How to Build an Engaged Community of Learners at a Global Energy Company

NovoEd

Brandon Hall Group™
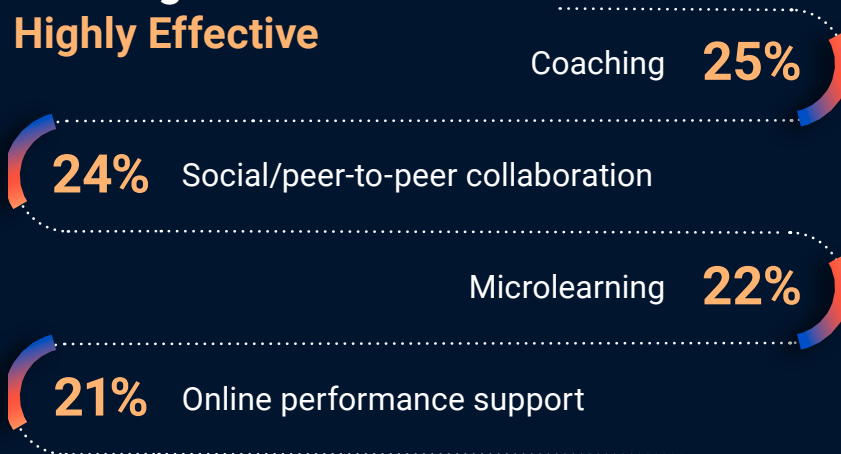
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Introduction

Social and cohort-based learning is one of the most effective learning modalities, according to Brandon Hall Group™ research, and social learning and collaboration platforms are more likely to be purchased or licensed in 2023 than any other learning system.

Learning Modalities Rated Highly Effective

Coaching **25%**

24% Social/peer-to-peer collaboration

Microlearning **22%**

21% Online performance support

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Learning Benchmarking Study 2023

Learning Technologies/Platforms to be Added, Next 12 Months

Source: Brandon Hall Group™
Learning Benchmarking Study 2023

33% Social/learning collaboration platforms

31% Learning content management

27% Courseware authoring tools

As work environments evolve, building communities that promote continuous learning will increase employee engagement and improve employee experience, Brandon Hall Group™ research shows. Social and cohort-based learning solutions enable many forms of collaboration and are must-have tools now. They make it easy to develop many types of learning communities that are in-demand.

73%

of organizations believe **collaboration** is a critical skill for future success

70%

of organizations said building communities that promote **continuous learning virtually** is critical for driving engagement

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, Transforming L&D for the Future of Work

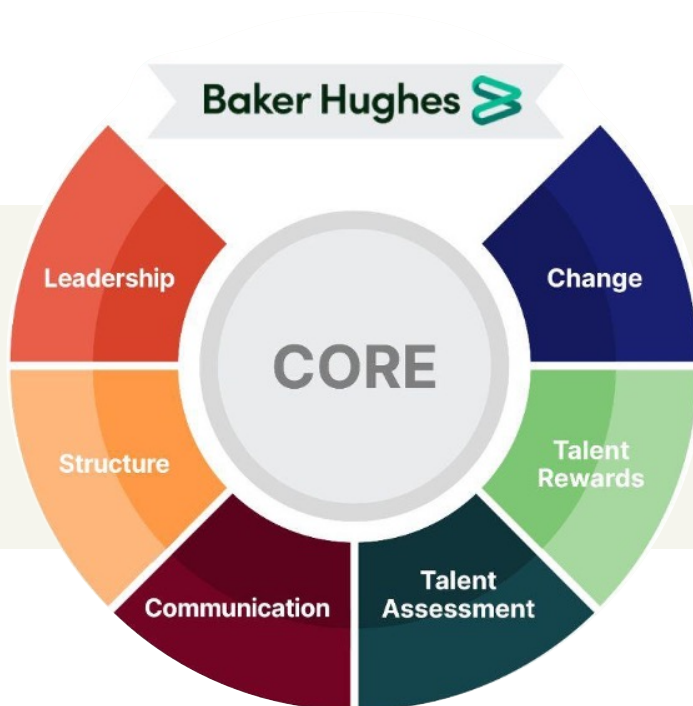Collaboration → Communities For Virtual Continuous Learning → Future Success

