

Connecting teams through learning and development

How digital coaching can empower a more
flexible and resilient logistics workforce



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted global industries of all sizes and scopes—not simply in terms of the bottom line, but also relating to organizational values. Drastic change is often a driver of opportunity and innovation and in the case of a global pandemic, evolutionary and revolutionary shifts in ways of working that had often been considered “aspirational” have become essential in order to stay ahead of the curve. One area of particular note has been the increased focus on people development as a measure and driver of success.

The challenges of the pandemic almost universally highlighted not only the need for core competencies such as agility, resilience and technological proficiency, but also the value of diverse perspectives and an increased focus on employee well-being. So, how can organizations provide the resources and support that their employees need while still achieving their budgetary and exponential growth goals in volatile global markets?

CoachHub, in collaboration with Atomik, a leading independent market research agency, carried out a *Global HR Survey* (CoachHub & Atomik, 2021) of 2,472 senior decision-makers in charge of organizational change and development to gauge the use of coaching as a tool to support talent development, employee retention and ultimately impactful business transformation. The results indicate that while global industries and regional markets vary in many ways, the challenges they face in our increasingly fast-paced, digital and diversified world often require strikingly similar solutions—namely an increased focus on and investment in human capital.





A look into the logistics sectors

The impact of COVID-19 rocked the foundations of the logistics sector. Disruptions to supply chains, shipping bottlenecks, and labor shortages were compounded by increased demand from stay-at-home consumers, highlighting the fragility of networks that were long considered to be efficient. This volatility has caused logistics companies to change processes and adopt new solutions at a rate not thought possible before the pandemic. However, even before COVID-19, the logistics industry was susceptible to local disruptions, like natural disasters and infrastructure failures, as well as global crises, such as border conflicts and threats from cyberterrorism (Kearney et al., 2021.)

It appears to be more important than ever to create solutions that take into account a holistic business model that includes a priority on employee well-being.

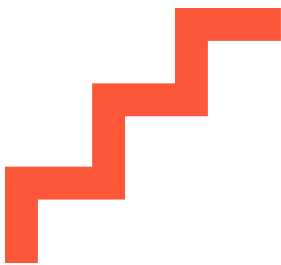
Additional challenges to logisticians include the rise of the digital consumer and growing concern about environmental impact. From an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) perspective, logistics companies are also facing the need for increased transparency and accountability (Brown, 2021.) Furthermore, according to the World Economic Forum, “no longer is it enough for logistics firms to deliver a consignment on time, they now also need to offer a multiplatform service to both personal and business customers.” While digital advances in AI, automation, and UAV/drone delivery seem to promise increased efficiency for both consumers and the logistics workforce, **these new and emerging technologies require skills upgrades, and training**, all of which would require substantial employer support (PwC, 2016.)

As logistics businesses continue to grapple with the fallout of the pandemic—including attracting and retaining talent—it appears to be more important than ever to create sustainable and scalable solutions that take into account a holistic business model that includes a priority on employee wellbeing. However, due to the lockdowns of Covid-19, **the limitations of traditional in-person learning and training have been exposed**. As a result, logistics companies are now exploring digital platforms as ways to support employee development and are finding them to be just as, or even more impactful and cost-efficient.

CoachHub’s *Global HR Survey 2021* illustrates how adaptive and agile the logistics sector has been in recent years, particularly while navigating the turbulence of COVID-19. Data suggests that the logistics industry has permanently embedded digital tools into their day-to-day processes and embraced remote working—which is particularly challenging in the transportation business. The survey data also indicates that there are marked contrasts in budgets and methods of delivering training, mentoring, and employee well-being across the sector, but that **increasing digital learning and development opportunities have allowed support to be offered to a broader base of employees**. Specifically, technological

innovation has enabled coaching and executive training to be democratized by a move online. This digital investment in employee growth and well-being is helping to fill skill gaps and improve retention rates in a highly competitive hiring market.

According to the 2021 Kearney State of Logistics report, “like the supply chains they serve, **logistics networks must fundamentally rethink and redesign their solutions.**” As a result, employees will need to likewise adapt and evolve to marketplace changes. The results of the 2021 CoachHub *Global HR Survey* indicate a need and willingness in the logistics sector to implement or expand workforce support and development in order to address the key challenges identified, including:



Personal Growth



Retention



Flexibility

Finally, the results of this study also provide a useful measure of the level of uncertainty from an HR and L&D perspective—as well as insights into how companies are responding to a sense of insecurity through embracing innovative people management and new technology.

