



Game on: Why Derivco encourages its employees to learn anything they want in order to stay ahead



As a leading software development house in the online gaming world, Derivco designs, develops, illustrates and animates the industry's most trailblazing technology. At its heart are its people. In fact, it is proud to employ more than 2,000 of the brightest minds in the industry across three South African offices, which are based in Durban, Pretoria and Cape Town. And while Derivco might be in the business of technology innovation, its success depends on their success. As such, Derivco seeks out individuals who are inspired, motivated and empowered to achieve greatness every day.



When you talk to Mark Collett, Head of Learning and Development at Derivco, a leading software development house, it is clear that Derivco is not your average IT business. First of all, the business designs and develops “trailblazing” technology for the online gaming world. Secondly, it places greater importance on the welfare of its talent than it does on output.

“If we take care of our people, output will take care of itself,” explained Mark. “It’s not about output. We have a performance development programme and model that values principles and how people feel. That drives everything in our business.”

Keeping up with demand

Mark heads up a six-strong learning and development team that enables Derivkins to learn whatever they are passionate about. He explained: “We’re a team of six but we’re not actually a team of six, we’re a team of 2,000.”

Mark describes Derivco as a family-business. It comprises an inquisitive community that desperately wants to learn.

This is evidenced in the huge demand amongst employees for learning. “As a learning and development team, we could not keep up with the demand for learning coming from the people at Derivco,” Mark said. “We had to change our approach. Online learning became an obvious solution for us.”

There were a number of problems that Derivco wanted to solve, every one of which seemed impossible at first. Derivco wanted to give everyone access to learning opportunities and there was a clear need to support line managers with curated learning paths and comprehensive content.

Mark continued: “We initially tested the engagement of LinkedIn Learning with people at Derivco. The engagement and feedback exceeded our expectations.”

Derivco started with 100 LinkedIn Learning licences. Mark added: “Within a week, 400 Derivkins wanted to access the platform. We ramped up our licences to 400 then we had 900 people wanting a licence. Now we have more than 2,000 LinkedIn Learning licences and a 100 per cent activation rate.”

The Challenge

- Create learning opportunities for all employees
- Encourage collaborative learning – develop learning communities
- Support line managers in learning and development conversations

The Solution

- Provide all employees (Derivkins) with access to online learning content
- Give employees freedom to learn and converse – make learning a habit
- Support line managers to take a development approach to performance

The Results



100% activation rate



More than 60% of learners access the platform at least twice a month



Nearly 400,000 videos watched since launch

Remove boundaries to achieve the impossible

According to Mark, a big part of the success of LinkedIn Learning is attributable to the culture of learning at Derivco. “Curiosity is a strong feature in our people, which helped the take up of online learning when it was offered. We chose to run a pilot for three months, and by the end of that time, word of mouth had increased the demand for licences.”

But what’s also of huge interest is Derivco’s attitude towards learning. Derivco provides all its employees with a LinkedIn Learning licence and all employees can learn anything they want to. Even the ukulele if they want to!

Mark explained: “There is no way that you can abuse learning. If you have LinkedIn Learning and you want to spend time learning the ukulele, knock yourself out.

“We know the importance of learning. We don’t tell people off for having 30 hours of ukulele lessons. Why? Learning is a discipline and an art that can be honed; no matter what you are learning. It is something that we as a company can still benefit from and it increases our capabilities as a boundary-less organisation.”

He continued: “As a technology company, continuous learning is even more important to keep a company relevant. Online learning has supported this for Derivco. But above that, learning is a habit and having learning as accessible as it is with LinkedIn Learning supports the habit. Derivkins have access to all the LinkedIn Learning courses to help each person develop themselves, and to help others around them, so that we can achieve the impossible as one community.”

In their own words

“Given the realisation that Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are going to be a fundamental and key part of our future, we set ourselves the goal of creating the opportunity and focus for a large number of our people to grow their skills and involvement in AI/ML. The sheer number of people utilising online courses via LinkedIn Learning and subsequent excitement and innovation was amazing to experience. This has created an awesome foundation for us to develop our capability within AI/ML across all of Derivco.”

Darryl Purnell

Executive Group Head
AI/ML at Derivco



“I find LinkedIn Learning quite simple and intuitive to use. Setting up a Learning Path is easy and straight forward, providing your pre-requisite work is in order. It’s also nice to know that you can combine public LinkedIn content with private content to create an effective hybrid training course.”