A key question is, **"What does that look like in real life?"**

A great example is the social learning community and knowledge-sharing experience developed by Baker Hughes, a leading energy technology company with more than 55,000 employees.
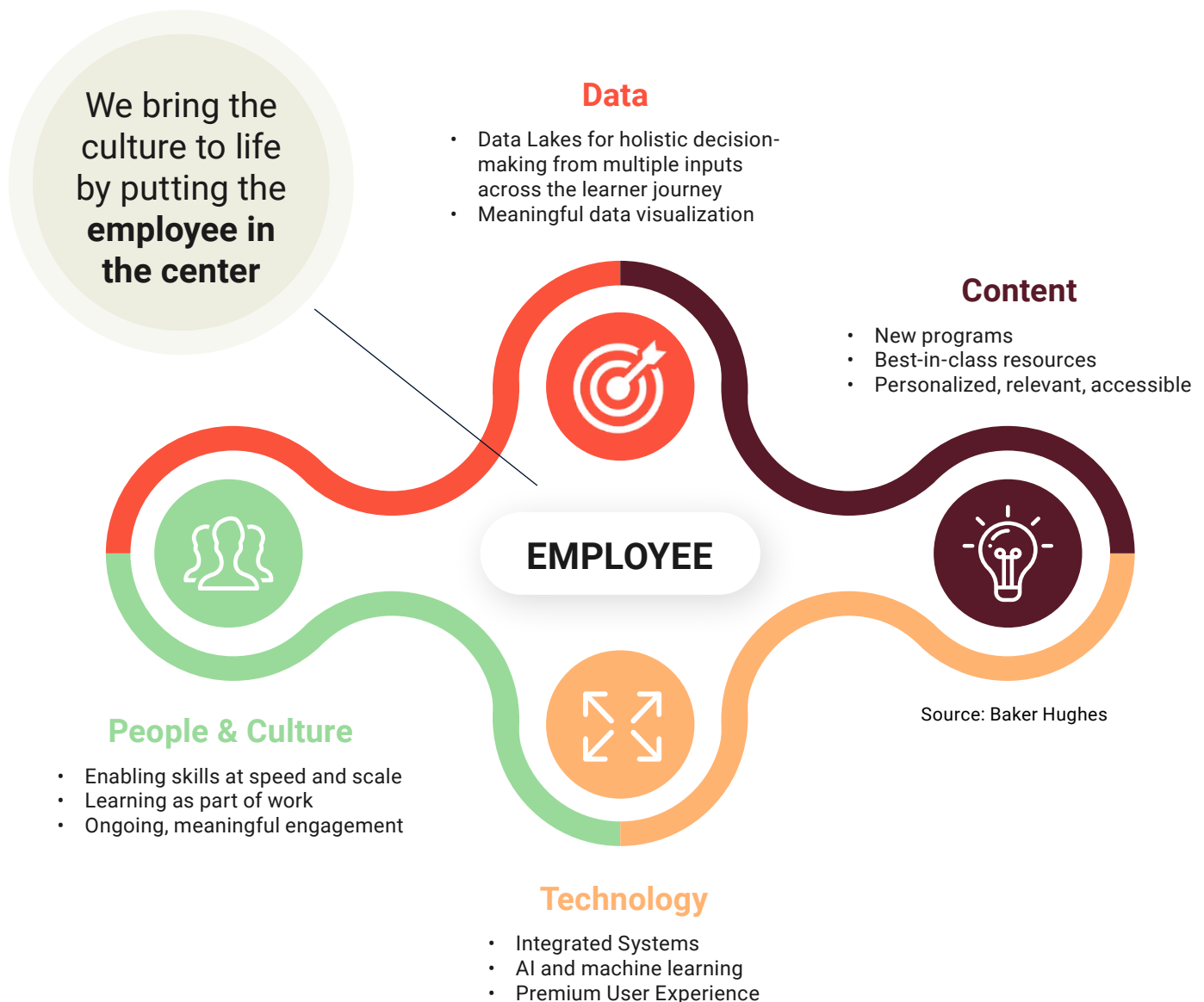

