

Who Has the Best Learning in 2012?

STACEY BOYLE

Now in its second year, Chief Learning Officer magazine's LearningElite benchmarking program has raised the bar of excellence in the learning and development field. At least, that's what elite organizations have said.

In LearningElite satisfaction surveys, several organizations said they incorporated facets of the application process into their staff performance reviews. Learning leaders at one Fortune 500 company said that as a result of participating in the LearningElite they were able to identify learning measurement as an area of improvement and used the company's scorecard and findings to help build an internal case, secure funding to add headcount and enhance their measurement capability. Further, LearningElite judge Frank Anderson, retired president of Defense Acquisition University, said the scoring rubric available to all judges and in the LearningElite Annual Report has value as a learning and development strategy document.

This year's LearningElite recognizes 45 organizations for delivering exceptional value through learning and development. Adhering to the five-dimension model, today's modern learning organizations were assessed for:

- Leadership commitment.
- Learning strategy.
- Learning execution.
- Learning impact.
- Business performance results.

The 2012 LearningElite is composed of a disparate group of small to large organizations headquartered across the globe, representing a range of industries with various learning and development investments. The diversity of the group indicates that exceptional learning and development can be achieved regardless of size, geography or level of investment. We have seen an increase in the quality of applications, and the pinnacle — the highest score for all five dimensions — increased.

In a continuous improvement effort, this year the top five finalists were required to participate in a capstone evaluation to establish the final rankings for the top of the elite. The capstone evaluation consisted of a two-hour presentation to an evaluation panel and an interview with an executive outside of the learning and development function.

The LearningElite is a data-driven process, and this year, because of a mathematical tie based on application scores, six organizations were eligible for the top ranking. The capstone evaluation process highlighted significant, learning-based business value and afforded the evaluation panel a detailed look into these learning functions, which subsequently yielded a well-informed ranking.

On a technical note, judges do not consider an organization's level of financial investment in learning and development. The applicants are asked to provide investment data, but that data is not shared with judges. The judges are asked to focus on outcomes, because regardless of financial investment — as this year's winners prove — organizations of all sizes can leverage learning to achieve exceptional business value. [CLO](#)

EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARDS

In addition to the LearningElite awards, the editors of Chief Learning Officer magazine recognized the following companies for special achievement.

Strategy: Accenture

Leadership Commitment: Defense Acquisition University

Learning Execution: McDonald's Corp.

Learning Impact: General Mills

Business Performance Results: AT&T

Best Small Company: Vi

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Neda Schlichtman and Erv Lessel represented Deloitte, which ranked No. 14, at the LearningElite Gala.



After the cocktail hour, attendees enjoyed dinner while watching the sunset over the ocean in South Beach, Fla.



The after party included dessert and dancing.



Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness and CLO of General Mills Kevin Wilde accepted the award for the No. 1 LearningElite organization. He is pictured with Mike Prokopeak, vice president, editorial director of Chief Learning Officer magazine.



Attendees show off their LearningElite gift bags at the after party.



Proud employees of Vi, which won the Editor's Choice award for Best Small Company.

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The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
1	6	General Mills	Minneapolis	35,000
<p>Elite Practice: General Mills' brand Chex Party Mix invited its external brand champions to promote party mix creations by sending them a media toolkit. The brand received more than 1.8 million impressions for a \$5,000 budget and grew 14 percent over the previous year. The company gained insight into consumer engagement and reactions, and how it could leverage consumers as brand advocates.</p>				
2	1	AT&T	Dallas	256,000
<p>Elite Practice: On any given day more than 5,000 students undergo classroom training at AT&T. More than 22,000 courses are available via classroom, virtual, e-learning, mobile, gaming and interactive virtual learning. AT&T also has developed training to improve specific skills for sales and call center employees that increase customer satisfaction. Content spans delivery platforms and includes a new website with resources to increase customer satisfaction.</p>				
2	3	Defense Acquisition University	Fort Belvoir, Va.	150,000
<p>Elite Practice: Amidst an austere budgetary backdrop, Defense Acquisition University has reduced costs while maintaining the quality of training some 152,000 members of the defense acquisition workforce around the world have come to expect. Last year students completed 676,023 classroom, distance and continuous learning courses and 4 million hours of informal learning on the job.</p>				
4	5	Accenture	Dublin, Ireland	220,000
<p>Elite Practice: Because growth needs will soon exceed the talent supply in emerging markets, Accenture's capability development organization is building foundational professional and technical skills in broader populations to expand its pool of potential hires. The company's integrated approach to talent development includes targeted skill-building, leadership development, mobility and on-boarding.</p>				
5	9	McDonald's Corp.	Oak Brook, Ill.	650,000
<p>Elite Practice: McDonald's USA conducts an annual future learning study to gauge employee development wants and needs and provide the learning team with feedback for design and development. Technology continues to drive the pace of change, and Diana Thomas, the company's vice president of U.S. training, said the study shows how much learners have evolved.</p>				
6	N/A	UPS	Atlanta	400,600
<p>Elite Practice: UPS is in the final year of a five-year learning strategy that has consolidated its learning management systems and streamlined a federated learning culture across the more than 220 countries and territories in which it operates. In 2009, the first year of the strategy shift, the learning function had reached a little fewer than 18,000 employees, by way of instructor-led or online courses. The company said it plans to reach roughly 37,000 globally in 2012 for less than 50 percent of the cost.</p>				
7	11	Farmers Insurance Group	Los Angeles	48,952
<p>Elite Practice: Farmers Insurance executives' commitment to learning has allowed its learning organization, University of Farmers, to build and sustain a comprehensive function that develops nearly 50,000 agents and leaders. Its most recent commitment came in June 2011, when the university opened its second campus in Grand Rapids, Mich.</p>				
8	7	Qualcomm	San Diego	20,000
<p>Elite Practice: Qualcomm's business strategy requires the company to evolve quickly to ensure it remains a leader in the global telecommunications technology industry. To that end, its learning function makes certain its technical offerings are relevant and closely aligned to changes in the business environment. The team works with vendors and internal subject-matter experts to create training for technologies that are still being invented.</p>				

