***Independent Banker***

**Portfolio: Leadership at all Levels**

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**Leadership at all Levels**

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**Getting more out of virtual learning**

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When the pandemic started in early 2020, virtual learning received an unexpected boost. It not only provided a safe learning environment, but it also proved convenient and economical, and allowed for wider training options.

It looks like online education is here to stay as a viable alternative to in-person classes, but many educators have noticed that remote learners don’t always focus the same way they would in live events.

So, how can we get more out of virtual learning? For leaders, it starts with supporting a culture of learning. It means talking about, and preparing for, remote learning sessions in advance—not the morning of. It also means allowing employees to be fully engaged by not giving them interfering priorities during a session.

For learners, remote sessions should be seen as an opportunity to focus on a new topic, new growth, and greater success, and not the fastest way to earn Continuing Professional Education credits.

In practical terms, it helps to break the learning process down into the following elements:

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**Body**

If you are learning remotely, put yourself in a quiet, distraction-free environment, such as a home office with a closed door or a dedicated training room at the bank. Make sure you’re comfortable—but this doesn’t mean reclining on a couch! A comfortable chair and desk plus soft lighting are important for providing the body with a conducive learning environment. Remote learning is getting much more immersive, so make sure your location has a functioning webcam and microphone as well as strong Wi-Fi. And remember the advice we always give children—get plenty of rest and eat a good breakfast beforehand.

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**Brain**

Staying present is critically important, so ignore the urge to multitask. A reaction such as “I really liked the class being virtual because I could still be at work and available” isn’t something learning professionals (and bosses!) want to hear. Remove distractions. Turn your phone off or commit to only looking at it during breaks. Turn off emails. Better yet, leaders should establish training stations or devices for employees that do not have email capabilities.

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**Behavior**

Stay engaged. Turn on webcams, ask questions, participate in the breakout sessions, be on-time and don’t leave early. Make it known to colleagues that you are learning. If this requires sticking a note to your door, do it. Speaking of notes, make sure to take them during the session, then make an action item list to tackle after the training and share your knowledge with your team. Put what you learned into immediate practice and be creative about it. All these actions encourage growth and bring learning to life. It is critical that leaders encourage this.

Whether you are in the learner’s or supervisor’s seat, the phrase “You only get out what you put into it” should be top of mind as every community bank looks to continue enriching its professional development practices and overall success.

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