

Dr. Judit Szilágyi – Tamás Schieszler:

## Necessary paradigm shifts in learning and development

*(interview summary)*

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Organizations today constantly face new challenges generated by the turbulent market environment. One of the keys to success here is sensing changes in the environment and developing the right response in time. Organizational learning has a key role to play in this process, ideally driven by the L&D department. In our experience, however, the transformation and the change of attitude are slow and bumpy...

### Why is L&D reform a current issue?

Judit:

- In theory, lifelong learning has been a top priority for decades.
- Due to the accelerating change in the market environment, it is becoming increasingly urgent to change the training culture in all organizations.
- The unpredictability of the environment, the need for rapid adaptation to change, the rapid development of technology, labor shortage, the changed demands of Millennials, or even digital transformation all make structural changes in company-driven development inevitable.

Tamás:

- Several clients of ours, for example, entertain the thought or already are in the middle of an agile transformation. An agile culture cannot exist without a learning culture.

### Who is the key to transforming learning and development within an organization?

Tamás:

- Definitely not HR. This is one of the biggest and most difficult paradigm shifts.
- Developing a learning culture is actually an organizational change through culture development.
- HR can be the driver of the process, but they cannot take responsibility. The catalysts for a learning culture are the leaders, be it middle or top management.
- For a leader, it is worth thinking and acting in two dimensions.
  - One dimension is directly about the business: create a strategy and deliver results.
  - The other dimension is to put the focus on the people: to facilitate their self-development and help them realize as much as possible from their hidden potential.
  - The more the second dimension gets the spotlight, the easier it will be to get results in the first dimension.
- The true meaning of leadership is developing people. The learning culture that can be developed in organizations brings this aspect of leadership to the surface.

Judit:

- Developing a culture is a slow process and can be approached from many angles. It is important for leaders to see their own responsibilities and circles of influence.

## Why does training culture seem so difficult to change?

Judit:

- Because basically, the training culture is not bad either. Just not efficient!
- For example, hardly anybody calculates ROI for trainings. They just want to see if participants liked the training and what is on the evaluation sheet. Almost every company would change their L&D systems in a hurry if they were to actually do the ROI calculation.
- There are already some subtle changes in the training culture. Many companies, for example, tried online trainings, we live in the golden age of coaching, and classic trainings are more and more out of fashion in some places.
- The question is whether we bring these changes to the cultural level and build a system, or just subscribe to a popular online learning platform and lean back.

Tamás:

- The principle of separation of professions still exists in organizations. For example, finance deals with finance, logistics deal with shipping, and if a team member is not good at something, then they should be developed by HR. In this way, leaders do not feel that developing their people is their duty.

## Do I feel a sense of personal commitment to the topic? Where does this deep motivation come from?

Tamás:

- I am convinced that the true meaning of leadership is to give people opportunities to get better and support them in developing their skills. The true meaning of our work as consultants is to support leaders in this capacity to find this kind of meaning - to help people realize their full potential - and to implement it in the organizations that they have an impact on.
- I believe that in the world we are creating, those organizations that put the long-term focus on developing their people will achieve strategic success. And this is based on a learning culture approach.

Judit:

- As a consultant, it's a lot more work to develop a learning culture, design real-life development processes with clients, or creating an L&D system that fits their strategic goals.
- I look for challenges where we can have a real impact. It is a fantastic feeling to make a group of training participants happy and have a good time, but it is entirely different to positively influence their daily work, careers and lives.



### About the authors

#### Dr. Judit Szilágyi

senior leadership development consultant, executive & business coach partner and owner at [FranklinCovey](#), [ComeandGrow](#)

#### Tamás Schieszler

senior organizational and process development consultant, business coach partner and owner at [Rainforest](#), [ComeandGrow](#)