



## Growing talent from within

How LinkedIn Learning supports Airtel as it encourages its people to learn and grow



Headquarters: Gurgaon, Haryana



Industry: Telecommunications



Employees: 14,500



At Airtel, we are proud to say that many positions at the middle management level and above are filled by internal talent. That’s the best form of learning ROI for us. We want our employees to feel that they are always growing with the company. As they learn, we naturally benefit from improved performance and a healthy internal talent pipeline. What’s more important to us is the ‘cultural ROI’ of having an engaged and motivated workforce.”



Samit Deb,  
Chief Human Resources Officer, Airtel

Airtel is the third largest mobile operator in the world in terms of subscribers and one of India’s top providers. With a strong presence across the country and a large business portfolio that spans both B2C and B2B services and solutions, Airtel employs over 15,000 employees in a variety of roles. As its employees’ role profiles, and therefore learning needs, are extremely diverse and dynamic, Airtel began exploring the world of online learning in 2016.

“Compared to instructor-led training, a robust online learning solution would provide far superior coverage in terms of reach, accessibility and learning content. We wanted a robust online learning solution that would open new doors and help ensure that every employee has the opportunity to learn,” explained Samit Deb, Airtel’s Chief Human Resources Officer.

After a rigorous assessment of all the online learning solution providers at that time, Airtel chose Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning) based on the relevancy of its content, mobile accessibility, positive feedback from early adopters and competitive pricing. Four years on, the company is seeing remarkable engagement with 100% monthly activation rates and 52% monthly repeat learners — but this success was not built overnight.

## Results

1. Between May and August 2020  
2. Between January and August 2020

- 100% monthly activation rate<sup>1</sup>
- 52% monthly repeat learners<sup>2</sup>
- 78 video views per learners per month<sup>2</sup>



## Shifting mindsets and behaviours

When Airtel first introduced online learning, its employees simply weren't interested. Vishal Choudhary, Head Learning Operations & Head-HR Kerala and Tamil Nadu, shared that it was partly because employees had come to enjoy the real-time interaction that synchronous, instructor-led training offers.

To address this, Airtel embarked on what was essentially a full change management programme with the aim of demonstrating the value that employees would gain from anywhere, anytime learning with LinkedIn Learning. Recognising that resistance to change often stems from inertia and wariness of the unfamiliar, the Airtel team used a 'push' and 'pull' method to get employees to experience online learning for themselves.

The 'pull' took many forms, including a dedicated learning hour every Friday when employees were encouraged to log into LinkedIn Learning. The team also organised games, contests and even a learning marathon to build excitement and buzz. Early adopters were recruited as change agents and their success stories were shared to inspire others. At the same time, the team incorporated a 'push' by assigning LinkedIn Learning courses to specific employee groups as part of their learning journey. Down the road, Airtel also began sharing learning dashboards by geographic region. For managers and leaders, these dashboards offer a useful snapshot of their teams' Learning & Development (L&D) progress.

Thanks to these efforts, sustained over time, online learning has become a habit for many Airtel employees. Now, the team's focus is on maintaining momentum and deepening engagement.

Anusha Rahinwal, Airtel's Learning & Development Partner, said, "Ongoing communication helps us ensure that learning continues to be top of the mind for our people. In addition to regular, company-wide learning reminders, we also segment our communications. To promote a new digital skills programme, for example, we would target our digital employees."

This commitment to targeted relevance also drives a lot of behind-the-scenes efforts. To develop role-specific learning journeys, Airtel goes through a rigorous process of identifying relevant skills and mapping these not only to relevant LinkedIn Learning courses but also to different skill proficiency levels.

“

When we offer learning courses that are relevant to an employee's daily work and pegged to their current proficiency, the take-up rate is very high and the learning experience is very positive. That encourages employees to keep coming back for more”



Anusha Rahinwal,  
Learning & Development Partner, Airtel

# The COVID-19 disruption

On 25 March 2020, India went into a nationwide lockdown. As streets were emptied out in a preventive measure to break the COVID-19 chain of transmission, 15,000 Airtel employees were instructed to stay home. While its office-based employees adapted to work-from-home arrangements, Airtel's field workers faced a very different reality.

“This was probably the first time in their lives where they literally didn't know what to do with their time,” said Anusha. “Having LinkedIn Learning made a huge difference; it provided them with support.”



Given Airtel's ongoing efforts to sustain high levels of interest in learning, it is perhaps unsurprising that, in April 2020, the company recorded a historical high in terms of LinkedIn Learning activity:

- **2X**  
the number of learners logging in
- **2.4X**  
surge in the number of videos watched per learner
- **35%**  
increase in monthly repeat learners

“These numbers are very meaningful to us because they signal organisational resilience. They tell us that our employees are embracing learning as a form of motivation. Even in times of adversity, they are thinking of a better tomorrow and taking proactive steps to achieve positive outcomes for themselves,” said Samit.

Adding on, Vishal said, “In that sense, you could say that COVID-19 was a disruption, but a positive disruption for us. It highlighted and reinforced our culture of learning.”



Vishal Choudhary  
Head- Learning Operations at Bharti Airtel

Now that Airtel's offices have reopened and its employees are cautiously returning to their daily lives, LinkedIn Learning activity has normalised. For Samit, Vishal, Anusha and the rest of Airtel's L&D team, however, the journey continues as they prepare Airtel and its employees to succeed in the new world of work.



**LinkedIn Learning** is a leading online learning platform that helps professionals learn relevant skills and achieve their goals. It combines a library of 16,400+ up-to-date courses in 7 different languages with an engaging, intuitive, and personalised learner experience. LinkedIn Learning also includes real-time skills insights that help learning leaders identify skills gaps. For more information, visit <http://learning.linkedin.com>.