The program is called CORE because it focuses on Baker Hughes' four core values of Lead, Care, Grow and Collaborate.
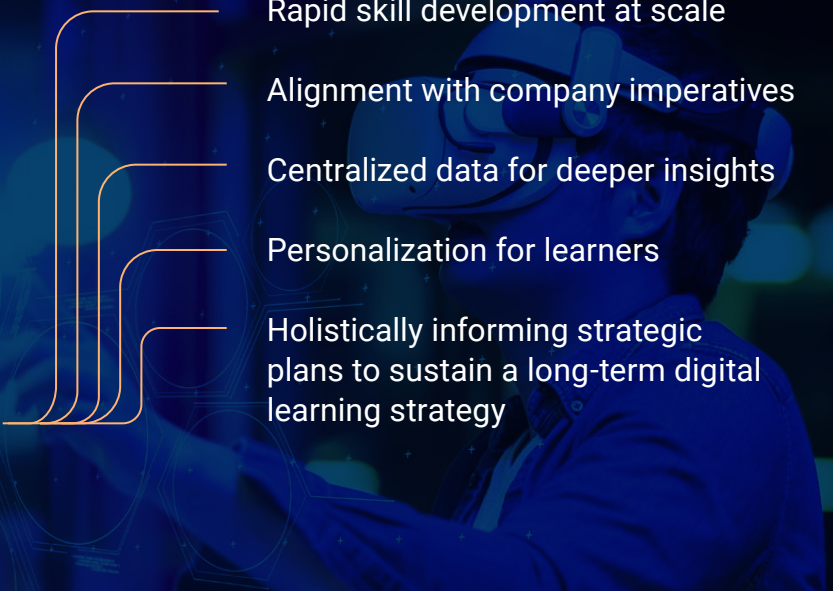
Source: Baker Hughes

The Baker Hughes team started CORE using the learning technology they had, which was not designed for building a learning community. As the program evolved, Baker Hughes realized they needed a collaborative learning platform and decided to partner with NovoEd, a Brandon Hall Group™ Smartchoice® Preferred Provider and a leader in leveraging the power of cohort-based and social learning.

A cross-functional team, led by Sean Conley, Vice President, Enterprise Learning & Executive Leadership Development, built a social and cohort-based community that transcended learning. It became a vital engine to reinforce the company's core values and bring culture to life by putting employees at the center. "Our approach is very simple – keep learning easy and engaging for the learner and impactful for the organization," Conley said. "Having a strong partnership with our DT team and NovoEd, we are moving the needle for our learning communities."

This graphic below illustrates how the program leverages a combination of content, data, technology, people and culture to create a thriving learning community designed to deepen understanding of company values.

We bring the culture to life by putting the **employee in the center**

Data
- Data Lakes for holistic decision-making from multiple inputs across the learner journey
- Meaningful data visualization

Content
- New programs
- Best-in-class resources
- Personalized, relevant, accessible

EMPLOYEE

Source: Baker Hughes

People & Culture
- Enabling skills at speed and scale
- Learning as part of work
- Ongoing, meaningful engagement

Technology
- Integrated Systems
- AI and machine learning
- Premium User Experience

Baker Hughes' original goal was to create immersive learning experiences that could rival the value of the face-to-face experiences that employees were starting to request again as the impact of COVID began to diminish. These experiences would also create a continuous learning thread necessary for:

— Rapid skill development at scale

— Alignment with company imperatives

— Centralized data for deeper insights

— Personalization for learners

— Holistically informing strategic plans to sustain a long-term digital learning strategy

That seemed like a tall order for a learning community that was completely voluntary. But the learning team, operating on a small budget, was innovative and kept building on their initial concept. It earned two Brandon Hall Group Gold Excellence Awards® in 2022.

