

Verizon Wireless



Business Outcomes

- Strong succession planning: career mobility increased by 20%
- Key talent development strategy: 20% of workforce participate in LearningLINK
- Turnover rate reduced by 50%
- Recruitment: 55% cite tuition assistance as decision factor
- 96% of participants intended to stay with Verizon for at least two years after degree

Employee Impact

- 600+ earned associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees
- Graduation recognition program
- 71% of supervisors report improved job performance

Tuition Assistance Program: LearningLINK

- Work with over 1,800 colleges and universities across the US
- 17,000+ participants in 2009

Talent Retention and Development through Postsecondary Attainment

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Fifty-five percent of participants in the Verizon Wireless LearningLINK program said the tuition assistance program influenced their employment decision and the program reduced turnover by 50 to 60 percent.

Verizon Wireless employs more than 83,000 people in 49 states, 80 percent of whom are “front-line” employees engaged in retail and customer service — entry-level positions that historically suffer high turnover rates. Verizon Wireless is leveraging its comprehensive tuition assistance benefits program to accomplish strategic organizational goals of increasing retention, performance and productivity of employees while offering them opportunities for educational attainment and career advancement.

Corporate Culture of Continuous Learning

From day one of employment, Verizon Wireless' new hires are encouraged to think about their career pathways. The new hire orientation is called Launch Your Success Story. They also are introduced to Plan Your Career, a course that allows employees to complete online skills and abilities assessments to benchmark themselves against job opportunities within the company. The course enables employees to chart a plan of competency attainment that might encompass targeted experience, technical training and/or enrollment in academic programs.

Verizon Wireless supports academic attainment by providing full- and part-time employees (working a minimum of 20 hours per week) 100 percent prepaid tuition, textbooks and certain fees to take courses related to their current position or other career opportunities within Verizon Wireless through the LearningLINK program. Full-time employee benefits are up to \$8,000 per year in prepaid or reimbursement of tuition while part-time employee benefits are up to \$4,000; neither

requires tenure to participate. Through diligent measurement techniques, it has been shown that turn-over cost savings cover LearningLINK expenses and generate additional savings to the business.

Through a strong recognition program, participants are supported and encouraged throughout their academic journey. Supervisors and managers take internal training programs that include coaching their direct reports on career development. Informal mentoring programs also exist throughout the organization. In addition, a college graduation recognition program includes a gift and card from the vice president of human resources. Graduation photos and testimonials from LearningLINK participants are featured on the Web site and in the LearningLINK program brochure given to all new hires.

PERSONAL STORY

Shawna VanDraska of Overland Park, KS, now a full-time marketing consultant for Verizon Wireless, said: “I recently graduated with my bachelor’s degree in business administration, and I have Verizon Wireless to thank. The tuition assistance program is so generous, easy to use and such a blessing. I am fortunate to be working for a company that is willing to invest in its employees. While several of my classmates are now struggling to pay off their student loans, I am buying a new house! Thank you Verizon Wireless!”

Academic Partnerships

Partnering with community colleges and universities, Verizon Wireless arranges for on-site delivery of classes leading to college degrees in most of its 30 call centers and other corporate office locations. These programs support a full-time university academic dean on site as well as a part-time university enrollment counselor.

Employees benefit from the “purchasing power” of a corporation the size of Verizon Wireless, which includes articulation agreements or contracts that have been negotiated with national education providers such as Strayer University and Bellevue University along with almost 100 local education providers, leading to a flexible, blended learning system.

To help speed degree acquisition, Verizon Wireless also promotes prior learning assessment and accreditation of experiential learning. It makes available *Earn College Credit for What You Know*, a book that walks employees through the process of obtaining credit for life experiences. Verizon Wireless also is participating in a universal pilot project to launch a national online platform for obtaining college degree credit for prior learning experience.

Business Imperative for the Tuition Assistance Program

More than 17,000 employees, 20 percent of its workforce, participated in the LearningLINK program in 2009. More than 600 earned associate, bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees.

Verizon Wireless sees this as a valuable recruiting tool — 55 percent of participants said the tuition assistance program was a factor in their decision to accept employment at the

company. Internal metrics indicate that the program also serves as a strong retention tool because it reduces the turnover rate by 50 to 60 percent among LearningLINK participants and graduates. In addition, participants and graduates show a higher rate of job transfers and promotions than the company’s general employee population with career mobility increasing by 20%.

“By having a well-educated workforce, our employees are able to do a better job of meeting customers’ needs.”

— Dorothy Martin, LearningLINK,
National Program Manager,
Verizon Wireless

Verizon Wireless managers reported improved job performance and behavior among the LearningLINK participants. Verizon Wireless has created a comprehensive measurement process that reports dollar-based returns on investments in LearningLINK for corporate leaders. According to LearningLINK National Program Manager Dorothy Martin, the key to winning continuous support for this comprehensive tuition assistance program is the ability to measure and quantify for corporate leaders the contribution it makes to Verizon Wireless’ overall strategic goals. In addition, Martin provides managers a quarterly summary that details the bottom line return on investment for their particular program, earning enthusiastic support from the field.

Even in the current difficult economic conditions, Verizon Wireless continues to invest in the postsecondary educational attainment of its employees because it is a winning talent development, recruiting and retention strategy.

About Corporate Voices

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

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Find Out More

Corporate Voices is committed to identifying and spotlighting businesses supporting postsecondary completion while making significant contributions to internal company goals. “Best practice” talent development models that increase access to career opportunities through education and training are being examined for characteristics that are transferable and replicable to other employers. This research is being conducted with the guidance of the Corporate Voices Learn and Earn Business Leadership Team consisting of business executives leading promising models and those interested in peer-to-peer learning. If you are interested in joining, contact Peggy Walton at pwalton@corporatevoices.org. Team members include:

- Pacific Gas & Electric
- UPS
- Marriott International
- KPMG
- TJX Companies, Inc.

For more information about Verizon Wireless, visit www.verizonwireless.com.

SECTOR: Retail: Wireless provider-high tech

EMPLOYEES: 83,000+ in 49 states

CUSTOMERS: 92M+

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