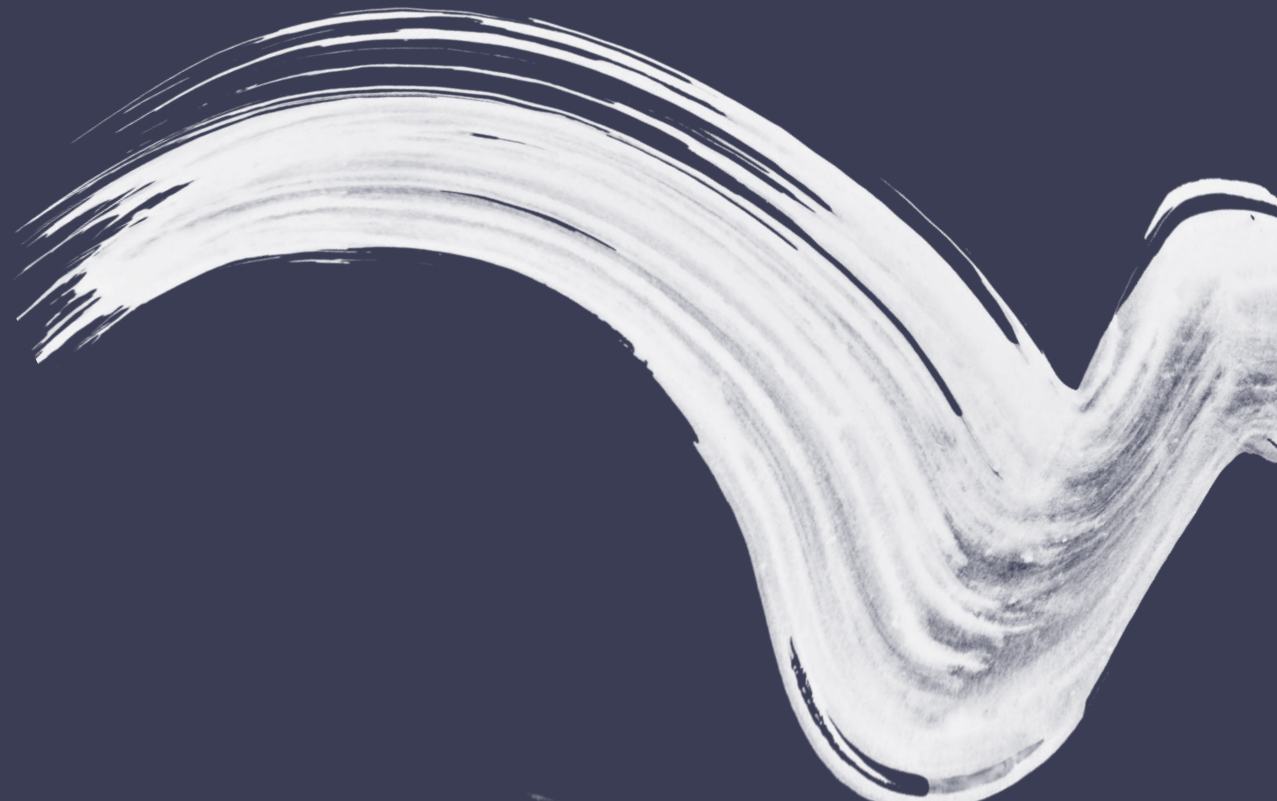




3 Learning and Development Case Studies



Introduction

One of the reasons Culture Amp exists is to allow organizations to understand what factors impact engagement, and how they are performing on those factors.

