



Planning Today for a Better Tomorrow

Workforce education:

The retention strategy you
can't afford to overlook



Harnessing the power of workforce education to retain top talent

Retaining top talent has become a daunting task for organizations in nearly every industry and there's no end in sight, with more than half of U.S. workers [thinking about quitting in 2023](#).

So, what's an HR leader to do?

It's crucial to approach employee retention from a fresh perspective and understand what your employees want and need. In today's workplace, **people seek out and remain with companies willing to invest in their careers and professional development**. An overwhelming [94% of employees said investment in training and education](#) is one of the major reasons they would decide to stay longer with the company.

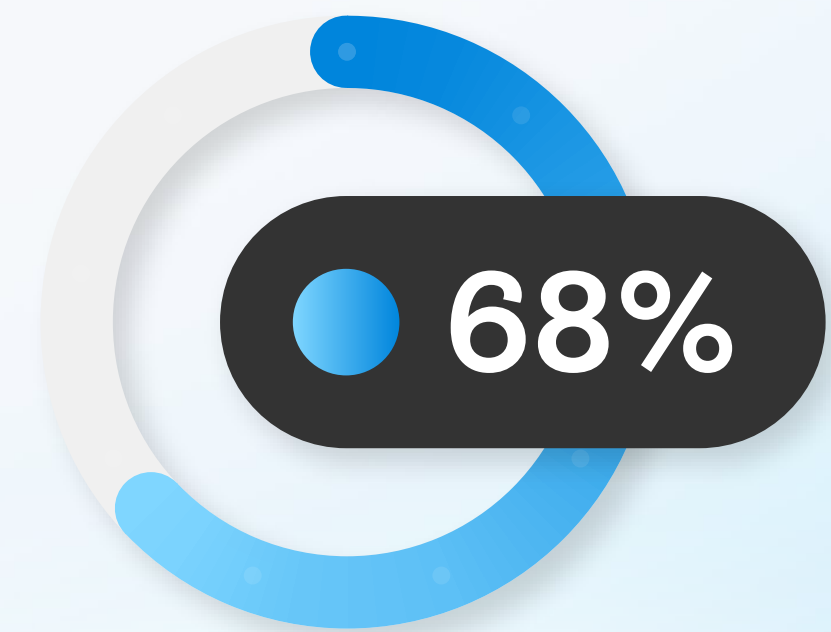
When organizations offer the same old standard training of the past — which actually does little to help workers advance in their careers — they run the risk of losing valuable employees.

Now is the time to optimize your workforce training and education strategy to ensure it meets the ever-evolving needs of your employees and ultimately, drives greater retention.

This guide will show you how.



of employees say they will stay longer if a company invests in their career development



of employees said opportunities for growth and development are more important than salary

Source: [LinkedIn](#)

Pitfalls of outdated approaches to L&D


Leveraging L&D as a means of retaining talent isn't a new concept and might be enticing at first glance. However, traditional methods of delivering learning and education to employees tend to fall short and thus, have failed to make a meaningful impact on talent retention.

In many cases, L&D programs merely exist as a repository of “one-and-done” training courses that offer no support for employees when it comes to understanding what continuous learning is relevant for long-term career advancement. These programs are often buried deep within a benefits booklet and frequently go underutilized as a result.

All of this combined undermines the effectiveness of L&D as a key driver of employee engagement and retention.

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Many standard employee education programs utilize a [tuition reimbursement model](#) that requires employees to pay upfront and wait for reimbursement. This approach favors employees with greater financial means, perpetuating socioeconomic disparities in education and career advancement opportunities.



40%
of employees who
receive poor training
leave their jobs within the
first year

Source: [SHRM](#)

Out with the old. In with the new.

The term “modern” is often associated with relevance, innovation, flexibility, efficiency and scalability. This holds true for workforce education. By embracing these principals, a modern workforce education program enables companies to empower their employees and retain their top talent in today’s rapidly-changing workplace environment.

Here are three key attributes of a modern approach to workforce education.



Engages employees by demonstrating a commitment to their growth and development

Employees with high engagement levels at work can yield numerous benefits, with improved retention topping that list. According to a recent survey, [80% of employees](#) shared that better access to learning and education opportunities would help them to feel more engaged on the job.