The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
16	N/A	Jiffy Lube International	Houston	20,000
<p>Elite Practice: With use of its virtual bay and avatars — appropriate since its audience is primarily 18- to 24-year-old males — Jiffy Lube links all learning efforts to business objectives and shows the value provided in terms beyond money saved or earned via retention, customer satisfaction and sales increases. Offering various learning delivery options to engage learners and reward successful completion of certifications results in higher retention and certification levels.</p>				
18	N/A	Prudential Financial	Newark, N.J.	52,233
<p>Elite Practice: Leadership starts early at Prudential. It has integrated seven leadership competencies with job-specific competencies for strategically important functions and roles across the organization. The senior leadership commits time and resources to ensure that leadership development is priority one.</p>				
19	N/A	Coldwell Banker	Parsippany, N.J.	86,000
<p>Elite Practice: Coldwell Banker supports employees' performance with technology, including social learning networks, learning content designed for mobile use and diverse types of content such as games and simulations. The organization's strong key performance indicators demonstrate its learning efforts significantly improve sales and agent productivity.</p>				



CONGRATULATIONS, AWARD WINNERS

We salute this year's CLO Magazine LearningElite Award recipients—and applaud their innovations as they transform IT on the journey to their cloud.

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The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
20	N/A	Cash America International	Fort Worth, Texas	7,130
<p>Elite Practice: Cash America has hard metrics associated with learning and a clear line of sight between leaders and the learning organization. Learning and business line leaders partner, budget numbers trend upward and there is demonstrated impact and a keen desire to use learning to strategically meet business needs. For instance, Cash America's learning efforts to support its annual Customer Appreciation Sales Event resulted in millions in revenue.</p>				
21	10	Lowe's	Mooresville, N.C.	250,000
<p>Elite Practice: Lowe's learning organization is focused on its role supporting the human capacity of the organization. The D-6 Process Flow provides the framework for its learning organization to implement performance improvement. Learning is aligned at every stage with goals and objectives for the client and the learners' needs. Tracking and proof of the return on investment in terms defined for the business ensure learning is a strategic and indispensable partner.</p>				
22	N/A	Xerox Corp.	Norwalk, Conn.	136,000
<p>Elite Practice: When it comes to its learning efforts, Xerox puts metrics first, connecting its work to improve service levels, customer satisfaction and productivity to business metrics such as growth, sales, cost savings, ROI and market share. The company developed a strategy focused on these elements and executed a tactical focus on time to repair, repair verification and improving new innovation usage from clients.</p>				

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The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
23	4	IBM	Armonk, N.Y.	470,000
Elite Practice: IBM's recent emphasis on learning's impact on career pathing is visible in its career guidance strategy. By using online portals, strong on-boarding and identifying individual performers' skill gaps with supporting solutions, IBM is able to keep employees engaged and promote business. The company has data linking employee engagement to business and customer impact.				
23	8	EMC Corp.	Hopkinton, Mass.	33,000
Elite Practice: EMC's attention is on customer loyalty, and its learning function must help develop and maintain this initiative. The company's loyalty program demonstrates how learning and business work together to produce results. For instance, its integration of learning consultants into the business facilitated a loyalty program outcome that realized an increase in customer loyalty and business growth.				
25	N/A	Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.	New York	2,500
Elite Practice: Effective use of business line and product/service analyses can accelerate an organization's time-to-solution. Maintaining the learning function to support and research technology is another elite practice that underscores Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.'s commitment to effective technology use and measurement.				