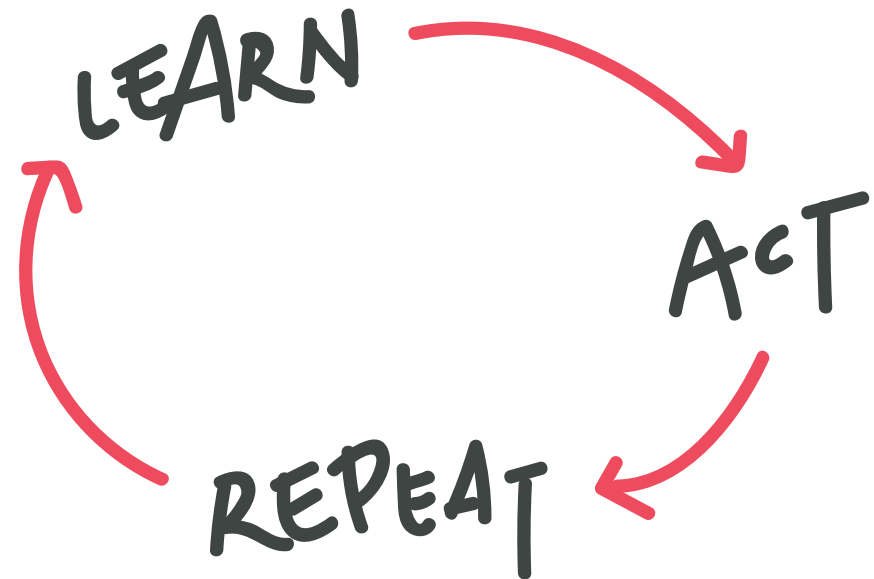
Learning and Development consistently presents as strongly linked to engagement in our data, and these case studies include companies who use Culture Amp to learn about how their organization is tracking. They then go away and act on the insights they find, and use the platform again to measure how they went. It's a process we call 'learn, act, repeat'.

Measurement also allows people to present solid evidence to stakeholders at their organization about how Learning and Development impacts on engagement and retention. It's my intention to provide people geeks with feedback and analytics as powerful as the reports of their finance counterparts.

At Culture Amp we're still (and always will be) refining our approach to Learning and Development. I hope the below case studies are as interesting to you as they were to me.

Didier Elzinga

CEO
Culture Amp





James Balagot heads up Learning and Development at Yelp and has been working for the company for eight years. It's a long tenure for anyone, let alone someone in New Tech, but it's not unusual at Yelp. He's seen the business grow from 100 to 4000 people.

"They just keep promoting me, they give me more responsibility," explains Balagot. Yelp's Learning and Development score was 13% above the benchmark for New Tech in 2015. "We have a very interesting model. I head up Learning and Development, but I'm the only person on my team. People think, 'Hold on, how does that work? How does anything get accomplished? Are people being bribed or what's going on here?'"

Their approach relies on two key practices. The first practice is that people are put in stretch roles. From the day they arrive in the business, they're allowed to find their way, and coached through the learning experiences they come across. "When I started I got put in a sales role even though I never did sales in my life. All of a sudden I was given a phone, I was given some training, and I was doing the hardest job that I've ever done. My job was to bring in revenue and I had to figure it out," says Balagot.

Putting people in stretch roles where they have the opportunity to learn is challenging and exciting. "Rather than 'Hey, go to a training session that we're offering, you're learning every single day in every moment because your job is challenging you,'" explains Balagot.

The second practice is promoting from within. "Recently, we took a look at people that were in our mid-market, our national sales, and our sales management roles, and 98% of the people that we promote into those roles were internal candidates," says Balagot.

Because people are promoted from within, there's a culture of mentoring. People understand that they've achieved their goals because they were in stretch roles and mentored by others. They also see that if they develop people to take over their role, they can be promoted again.

Yelp builds the message of internal promotion into their onboarding. Around 60% of the workforce is salespeople – and many haven't worked in sales before. In addition to practical training, guest speakers from the organization share their stories and career progression at Yelp. They also set expectations. "It's an odds game where you're going to fail. In order for people to focus on their development, focus on the long term, it's really telling those stories of people that weren't successful the first three months and look at them now. It's really that focus on development," says Balagot.

Inevitably, people make mistakes. "We let them know they didn't live up to expectations or we hold people accountable, but then we also make sure that they know we care for them and figure out what to do in order to improve," says Balagot.

“
They just keep
promoting me,
they give me more
responsibility.

– James Balagot



Airbnb is growing fast, and has no shortage of job applicants, in one year receiving 180,000 CVs for 900 positions. Despite the demand, the company's first preference for filling roles is to look internally, and after that to look externally and start with internal recommendations.

Every candidate that makes it through to an interview goes through a set of interviews related to their role, and in addition they have two interviews related to core values. These are conducted by people selected by the founders, who are outside of the function for which they are interviewing. "These interviews focus on our core values to determine how in their life they have lived these values in order to make sure that anyone who comes to Airbnb is going to be successful in living these values," says Airbnb's Global Head of Employee Experience, Mark Levy.