Because CORE is intended to be a continual experience and available at the point of need for any employee — and because Baker Hughes has four core values — the team decided to characterize the "program" as a community and focus the activities in the community on one value per quarter. Each year the content and activities for each value will refresh so that those who have been members for a while can continue to learn and grow and new members can begin participating at any time.

The Baker Hughes team, led by Chantelle Nash, Director of Digital HR Experience, based its approach around a new performance management metric called Return on Experience (ROX), which brings together "soft" investments in organizational culture with "hard" investments in technology and analytics. ROX is about constantly creating the next practice more than it is about delivering the best practice. Baker Hughes wanted to continuously push the envelope within their organization.

ROE/ROX
(Return on Experience)

**Building ROX metrics reinforces a
virtuous circle and amplifies value**

Pride — **The emotional commitment** to brand purpose and strategy

Influencers — **Internal and external brand ambassadors** and sources of emotional energy

Behaviors — **Those critical positive habits and actions** that define culture, drive excellence, and need to be embedded in performance management

Value Drivers — **The key sources of value** in the eyes of customers and employees

Outcome — **The financial results** produced by a higher ROX

Source: Baker Hughes

With ROX as its foundation, the Baker Hughes team focused on meeting learners where they are. Among the realities the team had to consider in their community design were:

- A larger remote, hybrid and distributed workforce where in-person learning experiences are impossible but support for them is essential

- The need to better develop leadership and collaborative behaviors in an environment where employees were not always empowered to make learning a part of work and technical skills development was prioritized.

- A lack of focus on the company's core values

- There was no central location where employees could find learning content.

- Leadership development programs were not universal; they were often functionally or regionally driven. Many leadership programs were also available only by invitation.

These considerations led to this action plan:

↗

Provide a flexible, adaptable, and scalable approach

A centralized, user-friendly, anytime, anywhere approach supporting bite-sized self-learning where content can be managed, curated, and quickly adapted over time as needed

↗

Facilitate an inclusive learning culture

An opt-in, global, diverse community where we learn together and from each other over time via leader-led experiences and SME sharing

↗

Curate a continuous learning experience

Curate a continuous learning experience with no "end" date, an ongoing part of our daily experience to meet moments of need using a diverse and blended approach of learning through experience, coaching, and practical learning.

With all these variables and needs, it is easy to get bogged down in details and produce something that is difficult to communicate and implement. But the Baker Hughes team was able to distill everything they were trying to accomplish into this simple model:

LEARN

- A curated selection of self-paced fundamental courses, articles, videos and podcasts from quality and varied sources
- Dig deeper and learn more, as time permits, with a great selection of electives available, too

ENGAGE

- Activities designed to synthesize, practice and apply what you have learned
- Including workshops, Open Mic sessions, chat boards and live events
- Also meet your community and support one another while you learn together

DELIVER

- Opportunities to showcase your learnings and teach others
- Organize and/or lead discussions, create videos, podcasts, case studies and articles, for other content to share
- Peer coaching and mentoring opportunities
- Projects to "pay it forward" and share L&D with your own team

Source: Baker Hughes

Engaging and growing a community requires much more than building a plan and producing the content. Nash and her team distinguished themselves with a simple but comprehensive approach to marketing their project across the enterprise. It started with a live launch event and a wide range of targeted campaigns to engage leaders across many functions, as well as Employee Research Groups, HR business partners, learning leaders and regional ambassadors.

