officer can—and should—wear many hats. While it's certainly part of the job to keep the operations of L&D running smoothly, it's also a role that is expanding in scope as the strategic reach of L&D grows. In the video below, Josh takes a closer look at what can happen when the CLO begins to use learning to shift the culture of the organization as a whole.



Trouble viewing the video? [Read the transcript.](#)

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Poll: Where Does the CLO Stand?

Answer the following questions and then select submit to compare your results to those of your fellow learners. Your answers will remain anonymous.

1. In your opinion, does the CLO (or equivalent senior learning professional) of your organization currently play a role in shaping the culture of the organization?

No, this person is more focused on tactical issues and operations

No, this person is more of an HR generalist

Yes, this person is beginning to make an effort to shape culture

Yes, this person has an undeniable impact on organizational culture

Submit

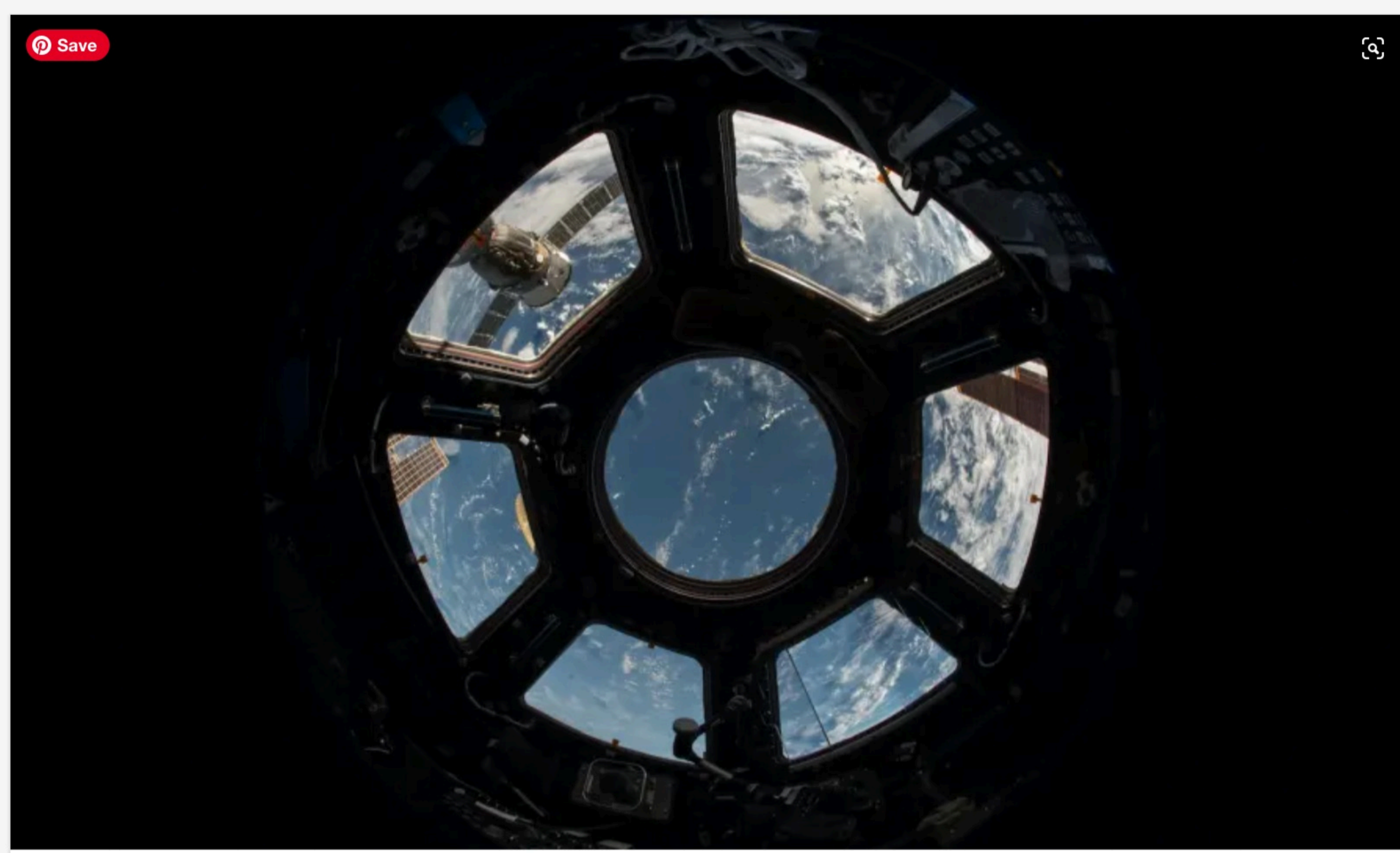
2. Do you agree with the premise that the CLO should also play the role of Chief Culture Officer?

