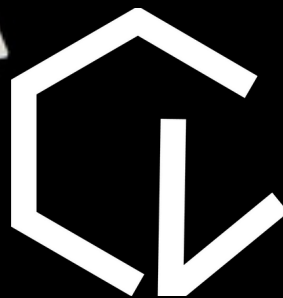
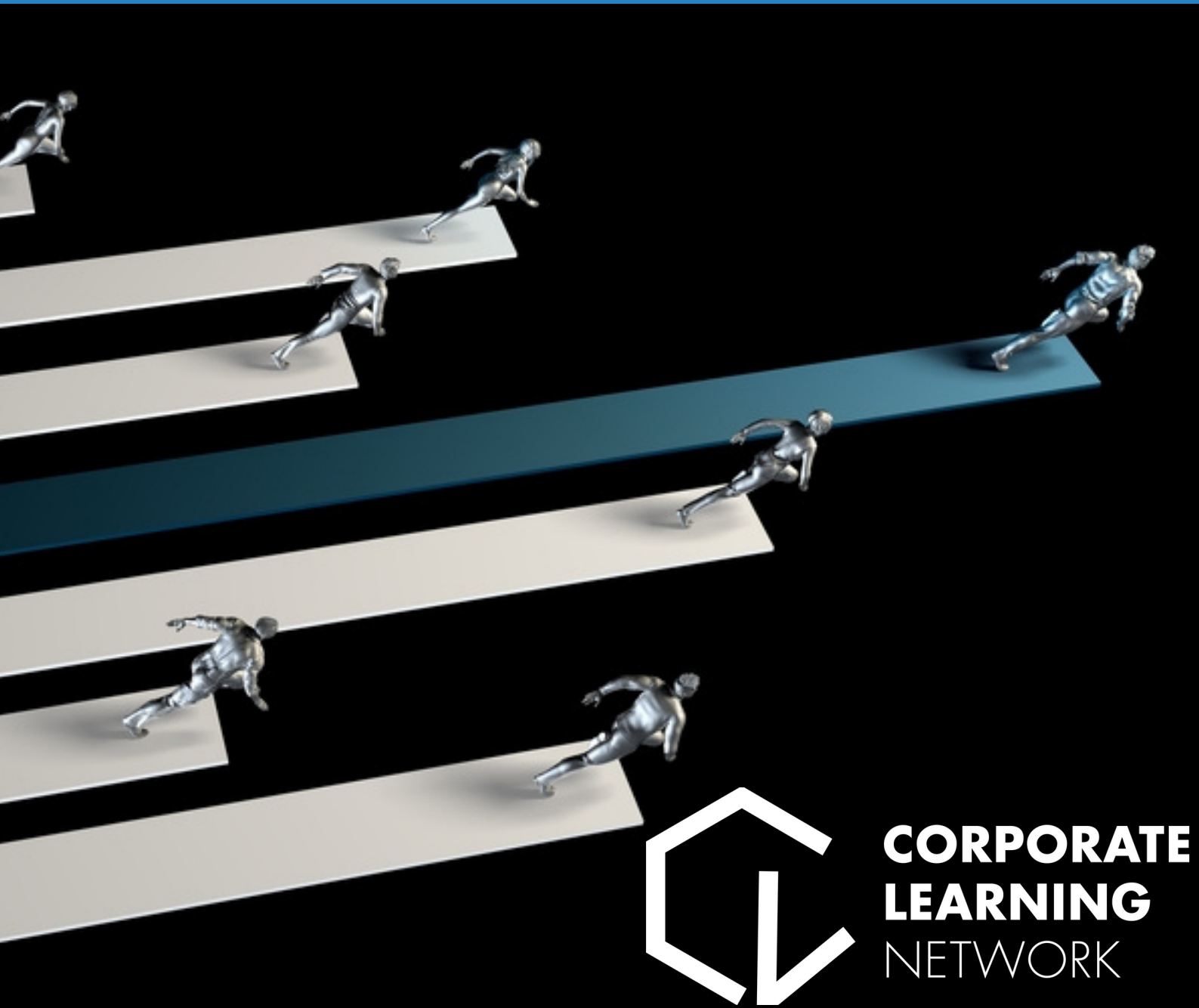


HOW TO FRAME LEARNING AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



**CORPORATE
LEARNING**
NETWORK

AN EXCLUSIVE SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT WITH:

Kason Morris

Head of Learning Experience Design
Salesforce

INTRODUCTION

Building skills and capabilities have become key components to crafting a workforce plan that is aligned to organizational transformation and value. But what does a skills-based organization and architecture look like? What steps can L&D leaders take to make the shift to a skills-based learning approach and how can they then align that with career paths that also have a return on investment for the business?

Kason Morris, Head of Learning Experience Design at Salesforce, and boardroom speaker and panelist at the August CLO Exchange in Chicago, gave us a sneak peek into L&D's pivotal role that leads to talent retention.



Q: WHAT LED YOU TO YOUR INSIGHTS/ BEST PRACTICES ABOUT THIS TOPIC?

In my last three roles, I've built L&D departmental functions for two high-growth startups – creating resources, processes, learning tracks, and technology – trying to help frame learning as a competitive advantage at work. It's a big mindset shift as learning is usually seen as just an event, for compliance or for high potentials. But it's really a tool we can leverage for engagement and competitive differentiation.



