

How Telenor Group Built a Culture of Learning on 40 Hours a Year



Location: Oslo, Norway

No. of Employees: +20,000

Markets: Scandinavia & Asia

Industry: Telecom

No. of Customers: +173M

Mission: Connecting you to what matters most. Empowering societies.

Challenge

- Embed online learning as a habit across the business
- Support the digital transformation process
- Support Telenor Group's 40-hour learning challenge for its employees

Solution

- LinkedIn Learning content provided the short-format accessibility to plan learning in hours, rather than weeks
- Mobile-optimised, video-enabled learning on the move
- Learning paths built on the learning habit by starting with shorter, accessible courses and then allowing colleagues to explore further
- Telenor invested in LinkedIn learning licenses for every one of its more than 20,000 employees

Results

- Telenor doubled its target for the average amount of online learning per employee
- On average, every Telenor employee now spends over 40 hours a year on online learning
- Activation of LinkedIn Learning content is close to 100% across Asian markets

When the global mobile operator Telenor Group embarked on the digital transformation of its business, it knew that its approach to learning and development had to transform as well.

The company's existing training courses were focused on leadership or compliance requirements, designed for specific people in specific roles. With new technologies rolling out and transforming every area of the business, Telenor Group needed a new approach.

"With our company changing, we have an obligation to give everyone the opportunity to stay relevant," says Joakim Slørstad, Senior VP for Learning and Development, whose unit supports this effort across Telenor Group's key markets in Scandinavia and Asia. "We wanted to engage everyone in the organisation. We were ready to invest in giving everyone the tools that they needed, but we were also aware that adoption of those tools won't come by itself."

Anna Edding Heijde, the Manager of Channels Business Development, is also leading the development of automated customer support for Telenor. She can see the value that freeing learning from siloes brings to such digital transformation projects. "We can no longer separate IT from the rest of the business," she says.

"We need to be an integrated department working collaboratively with data scientists, and it's therefore really important to embed understanding of those concepts in my team".

The 40-hour challenge

Telenor Group's President & CEO, Sigve Brekke is a passionate believer in both the need for digital transformation, and the vital enabling role of a learning culture. That aligned with the view of unions looking to safeguard their members' future roles – and an HR team planning to deliver the skills the business needed. Brekke had a clear vision for how that culture could be created at Telenor: a "40-hour Challenge" designed to embed learning as a habit for all.

"Our CEO challenged all employees to spend a minimum of 40 hours a year on self-directed learning," says Joakim. "This was a gift, but also a challenge. We were giving people the tools and the time. They had the responsibility to use them wisely."

"It's really interesting to see how LinkedIn Learning is changing the dialogue about digital transformation between my team and specialist colleagues working in IT. It's enabling us to work far more collaboratively."

Anna Edding Heijde

Manager of Channels Business Development



Encouraging employees to think in terms of learning hours, rather than days and weeks, had a key role to play in helping them meet that responsibility. And setting such a challenging goal was key to driving behavioural change. The objective of 40 hours is almost double the average 20 hours that businesses devote to learning, according to Deloitte.

“We wanted to shift to a more bite-sized approach that could make learning accessible to a broader target group and ensure they had a positive experience,” says Joakim. “If they could learn five minutes at a time, they would find it far easier to engage. We wanted to get people into the habit of going online and discovering what they could learn next.”

The content to enable a learning culture

The success of the 40-hour challenge would therefore depend on providing content that nurtured the learning habit. It needed to be accessible in terms of format – but also highly relevant to each employee’s evolving role.

“There were two traits of LinkedIn Learning content that made it ideally suited to our 40-hour challenge,” says Joakim. “First, was the breadth of relevant topics that meant we could expand the learning beyond its traditional focus around leadership. The second was the short video format that really fitted our requirements.”

“For example, we see that colleagues in Asia spend quite a lot of time on public transport or in the back of a car being driven through traffic, and so the opportunity to watch a short video on a phone during those moments is really valuable,” Joakim added.

For Anna’s team, the accessibility of LinkedIn Learning content enabled Telenor Group’s learning management system to function like a skills encyclopedia.

“If you’re working on a project and come across a new concept in IT or data science, you can look it up and get a high-level understanding really quickly,” she says. “LinkedIn Learning helps to widen our working knowledge when we need it.”

A global challenge with local activation

As part of their planning for the digital transformation of the business, Joakim and his team had developed five critical competence areas that would be vital to moving the company forward: design, digital marketing, digital channels, applied analytics and product development. They needed a way to raise awareness of these competency areas, and encourage employees to develop learning paths that would provide them with the skills they needed.

“Our CEO launched the challenge at a global town hall meeting,” says Joakim. “As we are spread across the globe, we knew we needed to localise the challenge and develop a plan for each business unit. These often start with learning days, when local leaders talk about the importance of staying relevant on the most important topics. They’re also able to talk about the learning they are doing themselves and we’ve found this type of role modelling to be really important.”

Measuring engagement on the learning management system enables Joakim to identify the techniques that are most effective at driving take-up of learning.

“We can track differences from business unit to business unit and then look at the activities those units have run,” he says. “We can see traffic going up in the business units that have really embraced anchoring by top management and one-to-one recommendations for employees – so we know that these things make a difference.”

Directing the learning habit

LinkedIn Learning has already powered Telenor past its ambitious target, with each employee spending over 40 hours on online learning alone – and far more when other forms of on-the-job and classroom learning are included.

“In many of our Asian markets, we’ve had 100% take-up,” says Joakim. “There’s been a very proactive response to the opportunity to learn skills not covered by traditional education. In Scandinavia, we’ve found we’re most effective when we talk to people on an individual level and help people identify the content that’s most relevant to their jobs.”

Building on the success of the 40-hour challenge, Telenor is now developing a more standardised system for curating content and helping employees to plan their most relevant learning paths.

“We’ve already seen a good link between what we say is important and what people go on to learn,” says Joakim. “We’re now working on developing learning paths for different roles within the company that we encourage employees to complete.”

“These start with the most accessible LinkedIn Learning content and then provide the opportunity to go deeper,” he added. “We’re also developing a more personalised system for colleagues to identify their most appropriate learning goal, and then plan with their leader which online courses to take, and how to practice the new skill on the job to reach that objective.”

As the leader of a team closely involved with the digital transformation process, Anna embodies this process of bringing personalised learning goals within reach. “It’s part of my role to engage the team with the fact that we need to be the experts on automated customer service,” she says. “I don’t tell them to learn this skill or that skill.”

“I want them to come up with ideas but then come back to me to discuss them,” Anna added. “It’s valuable to have me there to bounce ideas off. It often feels like time is short – but we’re learning that if you can set a clear goal and plan in learning sprints to achieve it, then you can make sure it happens.”

“On learning, we want our people to act their way into thinking rather than think their way into acting. LinkedIn Learning is helping the business as a whole embrace the habit of going online and seeing what they can learn next. That’s the most important way we can support the digital transformation process.”



Joakim Slørstad

Senior VP for Learning and Development