Diving deeper into the data

Marketplace change is often a catalyst for changing ways of working, and as a result of COVID-19, logistics organizations were forced to reevaluate their business models and adopt transformational strategies to stay in business (Kearney et al., 2021.) Whether the logistics sector’s priorities lie in upskilling and reskilling current employees to meet evolving market demands, providing support and resources to employees as they navigate technological change, or increasing flexible opportunities for their workforce, **it is clear that companies need to invest in people development.** However, the results of the CoachHub *Global HR Survey 2021* highlight surprising disparities between industry sectors in their short- and long-term attitudes to people development for 2022.



Personal Growth: Provide opportunities to develop soft skills

The speed and impact of technological change creates difficulties preparing for and adapting to transformation, especially when it comes to logistics. **With this increased stress and pressure, many employees may need help and support as they learn and cultivate soft skills** such as time management, communication techniques, and conflict resolution strategies so that they can better navigate uncertainty.

The survey data highlights a significant mismatch between current positive expectations for growth and a low likelihood of a sense of certainty and continuity. However, responses also indicate managerial optimism in learning and development budgeting, but with less concrete plans on how that money might be best invested. Interestingly, the data points to a return to enhancing developmental skills, rather than technical ones, and an erosion of the traditional line between so-called hard and soft skills.



Retention: Offer learning and development programs

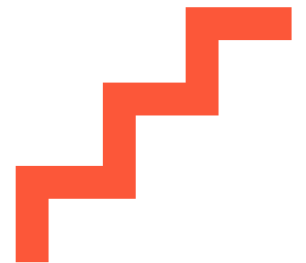
Given the challenges of recruiting candidates in the current job market, it makes sense for organizations to focus on their reskilling and upskilling practices in order to retain and advance the teams that are already in place. The survey data shows that logistical organizations are among those most likely of those surveyed to retrain people to new processes and tools in 2022—and less likely to make direct new hires to fill identifiable skill gaps. There is also currently a focus on upskilling existing staff, while much of last year had been about helping them to quickly adopt new methods and technologies.

Responses did indicate that over half of the organizations surveyed will be recruiting (both internally and externally,) while fewer than 20% forecast redundancies, and 40% of businesses are planning a restructure. Overall, the survey predicts a top-down shift from managing present challenges to a focus on planning for the future.

How do logistics companies envisage their people management strategy in 2022?



* Includes multiple responses per respondent





Flexibility: Create a culture of adaptability and agility

The rise in new platforms and technologies means that companies can communicate and work more efficiently with other organizations around the world. However, when more and more interactions are virtual, employees can experience a sense of disconnection and disengagement.

The survey data confirms that managing uncertainty requires behavioral “soft” skills above teachable, technical “hard” skills. However, the larger the organization, the less tailored support packages seem to be for employees at the forefront of navigating the transformation. Many corporate training and development initiatives are organization-wide, with few having programs developed at the employee level, therefore neglecting the opportunity to tailor and focus learning goals to departments, teams, or individuals’ needs.

The survey indicates that an increasing number of logistics organizations have made coaching accessible to a wider cross-section of their workforce—where traditionally it was reserved for leadership roles. Both broad learning and training programs and highly targeted interventions like coaching have changed in recent years through embracing digital channels of delivery. **This level of accessibility allows for personalized digital coaching to be democratized and scalable throughout an organization.**



Key takeaways

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted old organizational vulnerabilities in the logistics sector—**such as managing local and global supply chain disruptions and the rise in the digitally- and socially-savvy consumer**—and has also created new ones—including **labor shortages and increased demand**.
- Most logistics companies have responded to a shift in ways of working **by embracing new technologies and evaluating the needs of the modern workforce**.
- It's also clear that organizations need to build holistic and sustainable digital business models or risk becoming obsolete. This **new way of working begins with reevaluating the transformational potential of the employees themselves** and not simply the systems those individuals rely on.
- **New skills can be developed in radically different ways, including virtually**, covering a wide array of focus areas, such as improving the customer experience, efficiency and workflow.
- While recruitment remains challenging, logistics businesses are seeking **new ways to invest in their existing teams to develop talent and support wider well-being**.
- One important component to the future success of the logistics workforce will be to **personalize learning to attract, retain and grow talent**. Adopting personalized approaches to people development, such as digital coaching, has become a more effective method for **engaging the workforce** and has also provided organizations with a **competitive advantage**.
- Customized programs provide direct benefits to employees by **supporting their personal needs, learning style, retention speed and career development**.
- **Digital coaching is one of many tools vital to overcoming the challenges we are encountering**—and for facing the new ones that are just beyond our business horizon.

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About CoachHub

CoachHub is the leading global talent development platform that enables organizations to create a personalized, measurable and scalable coaching program for the entire workforce, regardless of department and seniority level. By doing so, organizations can reap a multitude of benefits, including increased employee engagement, higher levels of productivity, improved job performance and increased retention.

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