Because of COVID, L&D has had to react differently and now we're getting more of a seat at the table. Teams want to innovate, be agile/lean, and they need to look through a learning design/employee enablement lens to see interconnected parts (partnerships with HR, employee services and other lines of business) and use talent mobility and reskilling to help the company achieve its goals while retaining talent.

In my now 10 months at Salesforce, I've been building the idea of capability academies and how to operationalize them - framing capabilities (not just skills, but knowledge and capacity). The learning comes down to three buckets: 1. Personal, intangible human skills, 2. Understanding organizational capability (the business unit/organizational structure to thrive) and 3. Professional capabilities (understanding the industry and your role).

Value propositions are easier now as there's enough research to show that these uniquely human, interconnected areas are powerful for wellbeing/productivity/psychological safety and ultimately create a more productive, sustainable future.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST/MOST COMMON CHALLENGES YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED WHEN BUILDING A SKILLS-BASED ORGANIZATION?

Role clarity and job architecture, and what should be in the role in order to execute business outcomes. Only once you have that can you get more focused on skills/competencies, and then anchor the right programs/tools in an employee centric way.

There are a lot of smart people doing great work, but when it's time to scale, companies deal with a lot of burnout/attrition. People leave which leaves a large hole in companies that's very hard to replace. We need to grab the tacit knowledge from key players in the organization to keep the wheels running and then disseminate it in a meaningful way. Incentivizing subject matter experts to share knowledge as part of their own growth helps cement them in the business.

Even for those companies that are mature, change management is a component that gets left behind as an oversight. You can have the best processes/strategies, but they won't be as impactful. People need to be supported at every level of the employee life cycle so that they leave as fans/beacons for your organization. "The Great Reprioritization" has shifted the narrative at a macro scale with people now working to live instead of living to work.



Q: WHAT'S THE MAIN THING YOU HOPE ATTENDEES WILL WALK AWAY WITH FROM YOUR SESSION?

Talent is truly the lifeblood of organizational productivity and sustainability. By focusing on talent and culture and creating a system where people are empowered to learn and collaborate – that's going to drive innovation/give insights where the organization is going. It's indispensable.

Starting with a people-first culture narrative has exponential benefits in every other area of the business. By looking at not just the role but the human experience will help the business thrive. Also speaking the language of the business and interpreting the value of learning and enablement that solves pain points helps with funding and sustainability when correlated to quarterly business results.

I think of it as a Yin and Yang system. Organizations have a responsibility to empower people and people have a responsibility to take agency in owning their own career development/skills growth – they're not mutually exclusive.

Pre-COVID, we lived in a world where companies could hire talent/skill needed to perform. That is inaccurate. The only constant now is change for all. This is why I emphasize the idea of human capacity, and how technology and business influences that, but it's centered around individuals.

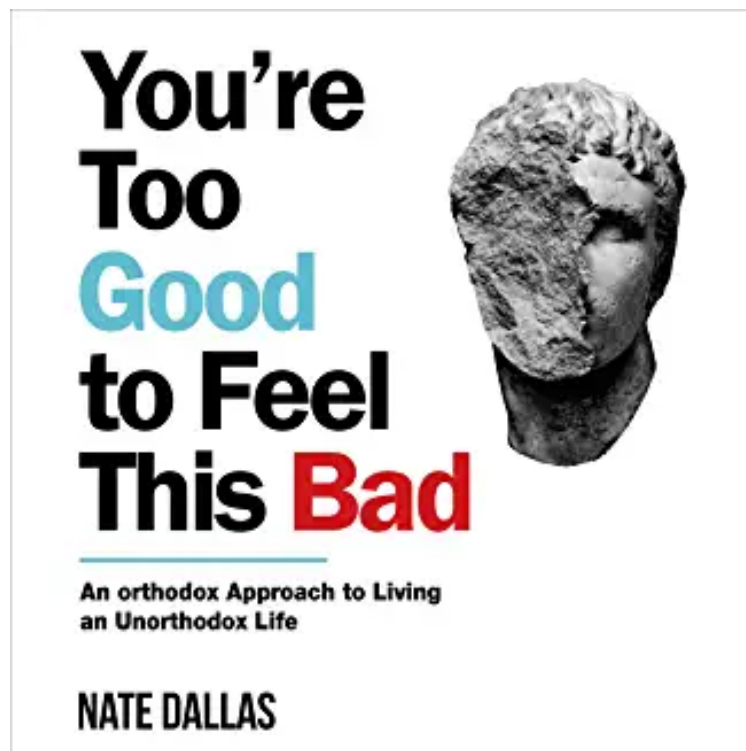


ON TO SOME FUN QUESTIONS

My Personal & Professional Bookshelf

I try to read one to two monthly books and enjoy human development elements like positive psychology, neuroscience, and design thinking, and then applying those ideas to work and life. I use the latest behavioral sciences, positive psychology, equity, inclusion and design thinking research to create practical personal and professional growth approaches that get teams transformative results.

One of my favorite books is *You're Too Good to Feel This Bad* – it's very holistic about an entrepreneur's journey. He was a top performer but wondered why he wasn't well physically, so he had to approach his lifestyle differently.



Leaders I'm Following

CLN Advisory Board member Christopher Lind, Andrew Barry (in terms of learning culture and operationalizing it quickly) and Josh Bersin.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Join Kason's boardroom and panel discussions at the CLO Exchange, August 14-16 in Chicago, Ill., or the Global CLO Exchange November 09 - 11 in Miami, FL.