

## Why is On the Job Training dying?

# WEEKLY LEARNINGS 2023

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In 1996, a hallmark study asked managers how they learnt and developed. 70% said through on the job training and challenging assignments, 20% from development inputs and 10% from formal training. This 70-20-10 became the model for most companies.

I worry that the 70 % is not happening at all and this is what I picked up talking to young and middle managers recently. So, why is this happening? Here are my learnings:

1. In a steady world, the past repeated itself with a high probability. The leaders were aware of the known-knowns and the unknowns were few and far between. Repetition was a fair strategy in most industries. So, a manager was the go-to search engine on the past and hence junior people learnt from leaders.
2. In a world that's changing rapidly, there is no institutional knowledge or codified rules of the game. Everyone is as blind as the other and hence managers cannot teach their colleagues anything or don't know much.
3. The best example is digital. Senior managers in most companies are at a loss on this topic, many of them are not on social media or are unfamiliar with digital models. They are learning from their junior colleagues and are not able to add value. Almost everything has a digital element to it today.
4. In the past leaders had a tough love attitude – they taught and expected a lot from their people. Today tough love is not practiced and in many cases unacceptable to colleagues. I tried my best to teach basics of making slides and communicating with impact in one team. Most people equate talking with making a great presentation and didn't appreciate the effort needed to be better at presentations.
5. The employee of today has many more choices and learning on the job is not a priority like it was years ago. In the past people joined a company that had excellent coaches and these senior managers invested their time as a rule. Because younger managers do not appreciate it, senior managers have also given up on it. However, millennials cite 'opportunities to learn and grow' as a top priority but are not investing in the workplace relationships with seniors to get it done. Both need to meet at the crossroads.

6. Another reason for the lack of on-the-job training is time in role. When time in role at any level is low then on the job training suffers.
7. The lack of on-the-job training is leading to lower engagement, higher attrition, and lower accountability.
8. There are many ways to get On the Job training back in a company – team projects, challenging questions in reviews, cross functional projects, shadow stints, learning by watching, role modeling by seniors.
9. Shadow stints are something that people like the most because they can shadow the senior managers and learn how he/she interacts, deals with issues, collects information. It gives them a ringside view without being judged. I saw immense benefits of the shadow program in every company where shadow stints were a norm.
10. On the job training is the lowest cost method to build capability, unfortunately, leaders do not have time to invest anymore. Lack of on-the-job training is driving standards down in every company.

Shiv

[www.shivshivakumar.com](http://www.shivshivakumar.com)

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