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6-10-2021

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Citation Details

21CLEO Research Team, "Learning for Future Possibilities" (2021). *21CLEO Research Project Blog Posts*. 19.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cleo_blog/19

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Learning for Future Possibilities

by 21CLEO Research Team | Jun 10, 2021 | 21 CLEO, Announcements

Reasons for Participating in Learning

21 CLEO
Research

To succeed in current job or chosen career by...



Learning for future possibilities

We've published 5 blog posts that present different personas of working learners. These personas are drawn from our interviews with frontline worker learners across the country who are participating in employer-supported learning opportunities. The personas characterize aspects of a set of real people – capturing and blending them in order to create one story that illustrates a broader representation of a participant in an employer-supported educational program or course. To date these include:

- [Neberu: Working To Feel Comfortable Interacting With English Speakers,](#)
- [Alimayu: College-educated Retail Worker Learning English.](#)

- Elise: Juggling Work, Required Training, And Long-term Goals.
- Regina: Healthcare Worker Seeking To Establish A Career
- Dani: Front-line Supervisor Paid Hourly Seeking Certification For Advancement



These personas represent the range of purposes learners have for engaging in employer-supported learning activities.

As we were wrapping up our data analysis focused on the creation of personas, we noted

that there was a set of participants who didn't fit into any of the current personas – these learners seemed to be engaged in employer-supported education, not for any specific articulate purpose or to meet a specific goal, rather, they viewed a learning opportunity as a promise for future possibilities. In the persona presented here, we introduce Naomi, who represents such a learner.

About Naomi: Learning for Future Possibilities

Naomi is in her mid-40's. She has lived with her young adult children and spouse in the same suburban community for some time. Her current work is in retail management, where she supervises several employees in her department. Her job is to ensure her department is staffed and running smoothly. Beyond that, she doesn't have much influence or responsibility in



Figure 2.

the broader work of the company. Naomi has held similar entry-level management positions in other industry sectors, including a call center and a logistics company. Naomi is an adult learner who looks for and takes advantage of learning opportunities — even if it is not immediately clear how it will benefit her career.

Naomi has a Bachelor's degree in psychology, which she completed in her late 20's. She has always viewed learning favorably, but hasn't necessarily followed a linear path to structure that learning. Naomi embraces learning as a challenge, both the idea of encountering learning and untangling the actual processes of enrollment and figuring out how to engage in activities and organize their own learning. She thrives in opportunities to learn independently.

Support

Because Naomi's income is essential for supporting her family, she takes on learning as work demands ebb. Even when she thinks she's going to have ample time, there is always a challenge of getting everything done. Naomi is currently taking college courses leading to a managerial credential; she sees how her learning is relevant to her current work and the resulting credential might have benefit to a future job.

Most of the courses are fully online, with lots of online videos and quizzes. Most of the work happens independently. Naomi appreciates that this online learning is more flexible, but would enjoy a more blended experience. Naomi has access to a laptop, software, and the internet and has no problems using technology for learning. She is making use of YouTube as part of learning – both assigned course videos and “going down a rabbit hole” and following her own interests. When the required technologies are new, she has issues working to overcome the learning curve. She loves the freedom of following learning interests on YouTube. She has benefited from a work laptop, which her employer knows she is using for the course.

Naomi's family is generally supportive and respects her need for time to study. Her teenage son even helps provide tech support when needed. Though her employer is not directly engaged and providing consistent support, they have expressed enthusiasm for Naomi's participation in the credential program, allowing her to use the company laptop at home and making time for Naomi to do interviews required for classwork during the workday. Learning is "normalized" in the corporation, so there is ample encouragement for learning that happens outside the workplace. Additionally, the employer smoothed the administration and tracking of credential requirements, freeing Naomi to just do the work of learning. Naomi's love of learning is what got her to take on the course work, but her engagement in the course and credential program was only possible because the employer paid for it.

Barriers

Naomi has some family issues that make it hard to fully participate in learning. She has had to help her sick mother and husband recover from COVID-19. At one point, she had to put her coursework on hold because of that. Naomi works hard to be diligent about completing course requirements despite distractions and completing obligations. Now that she's back at it, she recognizes that sometimes you just need to turn stuff in, even though it's not perfect.

Personal Drivers & External Motivators

"I jumped in and started participating in various programs, just to kind of stretch and to see what their growth opportunities were, not necessarily within the corporation, but just for myself, personally."

For Naomi, learning is an exploratory process. She is driven to stretch her expertise, skills, and knowledge when there is an opportunity presented. This drive is supported by personal attributes that support success, like problem-solving in the past that has buoyed confidence in her current course. She considers herself a nerd who values personal growth and recognizes that this was not always her mindset. She feels she has the maturity to recognize opportunity and persist. She sees current learning as a way to “catch up”, to be more employable and effective at work, especially regarding the use of technologies required for work and learning.

The program seemed to be a place where her past work and educational experience met a new opportunity for credentials and learning to support future success at work and in life. Additionally, the courses are an opportunity to take control over life and a welcomed distraction from other challenges in her life. The choice to enroll shows agency in daily life and in shaping the trajectory of her career. The possibility of a new credential was a motivating factor to enroll, especially when she saw the coursework, which seemed to be relevant. This relevance of the content also motivates her to engage daily – seeing her classwork as an investment for future benefit.

Blog Post Categories

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