Yes

No

Submit

Core Concept: What Does a Culture of Learning Look Like?



When organizations embrace a culture of learning, everyone gains something. Photo credit: NASA

When an organization has a culture of learning, you can feel it. There's something in the air: the steady thrum of innovation, excitement, and new ideas bubbling to the surface. And it ripples across every aspect of the business, from employee engagement to forward-thinking leadership to organizational resilience.

Here are a few of the key qualities shared by organizations that hold learning as a core value.

- Everyone is a learner, everyone is a teacher.** Whether it's the Senior VP for Asia-Pacific or the intern about to dial into her first meeting, everyone in an organization can benefit from a free-flowing exchange of ideas. We all have something to offer; we all have something to gain. Organizations that recognize this make time and space for coaching, mentorship, feedback, and dialogues: all tools that allow knowledge to move laterally across functions and vertically across layers of seniority, helping to form relationships and spark new thinking along the way.
- Learning is recognized and rewarded.** We are all more likely to engage with learning when our efforts are rewarded. In organizations that expect people to stay in their respective lanes, it often feels pointless to pursue development. Conversely, when organizations celebrate learning publicly, people are far more likely to take the initiative to pursue their own development, explore different approaches to longstanding challenges, and seek out insights from their colleagues: precisely the kinds of behaviors that lead to stronger leadership, product and process innovations, and network building.
- Mistakes are discussed honestly and openly.** Failure is among the most powerful learning experiences available. It is also extremely uncomfortable. Many organizations couch failures in terms of loss (of revenue or opportunity), which leads teams to be risk-averse and causes the business to stagnate. But in organizations that embrace failure, the dynamic is different. Teams go over their mistakes with interest, dissecting what went wrong, what almost went right, and what they can do differently next time. When everyone knows that errors are also assets, it contributes to a sense of psychological safety and ensures that people go on experimenting, achieving good results more often than bad.
- Learning is everywhere, for everyone.** There is very little point in gate-keeping knowledge. Organizations are stratified by nature, but information doesn't need to be. Sensitive data aside, everyone gets more out of learning when the content is both easily accessible—we don't put functional or hierarchical limits on who is allowed to learn what—and regularly offered to all comers. That means development opportunities don't just flow to senior leaders, but are a regular part of every employee's work experience. After all, a culture of learning can only emerge when everyone is encouraged to be a learner.

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Challenge: Our Culture Today

Take a moment to assess where your organization stands on their journey towards a culture of learning. Do you see any of the qualities covered in the Core Concept at work in your organization today? In which area is your organization strongest? In which area is your organization weakest? Feel free to share examples or stories to support your comments.

Share your thoughts in 420 characters or fewer. After you post, be sure to vote and/or comment on your fellow learners' responses. Remember, any up votes you receive and any conversations you start will contribute to your position on the Leaderboard.

Add comment or @mention

420 characters remaining

View by **Newest**

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STORY

Voices from the Field: **The Role of the CLO**

At Citibank, Cameron Hedrick embodies the ideal Josh describes on the Idea page: he is both the CLO and the Chief Culture Officer. In the following video, Cameron shares his take on the relationship between learning and culture and explains why culture is one of his chief concerns in his role as CLO.



Trouble viewing the video? [Read the transcript.](#)

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Challenge: **Defining Culture**

As Cameron mentions, culture means something different in every organization. What does culture mean at your organization? What is the role of learning in making it better?

Share your thoughts in 420 characters or fewer. After you post, be sure to vote and/or comment on your fellow learners' responses. Remember, any up votes you receive and any conversations you start will contribute to your position on the Leaderboard.