Once somebody has made it through both sets of interviews and gets an offer, they go through a week long check-in process that focuses on the Airbnb values, business strategies, an introduction to each function, and ways of working. New team members usually

go through this process with others who have also been recently hired. "We create belonging by enabling them to form a group that hopefully stays together as they progress here through their careers," Levy says. "We schedule different kinds of lunches and meetings to help people to understand their colleagues they're going to be working with."

Another way to ensure people feel like they belong is to bring together the entire international team annually. The last two years they have had One Airbnb, an all-company meetup as well as annual regional gatherings. One Airbnb is a company-wide conference that has taken place in San Francisco, over the course of a few days.

"One Airbnb is quintessential in the way we set it up," Levy says. "For the first one we had the first day about our future, the second day about our people and their development, and the third day was learning about each other and how we work together."

“
Interviews
focus on our
core values.

– Mark Levy

Four days at One Airbnb

Day One

Strategy and vision for the year, and a bit of getting to know the founders (looking back and forward).

Day Two

Unpacking the Culture Amp engagement survey to talk about where Airbnb did well and what they didn't do well in. To get cross-functional input on the survey results they broke out into groups of about 15, focusing on four themes they could find as areas of improvement. A representative from each team was tasked with summarizing everything into a tweet and proposing three things Airbnb could do as an organization to address areas they didn't do well in, based on the recommendations of all the groups.

That afternoon the founders walked everyone through what Airbnb wanted to accomplish that year, and in the evening they held a 'host your fellow employee' dinner, where San Francisco based employees had others to their home or at a restaurant for an intimate night of dinner and fun.

Day Three

This time was dedicated to learning, with about 40 foundational courses that people could choose from, with everything from giving better presentations through to project management. In the afternoon, it's the employees' time to share their knowledge with 'Air Shares' - something Levy says they do a lot of - which is where people have hobbies and interests that they share with other people in the company. In the evening was a family dinner, which included all 1200 employees, and turned into the world's largest karaoke party.

Day Four

The company held an 'Air Fair' where everyone from different parts of the company set up a booth to share what it is that they do, and were there to answer questions. The last activity was Airbnb employees went out in smaller groups, some with local hosts to volunteer somewhere within the city. The final evening event was a celebration in which individuals were nominated and recognized with regard to the company's core values.

Earls Kitchen + Bar was well-regarded as an employer of choice for many years before missing out on a Best Employers list they were used to appearing on. The experience prompted them to return to their core values and regularly measure their performance to ensure their actions were delivering results.

People who work at Earls are called ‘partners’. They believe that great guest experiences begin with great partner experiences. The partner experience is one of the key success indicators for the company. Employee engagement, leadership, enablement, alignment and development are measured. They seek feedback frequently because the feedback helps drive their business strategies.

Past survey feedback has contributed to company initiatives and programs like Vision + Goals (a goal setting and personal development program), guest experience training delivered via eLearning, and changes to their compensation and benefits program.

“The Earls Experience is about leadership, it’s about people, it’s about development and growth, and we have fun,” says Janis Tong, Earls Senior Manager of Content and Digital Strategy. “Our company’s soul is to live a large, purposeful life filled with fun, and so we try to inject that through all our communications, training programs, and make sure it’s integrated into everything we do at Earls.”

Last September, Earls took advantage of the the flexibility of the Culture Amp system to conduct a pulse survey specifically for their kitchen partners. They had been getting some feedback that front-of-house employees were getting a lot of training and back-of-house partners wanted that as well. With the survey, Earls was able to ascertain that employees needed to feel more connected to their culture, as well as what was needed in terms of training and development. This feedback will help mold future programs and initiatives that have a direct impact on kitchen partners.

The surveys also help garner feedback regarding new programs. Recently, Earls launched a new guest experience training program that will be provided to all their front-of-house partners. In the past, it was face-to-face training that took place in the store when a partner was first hired. Now, the course has shifted to a combination of face-to-face training and eLearning. Having not done a lot of eLearning, Earls designed a survey to see how effective the new training was and how they could improve it.

“Any time we push out something new, we use the pulse survey as a tool to see how the program or initiative is working for our people, and that’s really important for us to measure effectiveness and how we can improve it going forward,” says Tong. “We’ve been really happy with the tool. The fact that we have this tool to capture feedback really quickly and easily is awesome and we’re going to be using it a lot more going forward.”

“
Any time
we push out
something
new, we use the
pulse survey.

– Janis Tong



If you'd like to know more about how Culture Amp
can help your organization, book a free consultation
with a People Geek: www.cultureamp.com