Learning Outside Classroom: Challenges And Opportunities Of Remote Learning During Remote Working In An Indian Commercial Vehicle Organization

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Abstract: Brick and mortar commercial vehicle organizations are adapting to work from home or remote working style. Organizations for a long time have been used only to a physical nature of work and not remote working especially in the commercial vehicle space in India. While this transition is a big change, there are definitive challenges in proving Learn from Home initiatives considering volatility, ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity of the of the environment. While organization who were already in the digital learning space are transitioning to the Learn from Home way, it has been hard for organizations who don't have learning management systems and digital collaboration tools. Anxiety management of executives and providing digital awareness for successfully taking up learning remotely are the key during difficult times. It's also very important to sustain the learning agenda keeping in mind various restrictions like social distancing norms and operating in frugal budgets. Learning during this time apart from being a capability building tool is also thought of as an engagement tool.

Keywords: Competency, role, digital, learning, development, learner, environment.

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1. Introduction

Commercial vehicle organizations comprising of the 3 wheeler, 4 wheeler and multi wheeler is going through various disruptions like onslaught of competition from the global market, changing governmental norms and legislations on the emission requirements, higher expectations from the customers which would provide better efficiency and operational sustainability to run the business. Also reducing the carbon footprint, green manufacturing and sustainable environment are some of the pressing needs posed to the industry. GST implementation, scrappage policy are other situations where commercial vehicle industry needs to get ready. Overall commercial vehicle market going through the Hub and spoke model has further segmented the market in terms of higher product offerings to customer. Customers have also started looking at the total cost of ownership hence commercial vehicle industry has to offer both products based as well as solution-based offerings. Hence technologies like Industry 4.0, Internet of things are being implemented in the shop floor for achieving higher quality, lower cost, better delivery, safer environment and reduced lead-time. On the other hand, technologies like electric vehicle and battery technology are striving to contribute to a greener environment as well as achieve optimal total cost of ownership in the longer horizon of time. Too many technologies in such a short span of time means that there needs to be strong capability focused talent hiring as well as development. As they are emerging areas of technologies, there needs to be strong tie up with academia as well as benchmarked organizations to impart capability development to the huge base of current talent available in the organization which has not been exposed or oriented to the future and emerging areas.

2.Survey of Literature

Literature studies provide insights on the impact of digitization in learning areas as well as various tools used towards improving learning. Karin Vey and Tanja Fandel-Meyer 2017 opine 'that the truly all-embracing impact of digitization and its concomitant shifts have not yet been recognized by many leaders, despite well-known examples of digital "invaders", such as Airbnb or Uber, that impressively demonstrate both the speed and impact of an all new way of doing business'. Sujit Kumar Basak, Marguerite Wotto et al revealed that 'Each of these learning tools such as M learning, E learning and D learning has fundamental perspectives, namely, cognitive perspective, emotional perspective, behavioral perspective, contextual perspective. M-learning has three fundamental perspectives such as mobility of technology, mobility of learning, and mobility of learner. Finally, for the d-learning perspectives are technology, digital content, and instruction.'Todd J. B. Blayone, Olena Mykhailenko 2017 indicated that 'role perceptions, occasional student resistance to highly participatory activities, and institutional resistance to online learning also emerged as important facets of successful functioning'. Charles D. Dziuban, Patsy D. Moskal, Jeffrey Cassisi, and Alexis Fawcett University of Central Florida 'Given students'

control over how, when, and for how long they approach learning, this modality appears to have been effective for a large majority—most of whom were successful.Though the above researchers have provided importance of digitization in learning as well the usage of various tools in improving the efficiency, it was not clearly spelt out on the remote learning during remote working which is the need of the hour. Based on this gap, the paper has intended to study on the evolved and futuristic digitalization and tools being followed in the Commercial Vehicle Organisation

