



EARN & LEARN EARLY FINDINGS FROM CORPORATE STUDIES

1) Early findings from micro cases of business-led talent development models that support attainment of postsecondary credentials with labor market value among low-income young adults:

[NOTE: It is important to surface the fact that while employers support skills and talent development among their entry-level, low-skilled employees, we have not been able to make statements specific to “low income” or “young adult.” This is due to the fact that employers do not keep personnel records segmented in this way]

QUESTION #1

Is there a way to capture this information?

Is it available through your education/training provider?

2) Business imperatives for supporting postsecondary completion are complex and varied. However, there is substantial evidence that supports the position that businesses invest in the postsecondary completion of their incumbent workers. The case becomes even more substantial when it can be tied to return-on-investment metrics. The following business goals for supporting continued education of workers have been documented:

- Develop skilled and talented pool of workers
- Reduce turnover rate/stabilize workforce/increased morale
- Increase job performance/productivity
- Facilitate career progression
- Improve employee diversity
- Make a contribution to regional talent pool

QUESTION #2

Would you disagree with any of these?

What other reasons do employers support post-secondary completion?

3) Program types vary as well, with the “hub” of most programs being the corporation’s tuition assistance program (“TAP”). It is critical to our research that we gain understanding of the ways in which TAP can be leveraged beyond an employee benefit to a corporate talent development strategy in supporting the business. Following are salient elements of promising “earn and learn” models identified to date:

- Tuition assistance programs. Best practices include:
 - Prepaid instead of reimbursed
 - 100% tuition & book
 - Extended to full- and part-time employees
 - Available without employment waiting period
 - Available for any accredited program of study (not necessarily tied to current job track)
- Mentoring and/or career/education guidance support
- Recognition and/or bonus payments at significant milestones
- Pay increases with educational attainment
- Apprenticeship programs. Best practices include:
 - Work-study schedule with full pay and benefits while student
 - Accreditation of skills/craft training

QUESTION #3

What other elements contribute to successful earn & learn models?
Are there other types of programs of which you are aware?

4) Educational partner choices for corporate talent development run the gamut from very specific skills acquisition providers and community based organizations to community colleges and universities. For purposes of this research, we are primarily seeking community college partners. However, we have noted a trend of partnering with “for profit” colleges. Early indication is that these institutions offer several of the top attributes sought by corporations in education partners. However, there are several successful community college partnerships to be considered. Following are characteristics and practices of education providers in successful partnership with corporations that have promising “earn and learn” models.

Relationship driven—built with ongoing partnerships

- Responsive—
 - Customized curriculum
 - Flexible with speed to market
 - Incorporates company-based training
- Data driven—feedback loops for quick course correction
- Supports student/worker with wrap around services
- Fee negotiated with volume discounts

Delivery Models

- Blended—on-sight/near sight and web based
- Flexible course scheduling
- Offers credit-based learning in customized training
- Recognizes prior learning w/prior learning assessment

QUESTION #4

What other characteristics do you look for in a education/training partner?

5) Corporate culture plays a critical role in a successful “earn and learn” model. We have seen that an internal understanding of an organization as a “learning” company lays a strong foundation for talent development. The best case is to have a “C-Suite” level executive sponsor. However, much is accomplished with a strategically placed “internal champion.” Leading practices include:

- Well-defined career opportunities aligned with education attainment
- Career and education navigation support
- Formal mentoring and/or supervisor support for education process
- Active recruiting and outreach/marketing of education opportunities
- Flexible work schedule options that support class scheduling
- Employee benefits that support education attainment

QUESTION #5

What other characteristics of corporate culture supports lifelong learning?
Are there ways in which we might engage the “C-Suite” in your company?

6) It is clear that capturing data is vital to understanding not only the contribution made by talent development practices but is also necessary for quick response to student/worker needs. We have only seen a couple of companies that thoroughly track these metrics. Following are uses for data if/when they are available:

- To determine returns on investments
 - Determine recruiting and retention contributions
 - Determine performance and productivity contributions
 - Determine level of worker engagement
 - Determine career advancement contributions
 - Determine use of supporting benefits
- To track student progress
 - Determine intervention points for support
 - Determine quality of instruction to learning objectives

QUESTION #6

What metrics are you tracking in your E&L practices and how are they used?