

Team-based Games Drive Employee Productivity

More employers are planning to use team-based games in the new year to maintain and build on high employee productivity - which is currently at a 6-year peak. The Learning Key Inc. offers guidelines on how companies can make the most effective use of team-based learning in 2010 and increase workers' knowledge retention by up to 10 times over traditional learning methods.

We have seen a steady increase in employers using learning games to sustain and build on high employee productivity levels, and increase workers' learning retention about new job roles, the company's business, products, and processes, said Elizabeth Treher, Ph.D., founder, president and CEO of The Learning Key Inc.

Employee productivity rose 9.5 percent in the third quarter of 2009 - the highest level since 2003, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - as employers realized more output from fewer workers.

Employers are also more often utilizing learning games to assist them with strategic, operational, and communications issues following downsizings, mergers, and acquisitions, according to The Learning Key Inc., which offers these guidelines to optimize the return from using learning games in the new year:

1. **Use learning games to achieve specific purposes and objectives.** Learning games combine knowledge with enabling employees to practice and apply desired skills and behaviors while playing, said Treher. Among the reasons companies are using team-based games are to: Convey new organizational strategies; Teach employees about an employer's industry, business, or products; Communicate how to use a new process or system; Instruct employees about highly technical information; Engage employees in improving strategic partnering and outsourcing; Develop one corporate culture from newly merged organizations; and Build spirit and cooperation when playing in teams.
2. **Significantly improve employees' long-term retention of important information with games.** Learners retain 75 percent of the knowledge they acquire when playing games, according to research by the National Training Laboratories. In addition, people recall as much as 10 times more knowledge after six weeks when using learning games than through traditional learning methods. Learners retain 45 percent of knowledge after 6 weeks using game-based learning vs. 4 percent of knowledge after 6 weeks using traditional methods, according to a study by Indiana University. The repetition of knowledge and the element of competition that games provide dramatically increase long-term learning retention, said Treher.
3. **Promote collaboration and diversity with team-based games.** Team members consult with each other before providing answers, promoting a collaborative learning environment to improve decisions and solve problems. The discussions that take place during team-based games help participants think through situations, take risks, and test ideas - which increases learning, said Treher.
4. **Treat learning games with the same respect as a lecture, but encourage employees to relax and have fun.** Learning games must provide a relevant experience where employees gain insight into the topic and themselves; they are also fun to use. Team-

based games add the thrill of rolling the dice, the uncertainty of using a spinner, or the disappointment of losing a turn, said Treher.

We need both 'heads-on' and 'hands-on' instruction in order to learn, and board games accomplish this. As Albert Einstein said: 'Games are the most elevated form of investigation,' added Treher. As a stand-alone learning tool or to complement a training program or organizational educational initiative, learning games provide focused learning in a memorable way.

Source: The Learning Key Inc.; www.thelearningkey.com.

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