3.Role Based Organization, Skills and Competencies

In the present context, which is the new normal, the roles in a commercial vehicle organization can be grouped in three buckets. First group are the roles which can be performed in a 100% remote environment. The processes, interactions, digital infrastructure, ecosystem, work nature, ecosystem, decisions, collaborations can be done in a remote environment. It does not matter from where the individual operates whether from home or from office or in a location which is neither office nor home. The productivity of the employee does not get impacted by performing the role in remote location as the overall work can be done digitally. Second group are the roles which needs physical presence which is mandatory. This is because of the fact that the role involves activities which are intense physical in nature, brick and mortar processes, high level of supervising and monitoring and involves expertise in terms of manual skill, expertise of special machines and equipment which needs to be performed in the work area or shop floor. Shop floor work in a low or semi-automated line, building prototypes in the research and development center are classic examples of this nature of role. The third group of roles are the one which can be managed in a hybrid environment. Few processes need physical presence while many of the other processes can be managed through the remote route effectively. This nature of role needs periodic or frequency-based visits to the workplace for collaboration and performing roles at workplace. Hence in the new normal scenario it is very critical to define the competencies and skills which are required for each role and also define the role in terms of which bucket it fits (at office, at home or other venue or hybrid). Organizations need to have the library of roles which are required to run and sustain the business, as well as achieve the vision of the organization which has been defined. Also, each role should have inventory of the competencies which are required for the role.
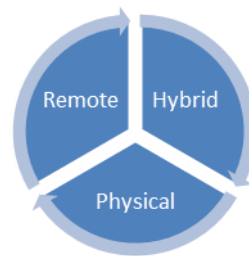

Figure 1: Roles in the view of remote and physical working nature

3.1. Remote working competencies

Remote working is not just change of location but competencies which are required to successfully required to dispense the work irrespective of whether the role is performed agnostic of location. Digital collaboration, networking with team in remote way, adhering to process discipline are some of the remote working competencies which are required. In addition to this ability to have a work life balance and awareness to digital tools and platforms would help navigate people who are adapting to remote working methods. The bedrock of effective remote working lies with the fact that there should be conducive ecosystem and environment to perform the role. Having a reasonable bandwidth on internet connectivity, a dedicated space, office furniture and an environment with low or no noise are some of the prerequisites. Providing awareness and having learning initiatives on effective remote working needs to be taken forward by organizations to help executives transition to the new way of working.

3.2   Company based competencies (Behavioural, Functional and Technical)

The overall human resources strategy holistically focusing on the employee life cycle consists of Talent acquisition, Talent development and Talent management. The central theme which cuts deep into the HR strategy and be the common focus area are the competency framework. Every Human resource process for the framework and delivery takes the foundational input of competencies which are defined for the organization. The way competencies are defined provides the right direction for the organization to channelize their energy and grow. Also, each and every initiative run in human resources takes the input of competency. Through this the linkage between Human resource processes and Human resource initiatives can be clearly established. Organisation A can have Innovation as the core competency for creating impact in their ecosystem while Organisation B can have customer focus the core competency for creating impact. Competency is derived from the vision of the

organization where the organization wishes to be in the short, medium and long term. Behavioral competencies are also called as leadership competencies which are generally common across the business and even across the group companies. However functional competencies are different for different target groups. These functional competencies consist of technical, emerging technology, futuristic areas, product knowledge, business process knowledge and other functional skills which are required to perform the role requirement successfully. The identified competencies form the input for rolling out various capability building programs of the company.
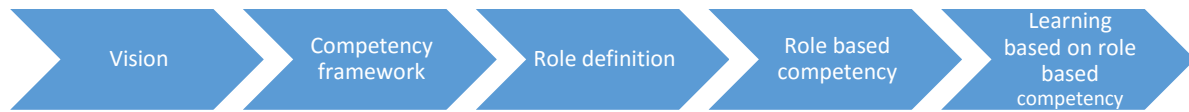

Figure 2: Linkage of vision to learning

4.Remote Learning

Moving away from classroom learning to virtual learning using collaboration platforms, learning management system, learning experience platform, learning content providers, bespoke content developed by organization is the focus area.