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The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
26	N/A	Carmax Inc.	Richmond, Va.	15,765
<p>Elite Practice: Carmax has found a way to grow despite a down market — quality associate training aligned to business objectives. This business differentiator features a blend of technology, data, closed-loop assessment processes and a look outside the industry for best practices. A strong focus on associates, customers, results and improving learning also has affected its internal promotion rate, which is 76 percent.</p>				
27	18	St. Peter's Health Care Services	Albany, N.Y.	4,500
<p>Elite Practice: St. Peter's Health Care strategy is to deliver the right training to the right learners at the right time to achieve its mission. Identifying incoming workforce skills as well as various on-boarding/orientation programs has contributed to significant improvements. For instance, the organization decreased the mortality rate for severe sepsis some 56 percent within the roughly one-year time frame measured compared to the period prior to learning intervention.</p>				
28	22	Emory University	Atlanta	24,884
<p>Elite Practice: Typical universities expend resources on students. Emory University focuses extensive resources on internal staff to ensure they are exceptional educators. Six different programs and a selection process allow employees to receive custom education, and all processes and resources — such as action learning projects and leadership development offerings — are aligned with the corporation's needs.</p>				

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2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
29	20	Cerner Corp.	Kansas City, Mo.	9,783
<p>Elite Practice: Cerner Corp.'s use of the 70/20/10 model to implement learning programs illustrates how learning strategy is designed and implemented in the corporation. Three areas of KPI measurement are spread across the learning organization and clearly delineated as either operations-based, adoption-based or as business outcomes. Cerner's ACE program provides outreach to clients for educational support and associates with career-growth opportunities.</p>				
30	N/A	Rex Healthcare	Raleigh, N.C.	4,800
<p>Elite Practice: Rex Healthcare employees can get training via in-house certification programs or attend conferences and events outside the country. The company has a number of certification paths that reflect the diversity of its employees and reinforce its philosophy that "every co-worker is a leader." That philosophy coupled with its strong stance on learning has contributed to success retaining high performers. High potential turnover is less than 10 percent, and overall worker satisfaction is 96.6 percent.</p>				
30	N/A	FDIC Corporate University	Arlington, Va.	8,300
<p>Elite Practice: By identifying key performance indicators that are linked to business objectives for its learning organization and then measuring how employees are performing at key milestones, the FDIC ensures that it gets a great deal from its learning investment. Further, the learning strategy is closely aligned with the business strategy and can be adjusted as needed.</p>				

CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER
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Congratulations

to the 2012 LearningElite Organizations!

Want to learn more about these organizations?

The 2012 LearningElite Annual Report provides the inside scoop on the LearningElite organizations, as well as details of the selection process, unique practices from some of the organizations, a description of a theoretical learning organization of the future and more! For more information, visit HumanCapitalMedia.com/LE2012annualreport.