Add comment or @mention

420 characters remaining

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PRACTICE

Voices from the Field: **Learn Everywhere, Every Day**

One of the core ways we'll know we've moved to a culture of learning is that it's happening everywhere, all the time. It isn't confined to a classroom or digital platform. Learning—the joy, the satisfaction, the search—is built into the fabric of our people's experiences at work and in life. In the video below, Pamay shares her philosophy for how to encourage people to adopt a learning-first lens.

Learn Everywhere, Every Day

Trouble viewing the video? [Read the transcript.](#)

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Quick Quiz

Take the following quiz to test your understanding of the video. Answer carefully: you can only take the quiz once, and the results will contribute toward your position on the Leaderboard.

1 Which of the following best summarizes Pamay's point about instructor-led learning in a time-bound setting?

It's just one experience of learning among many

It's often the most effective way to learn something new

It's impossible to learn anything meaningful in that kind of setting

It's an outmoded approach to the work we do in L&D

2 Based on what Pamay says, which of the following is true about learning in the flow of life?

Learning in the flow of life refers to learning outside of a work setting

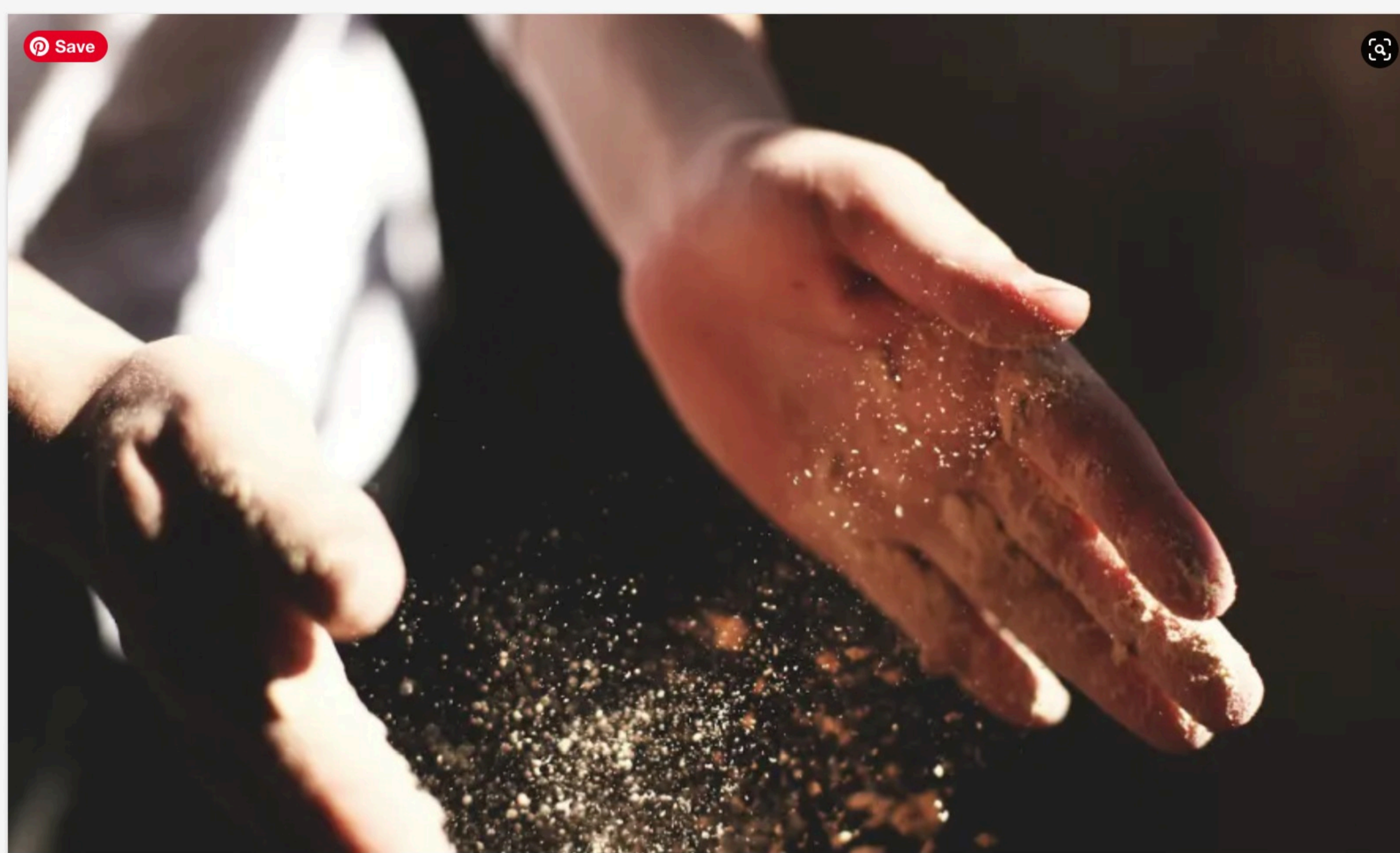
Learning in the flow of life is most beneficial to more junior professionals