When people feel supported by their employer and are actively equipped with the resources needed to learn and advance, they are more engaged, have better morale, and will ultimately stay with the company longer.

This is where workforce education comes in, as it provides people with opportunities to enhance their skills and up-level their careers, driving stronger engagement. Keeping employees engaged leads to improved talent retention rates while also strengthening your internal talent pipeline for future openings.

Tip:

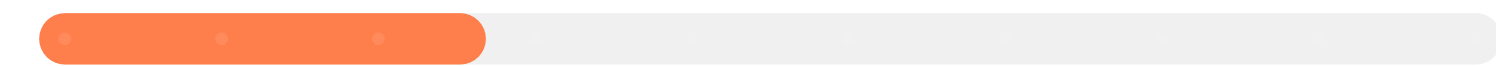
Extend education opportunities to dependents

Not everyone wants to go back to school. For employees who don't wish to advance their own education, the opportunity to have a family member's tuition covered may compel them to remain with the organization for longer.

CASE STUDY

One InStride partner in the life sciences industry is helping its **diverse frontline workforce advance to more senior roles** through its strategic workforce education program — made available to over 50,000 of its employees. Not only does this show a **commitment to the growth and development** of its people, but the program is instrumental in building this organization's internal talent pipeline for its most critical roles.

39% drop in companywide attrition rates since February 2021



80% of participants agree that the program has increased their desire to grow at the company



Removes barriers to learning and impacts a wider audience

Offering workforce education opportunities that employees want is just the first step. Giving employees what they want and making it easier for them to participate is what moves the needle when it comes to retention.

A modern approach to workforce education removes financial, resource, language and other barriers to learning, so that more employees can participate. For instance, providing [on-demand learner support](#) that simplifies the process of finding information about courses and degree programs so that prospective learners can find the learning options that best fit their career goals. Another example is a program with flexible on-ramps that accommodate previous learning experience, helping learners start at the level that best suits them.

Employees want to learn, but they often find that education benefits are difficult to access. If people can't take advantage of these opportunities, they aren't impacting retention (or your other business objectives).

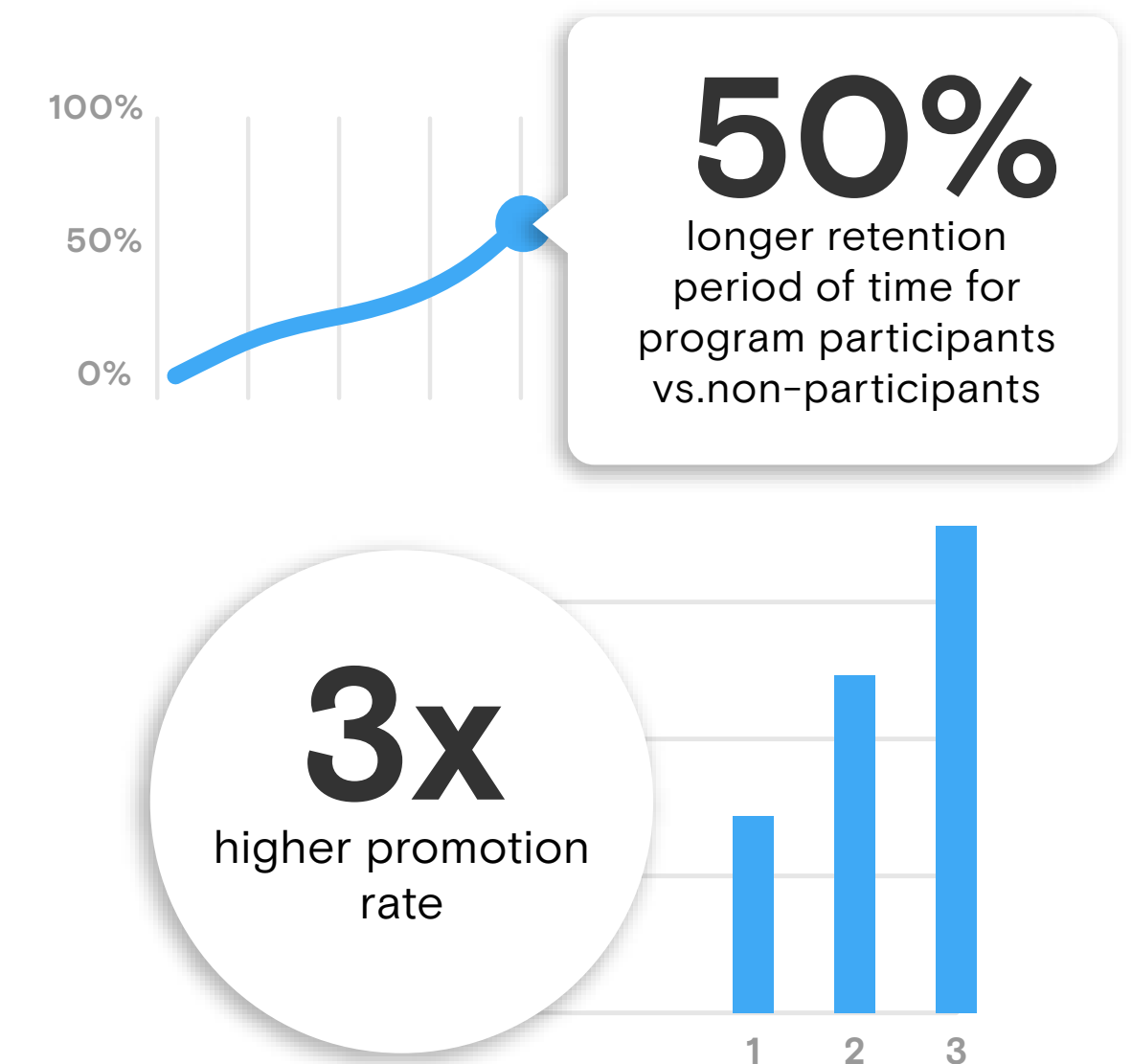
Tip:

Implement a direct-bill model

A direct-bill model allows employees to enroll in an education program with no upfront cost. The tuition is billed directly to the business, lifting the financial burden off of the learner. This ensures a wider population of workers can take advantage of this life-changing benefit. With this model, employees can focus on excelling along their academic journey, instead of worrying about how to pay for tuition.

CASE STUDY

A leader in the retail industry (that's also a go-to favorite for coffee lovers) launched its workforce education program with the mission of creating meaningful opportunities for its frontline workforce. The program allows employees to obtain a bachelor's degree, 100% tuition-free and has led to participants staying at the company for a 50% longer period of time than non-participants.



Connects learning to tangible career outcomes

One of the top reasons employees often leave an organization is because they don't see a clear next step in their career. A hallmark of a modern workforce education program is that it clearly aligns learning options to career paths. This way, employees gain a clear understanding of their options for upward mobility within the organization and what learning is required to get them to the next step.

When you clearly show that learning could lead to career outcomes within the company, there's a ripple effect. People are more likely to 1) take advantage of those learning opportunities and 2) stay with your company for longer because they see a future for themselves there.

Education is a powerful, proven way to enable career advancement. Employees stay with companies when they know the organization is committed to their professional development and provides education opportunities that lead to clear paths for advancement.

Tip:

Create learning paths that are clearly tied to career outcomes

When learning paths are tailored to business goals, employees are able to work towards a meaningful credential or degree, while also applying what they learn immediately to their job. Learning paths can be designed for a variety of roles, incorporating a mix of learning types – including degree programs, certifications and short courses – to meet employees where they are in their learning journey.

CASE STUDY

An InStride partner in the pet services industry needed to address the veterinary **staffing shortage** while engaging its workforce and continuing to provide top-notch service to its customers.

The solution: an expertly-curated workforce education program featuring STEM options. The results **demonstrated immediate ROI** and reduced attrition by 10x for program participants. In 2022, this partner expanded the program enterprise-wide, making it available to their 10,000 associates.

10x reduced attrition for program participants

17% increased retention rate for program participants vs. non-participating employees

Workforce education: A key strategy for retaining top talent

Today's top talent expects companies to provide professional development. By offering high-quality learning and education opportunities, your most valuable employees are more likely to remain committed to your organization and drive even greater success.

A modern workforce education strategy can empower you to boost employee retention, foster career growth and thrive amidst today's constantly evolving landscape.

**Ready to upgrade your approach
to employee education?**

Talk to an expert >