To learn more about LearningElite, visit CLOmedia.com/elite

The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
32	N/A	Liquidnet Inc.	New York	325
<p>Elite Practice: Part of LiquidNet's learning strategy centers on enabling its partners, specifically those in the role of head trader, and building the competencies, practices and relationships to make those in that role successful. This holistic approach to developing a role-based community is good for business. By making customers successful and transforming the way it does business, the organization is transforming the industry itself.</p>				
33	34	NetApp Inc.	Sunnyvale, Calif.	12,000
<p>Elite Practice: At NetApp Inc., learning is seen as a strategic investment, one that produces bottom-line results. Adopters of principles taught in the company's "Driving Business Conversations" course close on average 50 percent more business and drive nearly twice as many new opportunities as low adopters. Sales reps who took the "Selling the Value of Storage Efficiency" course had a 57 percent increase in sales bookings. The control group, those who did not take the training, had a 15 percent increase.</p>				
34	43	Amdocs	Chesterfield, Mo.	19,455
<p>Elite Practice: Amdocs is familiar with the LearningElite concept. It has an Elite Experts program to recognize and reward employees for developing content, instructing courses and sharing their knowledge. Its elite learning group has received considerable investment to promote technology and build a learning portal. Along those same lines, Amdocs' KTV — knowledge, training and versatility — program assesses learner knowledge, aligning it with competencies and uncovering gaps.</p>				
35	N/A	North Shore-LIJ Health System – Center for Learning and Innovation	Lake Success, N.Y.	43,000
<p>Elite Practice: At North Shore-LIJ Health System, the annual learning needs assessment cycle is inclusive and timely. It begins with team members and includes the CLO, an internal advisory group and one-on-one interviews with senior leaders. Workforce groups with critical connections to the bottom line get targeted development. Nurses get fellowship programs on the foundations of adult and pediatric critical care, emergency and hematology/oncology nursing. They also participate weekly in high-fidelity simulation scenarios at the Patient Safety Institute.</p>				
36	36	OptumRX	Irvine, Calif.	5,800
<p>Elite Practice: Customers at OptumRX complete about 500,000 after-call surveys annually. This year a key question asked about customer satisfaction. A strategic analysis of call-flow quality led to a focus on agent behaviors most likely to create positive customer experiences. The learning function designed technical competence and soft skills interventions to boost agent performance, and a customer advocacy refresher curriculum to remind agents about behaviors necessary to earn a completely satisfied rating.</p>				
37	30	Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy	Washington, D.C.	317,000
<p>Elite Practice: The Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy has had some positive indicators to show it has been successful using learning to impact the organization's mission, such as intern retention, partnerships with universities and other learning organizations, and the positive impact by personnel on high-risk, high-visibility programs. Highlights include a skill identification process for the incoming workforce and the Warriors 2 Workforce program.</p>				
38	33	CA Technologies Inc.	Islandia, N.Y.	14,000
<p>Elite Practice: At CA Technologies Inc., learning programs have a global scope, a good set of key performance indicators and associated learning metrics. The company uses host images to improve training operations and lower costs, and provides support for the sales process with a series of learning playbooks. The learning organization manages a repository for learning assets as well as for communications, knowledge management and professional collaboration.</p>				

The 2012 LearningElite Organizations

2012	2011	Company Name	Location	Number of employees worldwide
39	N/A	HCSC	Chicago	15,731
<p>Elite Practice: HCSC leadership has consistently supported training, including sending communications to the workforce to announce the availability and importance of new training programs and following up on completion rates for mandatory training. HCSC also established a Top 5 enterprise-wide goal for all employees to increase their understanding of factors creating the current business environment and how the company will differentiate itself from competitors. Performance against this goal directly impacted company performance in 2011.</p>				
40	25	Genentech	South San Francisco, Calif.	80,000
<p>Elite Practice: Genentech has integrated learning team members throughout all levels of management and business operations. Many companies talk about doing this, but this tight integration is somewhat unusual in the industry. Tight alignment to business key performance indicators, clear support from the learning organization for these measures and technology investments have helped to enable high-level learning and business alignment in the company.</p>				
41	27	AlliedBarton Security Services	Conshohocken, Pa.	55,920
<p>Elite Practice: AlliedBarton Security Services's Talent Lifecycle Value instrument examines four phases of employment to interject talent management practices that increase performance and shorten the performance curve. Together with input from business leaders, the company developed interview and selection guides to attract top talent, revised on-boarding procedures to promote shorter learning curves and redesigned its sales training curriculum to respond to new market needs.</p>				
42	37	Banner Health	Phoenix	35,000
<p>Elite Practice: Banner Health's learning program is going through a transformation. Senior leaders are committed to driving improvement in facilities that received low Leader Effectiveness and Shape the Future scores. Shared leadership councils — employee-driven groups that gather for ongoing development and needs assessment — help to deliver new skills to front-line employees in a short time period. This approach also empowers employees to take ownership over their own development needs.</p>				
43	N/A	University Health System	San Antonio	5,400
<p>Elite Practice: University Health System is improving patient satisfaction through learning via its service champions. The organization is also improving mentoring via a variety of approaches to drive results. For instance, its course champion model improves alignment with the business strategy. The service champion model also facilitates cost-effective training development, engages support throughout the organization and positively impacts key performance indicators.</p>				
44	N/A	National Industries for the Blind	Alexandria, Va.	166
<p>Elite Practice: At National Industries for the Blind, the learning team develops targeted learning strategies and uses metrics to ensure impact. The learning team created a development assessment form that is part of the annual evaluation process for all staff. Employees fill out the form describing training they believe is critical to help them boost performance levels. Learning reviews the forms with employees' managers and designs training programs based on needs as they relate to organizational goals.</p>				
45	N/A	Essar Group	Mumbai, India	75,000
<p>Elite Practice: Essar Group always has rewarded entrepreneurial spirit in its employees, with a sharp focus on identifying and grooming potential leaders. This led to the design and deployment of directed developmental initiatives, key talent management and proactive succession planning for critical positions. For example, the GenEssar initiative identifies high-performance and high-potential people who could be future business leaders and provides them with differentiated developmental opportunities to enhance their engagement and retention.</p>				