LinkedIn Learning Pilot Program
Evaluation: Executive Summary

Enterprise Talent Development
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Executive summary

Background

In April 2020, Enterprise Talent Development (ETD) acquired 10,000 licenses for LinkedIn Learning, an online learning platform. Participating state agencies decided which employees received licenses. Licensed users can access unlimited online training courses on a variety of topics, including technical skills, interpersonal skills, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

ETD asked Management Analysis and Development (MAD) to evaluate LinkedIn Learning as a training solution for the state. Specifically, MAD explored three research questions:

- How did LinkedIn Learning affect employees who received a license?
- How did LinkedIn Learning affect supervisors’/managers’ ability to support their employees’ professional development?
- How can LinkedIn Learning help the state achieve its training goals?

Methodology

To answer the research questions, MAD conducted three surveys throughout the project: two of users and one of users’ supervisors. MAD also interviewed agency human resources staff and analyzed usage data available from LinkedIn Learning. In general, MAD collected data at the beginning and end of the pilot period, which was April 2020 through March 2021.

Findings

How did LinkedIn Learning affect employees who received a license?

Users are satisfied with the opportunities available through LinkedIn Learning and want to use it more

The evaluation data shows that users were largely satisfied with LinkedIn Learning and want to continue to have access to it. Most users who took the final survey said the trainings available through LinkedIn Learning have been useful or helpful for them. Users also indicated they would like more time to dedicate to using LinkedIn Learning for their professional and personal development and plan to use it more in the future. Survey results demonstrated that LinkedIn Learning helped many users manage professional and personal development in the 2020–2021 period, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd.
**Users gained new knowledge and skills and were able to use them in performing their jobs**

The final survey results showed that users gained new knowledge and skills from LinkedIn Learning. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they learned at least one new thing from a LinkedIn Learning video, and 76 percent said they used at least one thing they learned from LinkedIn Learning in their current position.

Nearly 500 respondents described technical skills they gained, including learning Teams, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, SharePoint, Adobe Acrobat, Zoom, and WebEx. Three hundred respondents highlighted the interpersonal and emotional intelligence skills they learned. They often mentioned improving their skills in communication, customer service, leadership, and managing conflict.

**LinkedIn Learning made some people more satisfied with their professional development and their job**

When asked what kind of impact LinkedIn Learning has had on their professional development, more than 800 respondents to the final user survey wrote that having LinkedIn Learning positively affected their ability to do their job or gain professional development. Several respondents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to use LinkedIn Learning, with respondents describing how being given a license made them feel valued as a state employee.

**LinkedIn Learning did not affect most employees’ relationships with their supervisor/manager when it came to professional development**

Based on responses to the final user survey, having access to LinkedIn Learning did not affect most users’ relationship with their supervisor when it comes to professional development. The majority of final survey respondents (55 percent) neither agreed nor disagreed that LinkedIn Learning has positively improved their relationship with their supervisor concerning professional development. Written comments showed that some users would like to have more support from their supervisor or management, especially on how much time they can spend during working hours using LinkedIn Learning.

**How did LinkedIn Learning affect supervisors’/managers’ ability to support their employees’ professional development?**

LinkedIn Learning has had a limited, positive effect on supervisors supporting their employees’ professional development

Participant input showed the LinkedIn Learning pilot program has somewhat helped supervisors’ ability to support their employees’ professional development. If nothing else, LinkedIn Learning presented an opportunity for supervisors to discuss their direct reports’ professional development, and many supervisors did so. In their written survey comments, supervisors described how the platform had helped them. A few explained how they had their direct reports watch a training together and then discuss, while others shared that LinkedIn Learning helped their direct reports meet training goals. However, pandemic-related workloads and a lack of knowledge and agency support about LinkedIn Learning limited how much many supervisors were able to support their employees’ professional development.
Supervisors largely appreciate LinkedIn Learning as a training option

Supervisors were mostly positive about LinkedIn Learning as a way for their staff to develop professionally. More than three-quarters of supervisor survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that LinkedIn Learning is a good way for their direct reports to get professional development training, and that the state should keep LinkedIn Learning. More than 100 supervisors explained how they have already seen positive effects on their employees from LinkedIn Learning, including higher job satisfaction, improved job performance, and increased knowledge.

Supervisors would like more guidance and support

Although the effect on supervisors’ ability to help their staff has been limited so far, supervisors asked in their survey comments for more guidance and support. They also asked for more time for their direct reports to use LinkedIn Learning, and/or clearer guidelines about how much time staff could spend on it. Although ETD created an IDP template for users’ supervisors, most supervisors reported they never received a copy.

How can LinkedIn Learning help the state achieve its training goals?

LinkedIn Learning could be a good resource to reach some enterprise and agency training goals

The state and most agencies do not have organization-wide training plans or goals. However, MMB has an “Employee Learning and Development” policy, and most agencies do have practical training objectives. LinkedIn Learning can help different parties fulfill their roles under MMB’s Administrative Policy 21. In addition, LinkedIn Learning can help agencies meet their practical objectives in a variety of ways.

Many agencies are already using LinkedIn Learning to meet their practical training objectives, and this evaluation suggests it could help them even more. Some are integrating the platform into employee IDPs, while a handful of others mapped learning pathways using LinkedIn Learning or found LinkedIn Learning courses to match existing learning pathways.

