Xilinx Lets Learners Drive Their Own Learning

Xilinx
Best Unique or Innovative Learning and Development Program
October 2017

Company Background

Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	San Jose, CA
Year Founded	1984
Revenue	$2.21 billion
Employees	3,800
Global Scale	North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Japan
Customers/Output, etc.	Portfolio of software includes C and IP-based design tools that support development of software defined hardware, a family of software development environments that support development of software defined systems. Xilinx addresses rapidly growing demands for programmability and intelligence with software. Xilinx All Programmable devices are designed into tens of thousands of products from automotive driver safety, robotic-assisted surgical systems, consumer 3D TVs, IT gear for wireless computing and mobile applications, and space vehicles.
Industry	Technology
Stock Symbol	XLNX
Website	https://www.xilinx.com

Budget and Timeframe

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Number of employees involved with the implementation?	Approximately 40 key contributors
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	4 core team members (HR, HRIS and IT)
Number of contractors involved with implementation	1
Timeframe to implement	±8 months
Start date of the program	November 21, 2016

Business Conditions & Business Needs

Based on a recent employee-engagement survey, Xilinx found a significant interest in continuous learning and access to all types of training. They want skills training to help them become better at their jobs and more support in developing key corporate competencies, but they need options on how to develop those skills.

Employees also reported that they felt too busy, training options were lacking and hard to find, and their managers struggled to support them in their development with tight budgets. Xilinx was not aligned with how employees learn or what expectations about learning they had.

Research shows that modern learners typically feel overwhelmed and distracted by the number of tasks they manage in their daily jobs. According to research, learners want to learn from peers or experts and want control over their own development – the when and how they learn.

In response, Xilinx sought to provide the type of learning environment employees want: an easy to access, on-demand menu of options that enables them to share and discuss learning with their networks and empowers them to engage in life-long learning activities that best suit their individual needs. Xilinx leaders believe that investing in such a new learning strategy creates a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining key talent.

Overview

To power effective learning, Xilinx employed a learning strategy called "Learn to the Power of X" (Learn^x), which represents the infinite possibilities for employees to learn and grow in a personalized and empowered learning environment.

The Learn^x strategy defines and communicates the continuous learning culture, where learners can be inspired, inspire others, and engage in shared learning and collaboration. The Learn^x strategy combined with implementing the Degreed learning platform provides a flexible, learner-driven solution to meet both employee and business needs.

In addition, Xilinx defined a greater need for management development and leveraged Learn^x and the Degreed platform to develop a comprehensive Management Development Solution (MDS). The MDS is a Xilinx-wide offering that blends traditional classroom with online learning. To build the learning program, Xilinx looked at its competency model and identified the key knowledge, skills, and abilities based on behavior statements in each competency to create an MDS framework and related pathways.

As part of the MDS offering, there are six "pathways," or self-driven, mini curricula, each focused on one of six foundational competencies for leaders. Next, Xilinx determined cross-competency roles and defined three "Role of the Manager" pathways.

In addition to the on-demand, curated pathways, Xilinx designed interactive workshops that are part of the menu of options available within the pathways. The MDS workshops are not traditional day-long, classroom style, instructor-led classes. They are three-hour, blended, learner-driven experiences, reflecting the new learning strategy that support managers in their personal, continuous, and collaborative learning, development, and growth.

Managers experience the blended-learning approach by consuming curated content, completing a 180-feedback survey with their managers, and participating in the discussion-based, classroom workshop.

Design of the Program

In recognition of employees' desire to continuously learn and be on the cutting edge, Xilinx introduced a defined learning strategy that is beneficial to the growth and success of the business and employees alike, communicating what it means to be an empowered learner.

The comprehensive, Xilinx-wide offering blends traditional classroom and online learning. It meets managers where they are and provides something for everyone, regardless of management level or experience. It addresses multiple learning preferences in a learner-driven, on-demand, and collaborative manner. The infrastructure provided by the Learn[x] strategy and Degreed platform enables Xilinx to be agile and responsive in support of continuing management and employee development.

Delivery of the Program

Xilinx employed a parallel, dual-track approach to the delivery of the program by clearly communicating to employees how Learn[x], in concert with the technology, would empower and engage employees where and how employees want to learn for overall productivity.

The communications phase of the roll-out was about six months. During this time, the team focused on refining and testing the messaging to ensure it resonated with employees and aligned with the experience of using the tool.

Xilinx took a cascading approach to the communication phase, beginning with executives and their staff. An overview of the goals and objectives was presented along with branded messaging illustrating why it is important to empower learning in the organization and create a sustainable competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent with the expectation that executives would socialize and reinforce the new process within their groups.

The team then focused on manager-level briefings to help managers understand the MDS and their roles in supporting continuous learning in their teams. Finally, the project team cascaded strategy and rolled communication through the rest of the organization and in its regional locations with live briefings, demos, and videos.