Pandemic situation created challenges like social distancing norms, difficulty in travelling, sitting in groups, physical interaction and having physical classroom sessions. Also, there is definitive costs associated with managing the standard operating procedures and protocols mandated by government as well as self-defined by the company. Over and above costs, the mind set and anxiety level of executives in engaging in physical participation also needs to be kept in mind. Even in a situation where the company has taken steps in maintaining a safe environment to learn and grow, there could be practical difficulties in terms of travel ban and discomfort in staying in hotels which can't be ruled for executives as well as the faculties. While class room environment has its own advantage in terms of building a rapport with faculty and co participants as well as understanding certain communication which is clearly not spelt out (I.e., eye reading, body language etc.), the need for having virtual learning is continuously growing. The topmost factor which drives an individual from learning is the interest and passion the executive demonstrates in learning. Hence a virtual environment could be as effective in terms of achieving learning objectives. Learning through compulsion like kids attending online session or forcing an adult to learn may not yield result especially in a virtual environment. As explained earlier, more and more learning are linked to competency and competency is linked to role, the executive would be able to understand his or her gap in terms of where they stand. This would help in creating a pull as well as set the target objectively for the executive as the learning gaps are clearly known. It is up to the individual to seek learning rather than being nominated for a program forcefully by his or her reporting manager of head of the function. A virtual learning through bouquet of offerings can democratize learning and personalize the learning based on individual's interest and need. In the realm of adult learning, virtual learning platform could be effective because of providing the priority to work and learn is given to the individual as the boundary of working and learning can be thinned down or blurred. An individual would be able to prioritize his or her learning based on their work schedule and commitments. By adapting the virtual learning, the ability to scale to many learners with lesser cost can be achieved. Also differentiated learning for executives which is generally difficult to practice in a classroom environment can be achieved by personalization the learning journey for everyone. This would be tailor made to suit the individual's role and competency added to interest and passion exhibited by the individual
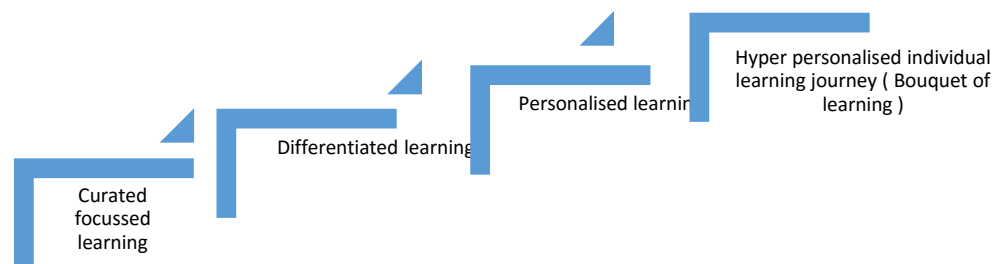

Figure 3: Maturity of learning

4.1   Self-paced, anytime anywhere learning (Taking the learning outside the classroom)

An individual would be able to prioritize his or her learning based on their work schedule and commitments. The learning pace of different individuals are different. There is a comfortable pace for every individual to grasp a

given topic or skill. Self-paced learning through the virtual learning mode helps individuals to learn in their own comfortable pace. Duration of the learning could be from few minutes to few hours for different executives. Also, learners would like to repeat the content multiple times based on their scores in the knowledge checks which come in the way during self-paced learning. Self-paced learning also helps to learn from world's best faculties, worlds best universities and benchmarked content if curated and chosen well. In terms of anytime anywhere learning, executives can focus on certain time spots in their everyday life which is spent in non-value adding activities like travel time, waiting for a meeting to start, awaiting critical input from your internal stakeholder to commence the next process. These time zones can be used for learning. Learning could be Learning outside classroom: challenges and opportunities of remote learning during remote working in an Indian commercial vehicle organization broken down to short nuggets and learning a small concept or area would help retention and overcome the attention deficiency.

4.2 Instructor led virtual learning program

Recorded content which is self-paced even though from a world class faculty or university lacks an important aspect of interaction. Digital collaboration platforms help create a classroom environment digitally where the facilitator can finetune the session based on class participation and interest level generated by the participants. Answering the questions raised by participants provide meaningful conversations which would be impactful for learning retention.

Figure 4: Instructor led virtual learning

4.3 Certifications on competencies from world class universities

One of the concrete ways to check if an individual has proficiency in each competency, is certification. Certification programs offer a clear guided learning journey coupled with learning assessments like quiz, knowledge checks, assignments, peer review etc. which reinforce the learning. Most importantly certification also provides a personal pride to the executive about their accomplishments. For executives who have joined the organization at an early age and aspiring to do higher education, certification programs and courses gives an opportunity to continue the process of learning and gain competency without taking a sabbatical from work. Organizations would be able to maintain a talent library through this and movement of individuals to different requirements both horizontally and vertically becomes easy through this process.