They also garnered support from the corporate learning council, developed a strong approach to recognition and badging, authored progress reports about CORE to stakeholders, and shared lessons learned from their development process so people across the company could benefit from their journey. In a word, the team was truly inclusive.

The approach to badging was important. CORE is completely voluntary and there is no particular start or end point. It is a true learning community that many people might not have experienced before.

CORE BADGING APPROACH

LEVEL 1

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 3

ACTIVITY BADGES

Complete the activity requirements for one of the activity categories (Learn, Engage, or Deliver) for a given value.

Some activities are related to knowledge acquisition, while others require practicing specific skills.

Each category has its own requirements, so you can earn 3 badges for each of the 4 values/phases!

VALUE BADGE

Complete the activity requirements across all 3 of the learning categories for a given value. The image above is one example — there will be 4 badges total that can be earned for each value.

TOTAL COMPLETION BADGE

If you earn all 3 activity badges across all 4 phases/values of CORE, you will receive a special completion badge acknowledging this achievement!

Source: Baker Hughes

"We found that having badges and having the ability to share badges in a public forum, such as LinkedIn, could provide a way for participants to showcase something that was important to them," Nash said. "From an employer brand standpoint, we wanted to show that Baker Hughes was investing in growing our employees and providing some structure or pathway to follow."

Another strategy Baker Hughes leveraged, but which many organizations omit or do poorly, is providing resources to support the learning experience. This included:

- A welcome video about the Core Community

- Slides about the importance of strengthening Baker Hughes' CORE values

- CORE Community Resource Guide and FAQs

- Five steps to get started with the CORE Community

- And a recording of the Live Event that kicked off the program. It stressed the importance of employees owning their development

The NovoEd platform provided the power needed to take CORE to the next level. The platform delivered a cohesive, high-impact learning experience at scale that was not possible with the previous technology. NovoEd enabled:

- **Easier enrollment** with a modern user interface and an intuitive mobile app

- **Curated learning paths** for a centralized experience

- **Automatic progress tracking** that eliminated manual reports

- **Automatic badge issuing** for immediate recognition

- **Analytics** for community facilitators

- **And many social and peer-to-peer features** that increase the sense of community

"We're used to technology in everyday life and having apps that work seamlessly," Nash said. "So when we come into organizations and technology is clunky and people are still using LMSs as LXPs, that becomes something that causes friction with some employees and makes it difficult for strong results to occur."

Key Takeaways

With more than 5,000 participants in this voluntary community and a layered and well-developed strategy that continues to evolve, CORE has delivered several measurable and business-focused benefits, including improvements in absenteeism, turnover and engagement.

The social, collaborative and cohort-based learning experience like CORE is the future of learning. This generation of learners doesn't value courses and formal learning as much as experiences that enable them to interact and learn by doing. Keys to success include:

Build your program from the ground up with the employee in the center.

Link your cohort-based learning initiatives to important business objectives. Part of the magic of CORE is that it united a community of learners around culture and the values that are critical to Baker Hughes' vision, mission and approach to doing business.

While a learning strategy is important for success, having the right technology is critical, especially in the evolving remote and hybrid work environment.

"Culture is driven by behavior, behavior is driven by emotion and emotion is created by experiences," Nash advises in a webinar about the CORE project. "Think of your favorite brands and the experiences they create that make you a loyal customer. That is the path you need to follow in your organization."

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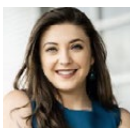
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About NovoEd

Founded at Stanford's Social Algorithms Lab in 2012, NovoEd is a capability-building platform that uses social and collaborative learning to drive alignment, performance, and mobility at scale. Through cohort-based experiences, NovoEd taps into collective wisdom, placing each learner at the center of perspective, application, and expertise. Large enterprises such as 3M, GE, and Nestlé partner with NovoEd to accelerate their critical initiatives and reconnect teams through learning that is felt, experienced, and swiftly transformed into impact.

To learn more, please visit: **www.novoed.com**

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