LinkedIn Learning could also help the state meet emerging training needs. For instance, many agencies are focusing more on DEI trainings and cultural competency, particularly because of the equity change plans that each agency’s Equity Change Team is implementing with guidance from the Office of Inclusion. Interviewees emphasized the benefit of having access to LinkedIn Learning trainings specific to current events, such as DEI and learning how to effectively telework and manage remote or hybrid teams.

Additionally, if agencies do adopt overarching training plans, LinkedIn Learning could help meet strategic training goals. LinkedIn Learning’s expansive library can also help agencies meet some general training needs, leaving agencies to focus their limited training resources on providing agency-specific, technical courses.

LinkedIn Learning cannot fulfill all the state’s training needs

While LinkedIn Learning can help the state and agencies reach some training goals, it is not a complete training solution. One of the most significant limitations is that online learning videos, where users mostly passively absorb content, may not suit everyone’s learning styles. MAD’s research suggests that the state should also
invest in active trainings and multi-model offerings for professional development, such as live in-person or online courses, as well as on-the-job training.

**Findings demonstrate promising individual-level results, but only limited evidence of organization-level impact**

Although MAD’s evaluation yielded only limited evidence on how LinkedIn Learning has affected users’ teams or agencies, data collected in this evaluation points to individual positive behaviors and morale as a result of using the platform. These effects could be leading indicators of organizational impact. For example, nearly two-thirds of final user survey respondents (65 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that the videos they watched have already helped them have a positive effect on their team/unit in the past few months. Beyond some potential leading indicators, though, the evaluation findings pointed to limited evidence of results at the organization level.

**Recommendations**

MAD offers the following recommendations on how the state can better implement LinkedIn Learning as a training option. The full text of the recommendations can be found on in the full-length version of this report.

**Make it easier to access and fully use LinkedIn Learning**

- **Improve onboarding:** Some users would benefit from additional support after receiving a license. ETD could develop a standard package of information that can be shared with agencies or directly provided to users before the license activation email from LinkedIn Learning is sent to the employee. ETD should also consider updating its website regularly with relevant information.

- **Continue to promote and encourage LinkedIn Learning:** Participants often said that with the wide variety of content available, it can be difficult for users to determine which courses to take or which ones are the most helpful. Communication from ETD or agencies could highlight recommended courses, pathways, and videos. In addition, participants suggested establishing ways for users in an agency or enterprise-wide to review and vet courses. ETD or agencies could find ways for users to communicate with each other, such as a Teams channel.

**Establish LinkedIn Learning within the broader vision of professional development for state employees**

- **Commit to LinkedIn Learning and expand the opportunity:** ETD should make a commitment to continuing the use of LinkedIn Learning for a set period of years, which would give users and agency HR staff a sense of how invested they should become in the platform. If agencies are not sure whether LinkedIn Learning will be available into the future, they will be less likely to meaningfully incorporate its use within a broader professional development strategy. Participants throughout the evaluation also asked for LinkedIn Learning licenses to be available to more employees.
• Clarify the role of LinkedIn Learning within other professional development options for state employees: Moving forward, ETD should help agencies clarify how LinkedIn Learning fits into a broader vision for state employee professional development, such as how LinkedIn Learning fits with ELM courses, job-embedded professional development, or required certification courses for certain positions. ETD could also provide guidance to agencies and users for how LinkedIn Learning can build onto other types of professional development.

• Clarify how much time users can spend on LinkedIn Learning: Many users would like to watch more LinkedIn Learning videos but do not feel they have time at work to do so. While ETD may not wish to designate set learning times for all agencies or require users to watch a certain amount of training per month, it is in a position to suggest enterprise-wide guidelines about how much time staff can spend on LinkedIn Learning. It can also support agencies in setting their own expectations. Because the pandemic is not yet over, it is understandable that some agencies have not focused on increasing how much time their staff can spend on professional development. In the future, though, agencies could try to adjust workloads and fill vacancies to ensure that users have time to spend on professional development, including LinkedIn Learning.

• Build deeper learning opportunities around LinkedIn Learning: Many users said they would like additional or deeper learning opportunities built around LinkedIn Learning. Ideas from users included book clubs, flipped classroom opportunities, and webinars focusing on LinkedIn Learning videos. ETD could support employees with engaging in deeper learning opportunities built around LinkedIn Learning by generating ideas and providing guidance to agencies on how to implement them. ETD could also provide these ideas or resources directly to users, or host some of these opportunities itself.

Continue to support a culture of learning across the enterprise

• Expand the use of IDPs or other professional development tools and templates: As part of promoting a culture of learning across the enterprise, ETD should consider how to better support agencies to expand the use of IDPs or other professional development tools and templates, and to include LinkedIn Learning in these plans. For example, ETD could attach its IDP template to the initial onboarding emails for new users and their supervisors, along with an explanation of what the IDP template is and how to use it.

• Help supervisors better support the professional development of their direct reports: Supervisors need to understand LinkedIn Learning and support it for users to take full advantage. ETD could create resources aimed at supervisors of users to explain how the platform works, what topics are available, and how often they should be discussing LinkedIn Learning with employees. In addition, ETD could play a role in broadly helping supervisors understand why professional development, even outside of a person’s current job duties, is valuable.

• Connect LinkedIn Learning to enterprise-wide and agency goals: ETD could leverage Administrative Procedure 21 to make the case for continuing the LinkedIn Learning program for enterprise employees, since the platform aligns well with the policy’s objectives. ETD could also highlight for agency sub-administrators courses and learning paths that meet emerging needs on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics, as well as help them explore how LinkedIn Learning courses could align with the competencies or learning paths agencies expect their staff to complete.