Figure 5: Certification source Coursera.

4.4 Reach and Relevance (Increasing the coverage of the learners with less cost as well as what is essential to business)

By the virtual nature of the learning, many aspects for a physical class room such as training hall, transportation, stay, nomination and availability of the cohort group, availability of faculty, printing the collaterals, availability of training aids in the class room, arrangement of refreshments and food, physical attendance, photography, stationary, feedback form printing are not there. Hence it becomes easy to administer a learning program managed virtually. Also, it allows executives in diverse geographical areas to participate in live

instructor led virtual session safely. This has considerably increased the ability to reach more learners in shorter time at a lesser cost. Also, availability of digital content on variety of topics and areas have helped Learning and development professionals to curate the relevant courses required for an individual thereby increasing the relevance of the learning.

4.5 Responsive learning (Laptop, desktop, tablet, mobile)

Figure 6: Responsive learning source internet.

One common factor which is being looked at in having a digital wellbeing is the amount of screen time an individual invests every day. This could be for personal or professional needs. This could range from variety of devices like Television, Laptop, Desktop or mobile phones. We can't deny the fact that there is an increasing trend in the screen time because of our day-to-day needs. Learning has an important place in how the screen time is productively used for development and growth. Many of the learning content which are offered have the responsive feature. Through the responsive learning the learner can learn from any device hence learning need not be restricted to certain environment. Learning on the go and learning during waiting time and travel time are possible through the responsive feature. Also, there could be environments where availability of internet is an issue. In such environments responsive with offline viewing capability helps individuals in having a smooth and seamless learning agnostic of locations and environments.

4.6 Involving internal talent (Making use of the subject matter experts in the functional domains)

Every organization has certain unique and discrete product and process offering which delivers the unique selling proposition for the organization. Those unique and discrete areas are generally developed internally by the organization using the internal talent. Hence learning programs should also focus on such unique capability building initiatives which are customized to the organization. Subject matter experts or domain experts help in developing the content as well as delivery in some cases. Learning professionals in such cases work with Learning outside classroom: challenges and opportunities of remote learning during remote working in an Indian commercial vehicle organization digital learning vendor and a subject matter expert to develop a bespoke module which is unique for the organization. This content can be taken from a catalogue offering externally by content deliverers. While developing the content, care is taken to have a proper flow through a story board approach and various example-based role play and simulation exercises to drive the point clearly. Sometimes a blended approach consisting of a digital learning module post which an instructor led program helps to increase the understanding level of the individual. Compared to the off the shelf content where refresh of the content is done by the content providers in a bespoke learning approach, the applicability of the learning needs to be reviewed in a fixed periodicity and necessary changes and version controls needs to be applied in the module so that the learning stays relevant in terms of time progress.

Figure 7: Learning intervention by internal subject matter expert.

4.7 Curation of content to suit the needs of the business

World class content is offered by various content providers. Many illustrious academia has also partnered in this endeavor to provide learning across to learners. Topics related to behavioral competency, leadership competency, functional and technical competency, digital competency as well as emerging and futuristic areas are

available in a click of a button. Based on the hot skills in the market and which are the skills sought after by organizations, artificial intelligence-based curation provides learners suggestions in terms of which are the content they need to learn. These recommendations are based on the job demand, progress of various skills in the market and the overall ecosystem prevalent across the globe.

5.Conclusion

Organizations approach execution model of their learning initiatives in 3 predominant ways. First approach is to drive the overall learning programs through the physical way. This method consists of classroom programs, hand-on learning through workshops and labs. Second approach is to impart learning through the digital way. A digital library with curated learning needs for the organization is developed for the employee to take up the learning 100% through the learning management system of the organization. Third approach is through the Phydigital way where in it's a combination or a hybrid version of Physical and digital methods. Organisation who had already started the digital learning could easily navigate during the pandemic as it gave an opportunity for the organizations to navigate the learning agenda. Even after we return to a total normalcy in terms of pre covid time, digital learning is here to stay as it has opened the tremendous potential and opportunity for the organizations to take up the learning agenda in optimum cost. Hence a hybrid model may likely to sustain as we go forward.

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