

Caring for People and Pets

How learning pivoted in a pandemic

A Nestlé Purina success story



When visiting Nestlé Purina's headquarters, do not be surprised to see dogs walking through the lobby and at the feet of employees in their offices! One of the great perks of working at a pet nutrition company is that employees can bring their dogs to work. Dog shows are not uncommon entertainment, and breaks to play with your dog are expected.

Ask a Nestlé Purina associate what other perks they enjoy, and you are likely to hear about the wide range of opportunities available to them for continued learning. Tiffany Alexander, Manager – Organization Development, summarizes Nestlé Purina's learning culture and philosophy this way: "We are a place where all associates have the opportunity to pursue career development and growth at their own pace. We are never finished learning, and we strive to give a wide variety of tools and resources to help associates on their development journey."

The impact of Covid-19 forced Nestlé Purina's Talent and Development group to quickly re-think its strategy for developing employees. How could they continue to deliver quality development opportunities with employees working remotely? Through hard work, great communication, and strong partnerships with key vendors, Nestlé Purina wasted no time pivoting to a

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Tiffany Alexander
Manager of
Organization Development
Nestlé Purina

focus on virtual-live delivery. Fast forward eight months, and all agree that learning delivery will never go back to the way it was!

Pre-COVID, most development opportunities at Nestlé Purina were in-person and instructor-led. Vendors traditionally visited the corporate campus to deliver the programs. Leaders from Nestlé Purina also attended off-campus leadership development programs with The Institute for Management Studies (IMS).

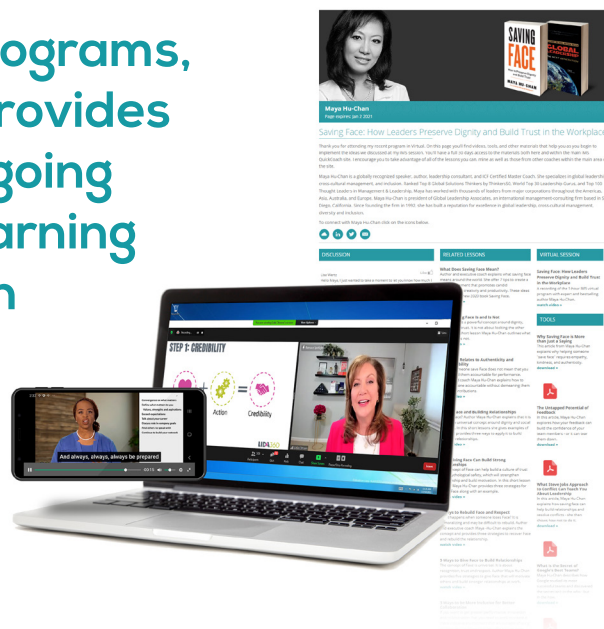
In addition to world-class programs, the IMS Learning Journey provides learners with 30 days of ongoing support with 2,700 microlearning lessons, articles, a discussion board and a follow-up coaching session.

With the onset of COVID restrictions, Nestlé Purina made it a priority to still offer quality learning opportunities. Falencia Moore in Purina's Organization Development group expressed that "we didn't want people to feel that, due to being confined to their homes, they couldn't take advantage of developing themselves."

Fortunately, several of Nestlé Purina's vendors quickly switched to offering their content online. IMS began offering two virtual-live leadership development events each week starting in early April. Falencia described the shift IMS made to virtual-live online development

opportunities as seamless. She shared that "Feedback from associates at Nestlé Purina is that they are more engaged when participating in an instructor-led virtual-live event than they are in trying to watch a pre-recorded video. The enrollment numbers confirm that virtual-live is the preferred learning method for our associates."

Communicating the shift to virtual-live learning delivery was another challenge. In addition to traditional email newsletters, Falencia found that their internal social



media tool, Workplace, was a highly effective channel for sharing rapidly changing information on development opportunities. Posts about virtual classes from IMS and other vendors were received with great enthusiasm. Falencia enjoyed seeing employees tagging each other in Workspace groups with comments like, "I recommend taking this class," and "This is the class I was talking about," and using hashtags like "#developmyself". This positive "buzz" confirmed that Nestlé Purina's learning culture was alive and well despite employees working remotely. Falencia made it a priority to update Nestlé Purina's iLearn Learning Management System with the full schedule of

virtual-live offerings from IMS and other vendors. This made it easy for employees to register for events in iLearn, which would also document a record of their attendance.

Enrollment quickly doubled in the IMS virtual-live events. This significant increase in demand came as a surprise to the Nestlé Purina team, and it was a clear sign that leaders still wanted to continue learning, even during a pandemic. Fortunately, IMS and other vendors were



98% of attendees say that IMS programs are application focused, had a positive impact, and that they would recommend them to others.

able to add more programs and schedule new classes to address emerging development needs. IMS added programs to address topics like resilience, leading virtually, and diversity and inclusion based on feedback from Tiffany Alexander and other members on the IMS Advisory Board.

Tiffany commented that “IMS has proven to be a great asset to our overall curriculum. They provide high-quality learning and access to top thought leaders across a broad range of development topics. It has been great serving on the IMS Advisory Board. Our role includes working collaboratively to develop a schedule that addresses the constantly evolving development needs of our leaders.” One exciting benefit of the shift to virtual delivery of development offerings has been that geography is no

longer a barrier to learning. Nestlé Purina has been able to open IMS classes to all employees, including employees at plant and warehouse locations throughout the country.

Nestlé has received positive feedback from its leaders about the quality of the IMS virtual-live programs, which includes the ability to interact directly with the IMS educator, and other leaders attending the program in breakout room discussions. After the program, IMS provides Nestlé Purina leaders with additional learning resources and a virtual ‘capstone’ session three weeks later that allows attendees to ask additional questions of the IMS educators. These options for engagement beyond the classroom evolved when IMS shifted their programs online.

Nestlé Purina’s plan moving forward is to continue utilizing virtual-live learning programs such as those offered by IMS. When COVID restrictions are lifted, the company envisions moving toward hybrid programming where some programs are in-person and others are delivered virtually online, providing learners the best of both worlds.

During the pandemic Nestlé Purina’s learning culture remained intact, and its commitment to employee development and career growth within the company never wavered. They are also committed to continuing their partnership with IMS, a partnership that integrates well into their learning culture.

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