



The Benefits of Giving Employees Paid Time to Take Nanodegree Programs





Introduction

For even the most tech-savvy employee, acquiring the latest digitally-driven skills while holding a full-time job can present a formidable challenge. Forward-thinking employers understand that providing their employees the time to learn is an integral part of their upskilling programs. If employees feel overwhelmed by their daily workload, they will find it difficult to allocate time for learning. Ideally, learning should be a part of their everyday job. Organizations should therefore give their employees paid time for learning new skills.





Benefits of Protected Learning Time

1

FASTER RAMP-UP TIME

By carving out time for employees to work on their Nanodegree programs, managers can help learners successfully progress through the material and graduate faster. Supported learners acquire new skills more quickly, become more productive in their existing roles, and are able to take on more impactful projects sooner. In addition, teams or business units that are given protected time to acquire new capabilities will be better equipped to quickly apply their newfound knowledge and skills to accelerate innovation and time-to-market.

2

BUILD CULTURE OF LEARNING

Organizations that offer employees free access to Nanodegree programs and protected time to upskill model learning as both a business and a people priority. Many, if not most, employees lack the bandwidth and motivation to learn on their own time. Allotting paid time for study eliminates obstacles and sets the expectation that learning and adapting to the ever-changing tech landscape is an essential part of their roles. Once your company has established a culture of learning, more employees will be inspired to upskill, in turn increasing demand for learning programs and further transforming your workforce to meet the demands of the digital future.

3 EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

Personal time is extremely valuable to everyone, and asking employees to spend part of their nights and weekends can make your company-funded training seem like a double-edged sword. Allowing employees to use paid time to complete their Nanodegree programs shows that you value their futures.

Providing workforce education also demonstrates that your organization is invested in professional development and supports the opportunity for existing employees to acquire in-demand skills and potentially step into more advanced roles that would otherwise require external hires. What's more, Udacity's enterprise customers who support their employees often find that these same learners reinvest their time into the program after graduation for the benefit of other learners, for example by being a mentor for future cohorts.





Best Practices for Implementing Protected Learning Time

1 GET EXECUTIVE BUY-IN

Most employees already feel overloaded at work. Carving out time for learning on top of their usual workload may seem impossible. The first step in making time for learning is to identify an executive sponsor who endorses your upskilling initiative. Ideally this person is in a position to internally promote learning as a priority, and help remove any roadblocks for those committed to their learning journeys. Once higher-level buy-in is achieved, line managers and learners will feel empowered to take on a new challenge.

2 WIN MANAGER SUPPORT

Getting support from line managers may be difficult, as they may feel pressure to meet team goals and show results. Taking some of their direct reports' time away from daily responsibilities may therefore seem counterproductive.

To get your line managers on board, you will need to help them understand how granting employees protected time for learning can benefit their teams down the line. Consider assembling a committee of managers to be involved in designing the learning process for their direct reports. Giving them the opportunity to decide how much protected time to allocate to learners, and how they can ensure the commitment is being honored can go a long way toward earning their buy-in.

3 CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Once you have gained executive and manager buy-in, and your learners have received permission to work on their Nanodegree programs during work hours, you will need to track progress and outcomes to measure the effects of protected time. How have graduation rates improved? What new projects have learners been able to take on? How much time or money has been saved as a direct result from the digital upskilling? Gathering learner stories through graduate interviews and broadcasting them to the greater organization will make managers of future cohorts more willing to give employees protected learning time.

Udacity's Enterprise customers that allocate time for their employees to complete their Nanodegree programs see higher and faster graduation rates and greater business impact. Your learners' biggest struggle when going through an upskilling program is finding the time in their already busy schedules. Once this roadblock is removed, they will be empowered to efficiently and effectively learn new skills and drive results within your company.

Questions?

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