



Creating a Learning Mindset and Culture Across a Global Organization

Exclusive Interview With:

Abd Basheer

Manager of Learning Programs
Carnival Cruise Line

INTRODUCTION

One of the most pertinent challenges many L&D leaders face today is cultivating a culture of learning across a global organization. It can be difficult to account for many different cultures, titles and job functions when creating learning initiatives. Learn how Abd Basheer, Manager of Learning Programs at Carnival Cruise Line and speaker at CLO November '22, develops exciting learning opportunities for over 40,000 global employees from 100+ nationalities.



ABD BASHEER
MANAGER OF LEARNING PROGRAMS
CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE

Q: What is your background and expertise, and what are you working on now?

I've been in the learning & development space now for 14-15 years. I started my career as a corporate trainer, and then I transitioned into academia, where I did my PhD, and I was teaching some classes at Washington State University and doing research. From there, I moved to work for Microsoft as a Product Manager in the worldwide learning department. I then moved to the Talent & Learning Experience (TLX) team as a Senior Learning Manager. Finally, now I am at Carnival Cruise Line as their L&D Programs Manager.

I focus on curating learning experiences for shoreside and shipboard employees and over 40,000 employees worldwide. We are the largest cruise company in the world, and as you would expect, a ship cannot run itself. We curate learning experiences for people for hotel operations, marine operations, academic programs and everything in between. It's all about building a dynamic learning culture that empowers a call to action that improves the quality of life.

We leverage multiple data channels and work backward from the employee's needs and/or performance gaps to identify root cause/s and respond appropriately.





Q: What is something exciting that you're working on right now? And something challenging? They can be the same thing.

With an operation like ours and with a company that moves at the speed of light. Everything we do is fluid and constantly evolving. All we can really do is look after our most valued asset, which is our people. One of the most challenging but fun projects was developing a learning program for 1,200 team members returning to operation for the first time in nearly three years in Australia.

Carnival Cruise Line recently acquired one of our sister brands, Carnival Luminosa. Carnival Luminosa will sail from Brisbane seasonally from October to April, then to Alaska from May to September before returning to Brisbane. My team has never faced a challenge like this before. I collaborated across the company with Business Area Leads and HR Leadership to translate business strategies into a robust learning program that meets the needs of our team members as well as business needs.

My team is extremely adaptable. We conducted external research, leveraged internal resources and collaborated with Australia's Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Health to integrate an optimal blend of cultural, health environmental and safety protocols across all departments. It's essentially an onboarding program for the 1,200 employees aboard the ship that will sail to Australia. It's exciting for the company and for us because it's fun and challenging.

At the 15th Annual Seatrade Cruise Awards, Carnival Cruise Line was awarded the "Investment in People Award" for our efforts in DEI, Learning and Community initiatives. This category represents a company or organization who made a significant contribution to recruitment, training, diversity & inclusion initiatives for the industry's most valued asset, its people.

Q: How do you implement learning across many different cultures and many different positions at the same time?

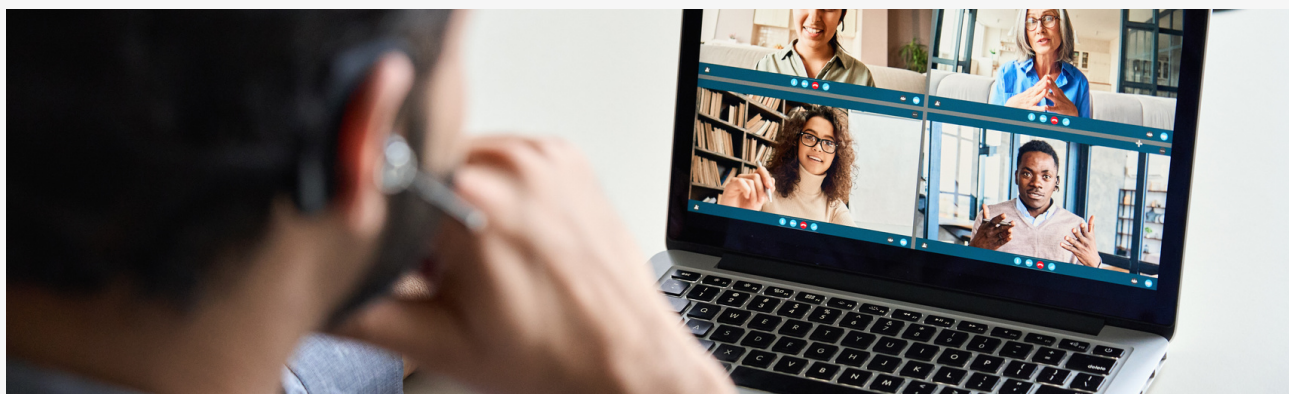
I have been with Carnival Cruise Line for a year now. Now, and right when I joined, the company has/had been in what is referred to as return to operation. Across the travel industry a lot of operations were on hold.

In March 2020, Carnival, the largest cruise line in the world, suspended operations across the globe. When we were returning to operations, we had a mix of team members who were familiar with our industry and team members who were new. We needed to bring those groups together to upskill them really fast.

We've had to rely on evidence-based research to set our team members up for success and meet the requirements of the countries in which we operate. Carnival truly believes in the growth mindset, which is why many of our corporate employees began their careers on the ships. The emphasis is on the importance of progress and that learning and development as a culture is a journey, not a destination.

There's a journey of continuous learning. And that's because Carnival invests in all of its employees.

The focus is on diversity, equity and inclusion. It's not just words. It's there every day in practice, and everything we do has to go through these review cycles to make sure that we're addressing all the needs of all these team members.



Q: How do you foster a culture of learning?

We are a resilient team. Our culture carried us through the sometimes fearful challenges of this recent pandemic and the necessary pause period during the recent pandemic. It is our company culture that allows us to learn and be curious, be accountable and learn from our mistakes.

We developed a program that establishes structured career advancement processes for Team Members. This program is based on the knowledge, skills and behaviors of team members to create a transparent, fair and efficient advancement path for team members. The members of the team will advance their careers by completing a list of predetermined Competency Tasks.

Q: How is L&D Evolving Right now?

In the future, any successful L&D organization, corporate executive or leader must prioritize and emphasize learning experience and growth culture, according to my predictions.



Learning and development leaders are aware that organizations with a growth mindset culture outperform their peers in innovation, revenue, profitability and market share. Insights from technology and data will play an important role in our industry. They will change the landscape of learning and the way we conduct business. Today, we must delve deeper and employ data to fully comprehend the learner's experience. Therefore, I view it as technology, learning experience and data insights. These three factors. You need to be able to use user experience data to comprehend and predict your organization's needs. Consequently, these three elements will transform you from reactive to proactive and determine a team's success. This requires a substantial investment from organizations, executive leadership and team members. It must have cohesion. But company strategy executives must support this.



Q: If there's one thing that you want people to get out of your panel at the event, what is it?

Empowering a growth mindset culture requires both an ideological and a pragmatic shift. A growth mindset culture can only develop in an environment where learning is highly valued. It is an ongoing shift in the company's values. A previously hierarchical and rigid culture is now striving to become a haven for learning and growth.



A man with a beard is shown in profile, sitting at a desk in an office. He is looking out a large window at a city skyline. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing white text.

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