

The Learning Network

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02/09/2020 Have you learned something new today? The knowledge commanded by employees is a key factor in competitive success. Learning is therefore part of Porsche's corporate culture. All the relevant activities are compiled by the Lernen@Porsche community. Here are some insights into the learning network at Porsche.

A quick click beams Matthias Görtz into another sphere. Porsche Spaces appears on the screen of his VR headset. His avatar strides through a virtual Porsche Center, past the latest sports cars on the ground floor and then along a corridor lined with seminar rooms on the second floor. Here is where the aftersales team imparts the latest knowledge about new cars to Porsche dealers on all continents and in all time zones, and where it also explains updates of existing models and teaches mechanics about the cars.

The content is full of facts and figures and data, which are not all that important for Matthias. He is much more interested in how the Porsche Spaces environment works, and how it can be transferred to

other learning formats. Learning is his passion and his job. As the manager of learning design and knowledge campaigns, he and his team play a crucial role in designing learning opportunities at Porsche.

Matthias's team is embedded within an overall network: the Lernen@Porsche community. The community's core group comes from the HR development department, of which Matthias is a member. "We design the framework conditions for learning at Porsche," he says in describing his role at the department. "Our offerings set things in motion. We also help people navigate through the wide range of learning programs and opportunities, and—very important—we link up everyone who wants to help frame the learning experience." Responsibilities are spread out across a number of different areas of expertise.

Matthias and his team are in charge of the overall design of learning opportunities—in other words, the right combination of different learning formats needed to provide effective and motivating programs. Another team focuses on further developing the digital learning ecosystem that gives employees access to the company's learning world. It encompasses e-learning opportunities, video tutorials, and virtual seminars, as well as all relevant information about actual classroom seminars. A third team supports skills management by compiling content and opportunities for interdisciplinary topics. This includes the Porsche Warm-Up for all new employees as well as seminars on topics such as agility, awareness, virtual work, and leadership, in addition to HR development programs for a wide range of target groups.

"Our work is guided by what skills Porsche will need in the future," says Katja Zimmermann, the head of skill management. "We design the content, variety, and structure of our qualification programs not only for what our employees need today but also and especially for what will enable them to meet their job requirements in the future." For specific technical programs, the HR development team advises instructors from specialized departments and provides them with suitable educational tools.

The means, paths, and pace of learning depend on each individual. And the end of each journey is rarely precisely defined. Instead, individual learners define their own destinations. One thing is clear: for a company to be successful, its employees need to be ready to acquire, integrate, and pass on new knowledge. Companies that stand still are left in the dust. The desire to learn is therefore a key part of Porsche's corporate culture. That is especially true for the HR development department.

Its members go to great lengths to keep gaining experience. They commission master's theses on the effectiveness of learning videos compared to e-seminars, and on the best ways to use podcasts for educational purposes. The team keeps learning in order to enhance Lernen@Porsche. It is constantly searching for the best and latest ways to impart knowledge. "We want to be innovation drivers ourselves by being the first to try out new formats like virtual or augmented reality," says Matthias.

Learning programs and opportunities are always developed as team projects in which HR development staff and representatives of specialized departments complement and supplement each other's work. "We start with the idea of developing a learning journey," explains Michael Pohl, the director of HR

development. The first task is to determine which content and methods will be applied in which sequence. “This ensures that the content conveyed will have a lasting effect, instead of just being a flash in the pan,” adds Katja. The goal is to facilitate the perfect learning experience.

Innovation workshops come close to this ideal, with lesson plans consisting of project management and methods of fostering innovations. They begin with short bursts of theory in advance such as an e-seminar on design thinking. Then when the actual classroom seminar takes place, participants have to use methods and dialogue to solve problems and innovation issues provided directly by employees from all the specialized departments.

When learning is gained from experience and action, its results last longer. In addition, it automatically meets the three conditions for an attractive learning experience: it is motivating; it shows that the content is relevant; and it enables participants to develop their own individual routines.

The applied learning approach is taken from real life. “Most of our learning is done on the job or in social contexts,” explains Michael. “But there should also be a good follow-up program to ensure that we don’t proceed to lose what we learn in everyday contexts.” One way of doing this is to use learning tricks. In many areas, it’s crucial to acquire hands-on experience with equipment and/or to discuss issues with colleagues. It is easier to retain knowledge acquired in connection with concrete actions or dialogue. For this the employees need a mindset that is always open to learning, and the curiosity to constantly try out new things.

The desire to learn cannot be instilled by fiat. That’s why the HR development department essentially integrates their co-workers into their network and offers them lots of scope and liberties. This is another reason why the Porsche learning ecosystem embraces maximum transparency and minimal restrictions as a central locus of learning. “It gives learners the chance to engage with the widest possible range of topics and navigate freely in this environment,” explains Sarah Schultz, who heads the learning ecosystem team.

User experience also plays a key role in the learning ecosystem, of course. This is evident in the modern, streamlined, and motivating design. The landing page is designed to enable individual users to quickly find relevant training programs. Yet the ecosystem also expressly allows for and even expedites the view beyond specific offerings. A news page, for example, regularly reports on new and exciting options. An intelligent algorithm is expected to supplement the learning experience with targeted suggestions similar to those provided by Netflix. Content from other departments and areas of expertise will be presented to learners in a form designed to expand their skills in targeted ways.

When views extend beyond the usual horizons, this automatically leads to dialogue between employees and specialized departments, which is the heart of Lernen@Porsche. Precisely that is why an entire learning community takes this idea and runs with it. The community consists not only of the HR development team but also of the people responsible for the training programs from specialized departments. But any employee can become a fixed member of the network. Regular meetings invite everyone to share their experience about the effectiveness of seminars and learning methods, and to

discuss and develop new training opportunities. “One of the best moments in the Lernen@Porsche community is when we receive exciting ideas from the specialized departments and thereby expand our own knowledge,” says Lars Sielaff, who fosters and promotes the learning community. That statement could have come from any member of the department. Only those who are hungry for knowledge and eager to learn themselves are in a position to provide continuous learning opportunities to an entire company.

Info

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Path: The Learning Network/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Matthias Görtz, Katja Zimmermann, Selina Widmann and Sarah Schultz, l-r, 2020, Porsche AG
Subline: Interlinked team: Matthias Görtz, Katja Zimmermann, Selina Widmann and Sarah Schultz coordinate many aspects of Lernen@Porsche

Path: The Learning Network/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Virtual Porsche Center, 2020, Porsche AG
Subline: For example, the aftersales department uses a virtual Porsche Center for its training programs

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