Learning in the flow of life should always be paired with more formal training

Learning in the flow of life can happen at any time and in any place

Submit

Framework: **Learning in the Flow of Life**



What happens when we look at our everyday experiences as learning opportunities? Photo credit: Austin Ban

We spend a lot of time thinking about learning as an institutional building block. Learning is about pursuing career development, working on new job skills, and accomplishing strategic goals for ourselves and the organization, right? *Yes* to all of the above. But as Pamay points out, it's a lot of other things too. When learning is part of the culture of the business, it suddenly becomes clear that everything—from how you responded to that snipe from your teenager at the breakfast table to the surprising realization you came to after last week's all-hands town hall—is a learning experience. Here are a few places where we likely do some of our best learning “in the flow of life,” often without realizing it.

- Podcasts, articles, and thought leadership:** We all know that the media we engage with shapes our thinking, but we may not always realize how much we're learning. Take a beat next time you pick up a book or download a podcast to notice what new information you're filing away. Everything we consume (for work or for pleasure) contributes to our base of general knowledge.
- Conversations, debates, and dialogues:** Any situation that pushes us to shift perspectives advances our understanding. A particularly compelling conversation about a dense topic can accomplish this goal. So can a disagreement or debate. Though it's often uncomfortable, we do some of our best learning when someone challenges our beliefs or thinking.
- Correspondence, collaboration, and meetings:** How many times have you been baffled by a colleague's initial idea only to have it become instantly clear when you take five minutes to discuss it? Whether it came in the form of an email that clearly outlined a new concept or a meeting that gave everyone an opportunity to understand a proposed new venture, collaboration often opens the door to improved understanding of tricky topics.
- Mistakes, feedback, and critiques:** We often learn more from the things we do wrong than the things we do right. When we are able to embrace feedback and look our errors squarely in the eye, we usually discover that they yield valuable insights that we might otherwise have missed out on.
- Curiosity and chance encounters:** Never underestimate the power of serendipity in the learning process. So much of what we learn is the result of an impulsive detour, a quick Google search turned research deep-dive, or an unexpected interaction or experience. All of that learning, however unplanned, adds value to our lives, our experiences, and our work.

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Learn More

Evaluate the crucial role that learning commitments can play in shaping culture in this [Resource](#).

Explore why it's more valuable to create self-motivated learners than to guess what skill will be needed next in this [Resource](#).

Investigate what it takes to broaden the scope of learning across organizational boundaries in this [Resource](#).



ACTION

Project: Teaching in the Flow of Life


In the course of this Program, we've discovered that a culture of learning depends on all of us being both teachers and learners that contribute to free exchange of new ideas. Now take a moment to put that idea into practice and teach us all something new!

Reflect back on a topic or skill you have been learning about in the past few months. This can be something relevant to your work or something you've been learning outside of work. Briefly describe:

- What the topic is
- One interesting point or fact about it
- How you might teach it to an audience within your organization

After you've posted your response, come back to this space at some point in the next week and put your learner hat on. As you read through the comments other learners have shared, identify at least one that taught you something new, and be sure to comment in response.

Share your thoughts in 700 characters or fewer. After you post, be sure to vote and/or comment on your fellow learners' responses. Remember, any up votes you receive and any conversations you start will contribute to your position on the Leaderboard.

 Add comment or @mention 🕒 📧

700 characters remaining

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