One month prior to launch, Xilinx followed up with additional communications to inform and support employees for the upcoming launch. The communications strategy included a message from the CEO prior to launch, an email from the Senior Vice President of HR upon launch and collateral materials such as posters, table tents, demos, and webinars to ensure employees understood Learn[x] and what it would mean to their professional and technical development.

Two weeks after launch, Xilinx hosted live "splash-event" celebrations at 14 global sites to reinforce the key strategy messages, provide additional hands-on support of the platform, celebrate the new strategy, and continue the conversation about learning.

For the roll-out, Xilinx transitioned to more platform-based training that included an introductory self-guided tour that enabled employees to get a more in-depth preview of the different elements of the new system. To further engage employees and generate excitement, the team created videos and held demonstrations at management and team meetings.

The platform was piloted in two stages with the first for just under 100 employees. At the same time, Xilinx had developed the competency and role-based pathways for the management development program for pilot participants to experience.

The second stage of the pilot included an additional 200 employees. In total, about 10% of the company participated in the pilots. Participants had access to all of the pathways in addition to Xilinx's MDS pathways. Throughout the pilots, Xilinx received positive feedback and, in November 2016, launched the program to the entire organization.

Currently, Xilinx is extending Learn[x] in exciting and impactful ways. For example, internal employees and teams are developing dozens of custom pathways and creating discussion groups to share their expertise, collaborate, and support their colleagues' ability to continuously learn and increase their productivity.

A Change in Strategy and Direction

This was a significant change in strategy and direction for Xilinx from the HR team. While garnering buy-in across the organization is always a challenge, the team had to prove that this was something more and better than just the next shiny new system.

Initially, some leaders thought that the Learn[x] strategy would be more of the same – just another system, another place to go. It became clear that to gain widespread support, the team had to showcase the value proposition that the strategy would have as part of making a new investment and commitment in Xilinx and its employees.

Xilinx leveraged a cascading communications strategy that included presentations and demos of the new technology. After the presentations, HR followed up with key managers for their feedback. This process helped many employees understand the new direction and how they would benefit. For those employees who were still skeptical, Xilinx let the strategy prove its benefits.

The pilots also were critical in communicating to employees and preparing for the launch. Each pilot lasted four weeks and included open-office hours each week. At the end of each week, the HR team had debriefing sessions for employees to ask questions and communicate concerns. The team saw consistent participation during each pilot, proving that employees were engaged.

Because the cascading communications plan and pilots were running in parallel, the team could leverage the pilot feedback and results to adjust and further refine key messages. This method ensured that the communications were relevant and effective.

Measurable Benefits

Xilinx has experienced a resurgence in interest in learning and development-related activities. Xilinx employees have proven that social capabilities are not just of interest to Millennials. Employees are commenting, sharing, and recommending. In fact, since the launch in November 2016, Xilinx has more than 24,000 learning items marked complete and more than 34,000 recommendations.

User Feedback From the Pilots

"The app is a terrific way to take bite-sized training on a cadence that fits my busy schedule. Daily suggestions emailed to me are great reminders that I could benefit from learning. This process saves me from hunting for content by providing me with recent articles and TED Talks to select from."

"I really enjoyed learning about Degreed – the way it integrates to external sources and my own performance plan and goals is amazing. I love being able to customize my content and learning paths, learn from colleagues, and also share my own recommendations with my team."

"Our new learning platform is utterly refreshing! Learning comes to us now. If we are not ready, we save it for later. When we think something is impactful, we can comment and share it with others. The interface is simple yet packed with robust functionality that even interfaces with TMS [Xilinx' performance management tool]. Continuing to learn and grow is even more of a reality with our Learn^x platform."

"The content is relevant and the curated pathways are an easy method to source materials aligned to my development opportunities. The bite-size nature of the content means you can dip in and take something away from a quick login. You don't need to

commit to an hour of video or get bogged down in a course to gain some new knowledge. This makes it a great complement to our traditional classes."

Overall

Xilinx is still learning. While it's still early, the data so far overwhelmingly shows that the strategy is resonating with employees in a positive way. There is a real appetite for learning if served in a way that is conducive to how employees want to learn – delivered in bite-sized formats, when, and how they want it.

People are hardwired to learn – it can't be stopped. Xilinx has provided a mechanism that facilitates learning and enables employees to determine what and how they learn best. Another key lesson is that a new strategy and a new technology for learning is not just for Millennials. If done well, learning solutions resonate with all generations of learners.

Xilinx is now focusing on the Employee Development Solution. Foundational competencies for employees and building out custom pathways are being reviewed based on those key knowledge, skills, and ability areas. The custom pathways provide a starting point for employees to develop their skills.

In the next fiscal year, Xilinx is seeking to build and expand the leadership voice and evolve the Learn[x] strategy. The leadership voice is intended to encourage leadership teams' thought leadership. "Learn[x] 2.0" will present the team with a number of different vehicles to innovate and advocate for affecting change within the organization.

Xilinx wants to evolve from continuous learning to transformational learning where employees are encouraged to find their own answers and share in a collaborative and flexible environment. The goal is to create a learning culture in which employee performance accelerates with learning.

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