

Building a Culture of Learning to Evolve the Healthcare Workforce

The pace of change in healthcare, pressure to innovate and rise of the digital age are changing the skills needed in all aspects of healthcare operations. To position for the future and retain the best talent, organizations need to invest in healthcare's most important asset — its people.

In [recent Huron research](#), leaders name staffing recruitment and retention as a top three growth priority, signaling that investments in people are essential to their strategic plans.

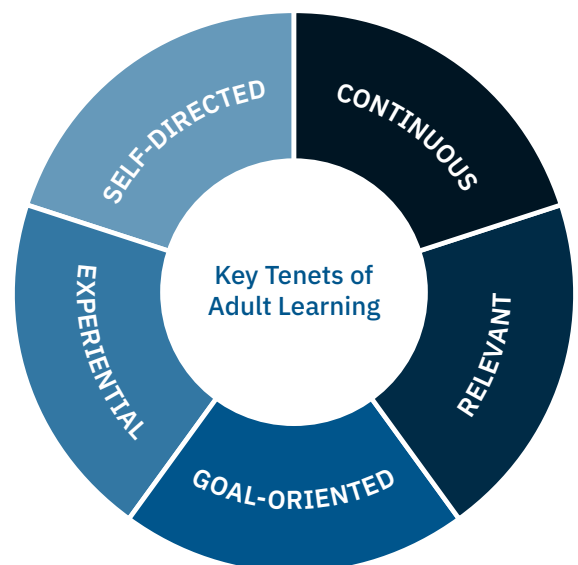
Compensation will continue to be a deciding factor for employees about where they work, but they are placing [increasing value on training and development](#) opportunities. While learning is key for individuals to develop their own skills, the long-term results of building a culture of learning as an organization can help differentiate employee and organizational performance, engagement and retention.

By leaning on the tenets of adult learning, organizations can elevate and streamline their learning programs to support the goals of individuals and the organization.

Learning to Thrive in Healthcare

The healthcare industry is constantly evolving to meet consumer needs and improve care. New technology and clinical practices require ongoing training to ensure employees can safely and effectively do their jobs. In an industry centered around people, soft skills training is equally as important, yet few have been taught the skills needed to guide people, especially in uncertain times.

When developing talent for the future, organizations need to build a learning program that addresses technical, clinical and people-focused skills. These combined competencies are what will enable individuals to maximize contributions to the organization and grow professionally in their roles.



Key Tenets of Adult Learning in Healthcare

As the industry evolves, the skill sets required in healthcare today may not be the ones needed tomorrow. To enable employees to develop and enhance skills that add value to their organization and help them meet personal goals, organizations must invest in a learning program that is:

- **Self-directed:** Employees know how they learn best. By putting people in charge of their learning experience, they can set their own goals and determine how — and when — they want to learn.

In a culture of continuous learning, employees with demanding roles are empowered by leadership to prioritize professional development instead of viewing training as merely adding to their workloads. Creating a curated learning path provides the flexibility learners need to build skills on their own amid busy schedules as well as the structure needed to stay motivated.

- **Relevant:** Adults are seeking practical, clearly defined content that is applicable to their role. To set up employees and the organization for success, leaders should consider developing curated learning paths specific to new skills needed in the workplace today rather than presenting employees with potentially outdated, irrelevant courses that add variety, but not value.

Upskilling, or the ability to evolve employees' skills for the current time, is necessary for organizations to build a change-ready workforce. Part of upskilling is providing a clear "why" for individuals regarding the benefits of investing their time in a development program and the value of being fully equipped to perform at the highest level in their role.

- **Continuous:** To better enable organizationwide improvement, leaders must view professional development as more than a point-in-time event, but rather a way to continually evolve workforces for the future.

Clinicians are already seeking learning to maintain their credentials. By providing continuous, on-demand learning opportunities through multiple modes of delivery, organizations can create a culture that doesn't view learning as simply checking a box, but instead provides an enriching experience that helps move organizational goals.

- **Experiential:** Transferring learning from the classroom to the real world has always been a challenge for adult learners. In a world of self-paced and digital learning, people still need experimental components to help close the gap between old ways of working and new skills or behaviors.

Whether facilitated in a group setting with simulations and case studies or through peer-to-peer connections, a "learn by doing" approach allows learners to build key competencies, practice decision making and understand results in a way that other learning modalities do not provide.

- **Goal-oriented:** Adult learners thrive when learning enables them to accomplish a goal that is key to their role. If an adult is going to invest time into a learning program, it is essential for them to have a tangible result that aligns to their personal or professional goals and makes their time worthwhile. Organizations should be considering how their data analytics programs can support goal-oriented learning by providing meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) that tie back to employees' goals and track progress.

Investing in people will continue to be an important strategy for healthcare organizations as they seek to thrive in an increasingly competitive and technology-driven landscape. Evolving employees' skills will require learning programs that are grounded in key tenets of adult learning — delivering training that is relevant, flexible and accessible.



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Key Takeaways

Healthcare organizations looking to evolve their workforce need to:

Think differently.

Consider learning as a continuous endeavor that can help employees reach their potential and prepare organizations for the future.

Plan differently.

Build a learning program that incorporates adult learning principles and empowers individuals to take charge of their own learning experience.

Act differently.

Provide learning opportunities that address the technical, clinical and people-focused skills individuals need to make the biggest impact within their roles.