Shane Moodley

Data Management
Compliance Officer at Derivco



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Mark Collett

Head of Learning and
Development at Derivco



Learning and development is fundamental to company culture

Derivco’s innovative approach to learning and development is further evidenced by Reboot, which is a specific initiative whereby Derivkins are expected to spend 30 per cent of their time “rebooting”. Every month. In fact, all employees dedicate an entire week each month to “rebooting”. Reboot week gives Derivkins the opportunity to make a difference, addressing challenges and developing processes that could improve the way people work.

“When we recruit talent, we look for passion,” Mark explained. “We’re interested in their passion and what drives them.”

“The working day is just an extension of someone’s passion. Who you are authentically, as a person, is also an extension of that. If we tap into that, motivation and engagement is not a problem.”

Once again, this is evidenced by how many Derivkins engage with content. Mark added: “Over time, as learning has matured at Derivco, we have seen patterns evolve. Whereas initially it was unusual for more than one per cent of the business to do a certain course, there are now a number of courses that achieve more than 75 per cent attendance. The shift from online learning being an individual activity to being a community experience has begun. Development has become a fundamental part of our culture and is what sets us apart as a technology company.”

What the learners say

“Being in the ever-changing tech field where you need to gain new skills all the time, I can say that LinkedIn Learning has been an amazing tool to help me achieve those skills. It’s become a personal challenge to myself to continuously learn and upskill and keep my personal profile updated, so that I can inspire others too. Learning on LinkedIn has enriched my life for the better, and it’s so easy to do when you have easy access to the training material.”

Danny Mchunu

IT Support Services
Engineer Level 1 at Derivco



“My ultimate go-to for the latest and greatest content whenever I need to brush up on software development or polish my soft skills, is LinkedIn Learning. They’ve got my learning goals covered.”

Chumile Dlamini

Developer Level 2 at Derivco



“A long journey in such a short time. After 28 years of life in construction, I joined the most forward-thinking software company Derivco in 2018 as a Facilities Assistant. That is when I started learning computers/IT through LinkedIn Learning. During lunch breaks, evenings and at night, I was always on LinkedIn, and by completing 50+ courses in six months I was accepted in a college without a Matric Certificate to study IT. A journey that changed my life!”

Sifiso Shezi

Facilities Assistant at Derivco



Learning communities go deeper

Clearly, learning has gained momentum. For example, Mark explained that there are people within the business that have a specific interest in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. These people are pushing the AI/ML agenda, influencing conversations and encouraging Derivkins to collaborate even further within Derivco learning communities.

“As a business, if we decide that we want to learn more about AI/ML, for example, Derivkins go and learn about AI/ML. They then tell us what they learned. Pretty soon, conversations around AI/ML snowball. Suddenly, we have learning communities that decide whether or not certain elements of AI/ML are applicable to our business. You then have a scenario where people are having intelligent conversations around definitions. This is cool to leverage.”

He concluded: “In a world where technology is advancing so quickly with so many bright people, to keep 2,000 people engaged and pulling in the same direction is exciting. It makes for an energetic environment.”

in each regional office so that the staff could relate and connect.”

Cecilia continued: “Tapping managers to drive engagement and create a culture of learning was a key component of our strategy. Prior to launch, we held several webinars and used the forums to highlight to managers the importance of learning and the one-hour-a-week goal of learning that we had determined was our learning benchmark across the business. The objective was to convert the managers into learning champions.”

Sokowatch created learner engagement initiatives. For example, Sokowatch used the intranet to make Learner of the Week and Learner of the Month announcements, with winners receiving a virtual certificate.

Phoebe Shiphira, Learning and Development Associate at Sokowatch added: “Once we had achieved a 75% activation rate of the LinkedIn Learning licenses, we changed our focus from Learner of the Week/Month to posting personal testimonials on the intranet, detailing learner experience with LinkedIn Learning. We also promoted how acquired skills had helped individuals to do their work better, faster, more efficiently etc. This boosted our activation rate to 100% and learner engagement to 82%.”

Phoebe’s task is to now analyse all the data that they have collated and tie all the learning to business strategy and results. They are currently focused on tracking high performing individuals to see if there is a relationship between learning and performance and are identifying opportunities for promotion.

Phoebe concluded: “LinkedIn Learning is a fantastic tool. It gives our employees the tools they need to adapt, react and create new and exciting solutions. I am excited to see how the learning opportunities that our employees have been given will translate into business results and to continuing our relationship with LinkedIn Learning.”