

Your Organization Already Has the Experts. They're Just Not Teaching Yet.

Peer Learning

The Expertise Is Already in the Building

Many organizations spend a lot of time looking outside themselves for better training. They look for a new platform, a new vendor, a new library of courses, or a new instructional approach that will finally close the gap between what people are told to do and what they actually do when the work gets complicated.

All of this is useful. Formal training matters. Systems training matters. Job aids, videos, knowledge articles, onboarding paths, and structured curriculum all have a place. In many organizations, they are badly needed. But after years of working in hospitality, travel technology, product environments, and learning organizations, I've become convinced one of the best sources of learning is often already inside the operation.

It is the employee who has handled the same difficult guest situation dozens of times. It is the front desk manager who knows which system step causes new hires to stumble. It is the night auditor who understands not only what the checklist says, but why the sequence matters. It is the implementation lead who can explain the difference between how a process was designed and how hotels actually use it. It is the person everyone quietly goes to when the documentation is technically correct but still not quite enough.

Organizations already have these experts. They just have not always built a practical way for those experts to teach.

This is important because a lot of workplace learning does not happen in a classroom or inside a learning management system. It happens in the moment when someone says, "Here's how I handle that." It happens after a mistake, during a handoff, in the five minutes before a shift gets busy, or in the exchange between a new employee and the person who has seen the same issue before. The problem is these moments are often informal, uneven, and dependent on who happens to be nearby.

Expertise Is Already Here



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Peer learning is a way to make those moments more intentional without turning them into another heavy program. At its best, it does not replace formal training. It strengthens it. It gives people a way to discuss the work, compare judgment, share patterns, and learn from the people who are closest to the job.

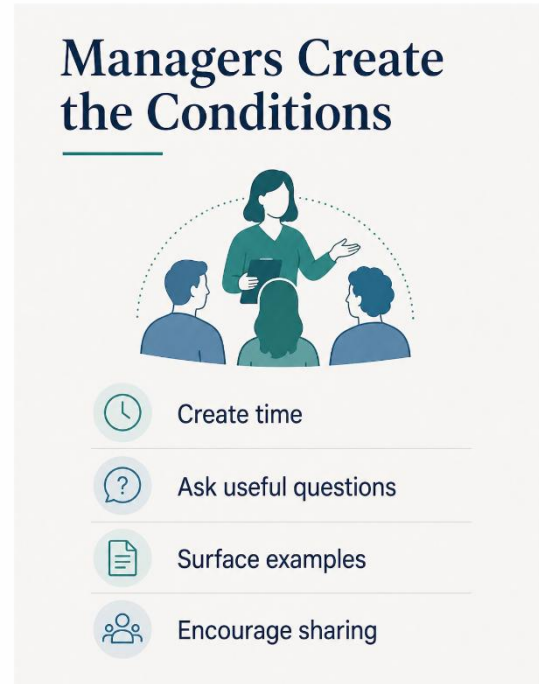
This is especially important in hospitality, but it is not limited to hotels. The same pattern shows up in call centers, field operations, software support, healthcare, retail, finance, and almost any environment where people have to apply procedures under real-world pressure. Formal training can explain the process. Learning from experienced colleagues helps people understand how the process behaves when the day is busy, the system is imperfect, and the customer still needs an answer.

The Manager Is Not Just the Person Who Checks the Work

One of the reasons peer learning gets overlooked is organizations often have a narrow view of the manager's role in training. The manager is expected to make sure employees complete required courses, attend meetings, follow procedures, and perform to standard. Those responsibilities are real. But they are only part of the picture.

In practice, the manager is often the person closest to the gap between training and performance. A corporate team may know what content was assigned. A learning team may know what courses were completed. A system owner may know what functionality exists. But the manager sees what happens when an employee tries to apply all of this during an actual shift. The manager sees where confidence breaks down, where the same question keeps coming up, where people invent workarounds, and where the official process does not fully match the pace of the operation.

The manager becomes more than a compliance checkpoint. The manager becomes the person who helps connect formal learning to daily work.



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This is not the same as saying every manager needs to become a trainer. In fact, the expectation can create more problems than it solves. Many managers are already overloaded. They are dealing with staffing, guest issues, operational pressure, administrative work, and performance expectations. Asking them to become full-time instructors is not realistic, and in many cases it is not even the right goal.

The better question is different: how can managers create the conditions where learning happens more often, more naturally, and with better guidance?

The manager's role becomes more interesting. A strong manager notices the recurring questions. They know which employee has developed a good way to explain a difficult process. They can tell when a team member has credibility with peers, even if the person does not have a formal title. They can pause after an issue and ask, "What did we learn from that?" They can turn a common mistake into a short team discussion before it becomes a pattern. They can invite the right person to share how they handle a situation, then connect the explanation back to the standard process.

This is a different way to look at management. The manager is not only supervising the work. The manager is shaping how the team learns around the work.

I saw this clearly with one organization I recently worked with. The training materials were important, and the system itself had useful features for the hotels it supported. But some of the adoption issues showing up in the field were not simply content problems. They were translation problems. People needed more than a course. They needed help connecting the system steps to the situations they were actually facing. They needed to hear how someone else handled the same workflow, the same guest question, the same exception, or the same point of confusion.

Sometimes the best resolution to a training issue is an enhancement to the underlying system. But sometimes the resolution is a better discussion between the people doing the work and the people trying to support them. Managers are in the best position to create those learning moments before frustration hardens into habit.

This is why peer learning should not be treated as something extra that happens only when there is time. It should be part of how managers help the team get better at the work itself. When managers learn to spot teachable patterns, draw

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out internal expertise, and connect team discussion back to standards, they become more than training enforcers. They become the people who help learning happen at the point where it is needed.

Formal Training Cannot Carry the Whole Load

Most organizations know how to produce formal training. They can build a course, write a job aid, record a video, create a knowledge article, and assign content through a learning platform. Those tools are useful, especially when the goal is consistency. If everyone needs to understand the same system, the same policy, or the same process, formal training gives the organization a common starting point.

But a starting point is not the same thing as mastery.

The challenge is the work rarely presents itself in the same clean order as a training module. A course can explain how to check in a guest, but it is harder for a course to fully capture what happens when the guest arrives early, the room is not ready, the payment type is confusing, the reservation came through an online travel agency, and the employee is still learning the property management system. A video can show the right sequence of screens, but it cannot anticipate every hesitation, every local variation, or every judgment call.



This does not mean the training is weak. It means the work is complex.

In a multinational hospitality company, a learning team may have to support many brands, property types, operating models, staffing levels, and levels of system experience. A limited-service hotel, a resort, an airport property, and a large urban hotel may all use the same core system, but the daily rhythm can feel very different. The training has to be standardized enough to scale, while the actual learning often has to be interpreted locally.

This is where peer learning fills a gap. It gives employees a chance to make sense of the formal content through discussion and example. They can ask the question

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they did not know they had during the course. They can hear how another property handles a similar issue. They can compare what the procedure says with what good judgment looks like in practice.

This is also where organizations need to be careful. Team-based learning should not become a place where people pass around bad habits or local workarounds that conflict with policy. It needs some structure. It needs a connection back to approved processes. It needs managers and learning teams to listen for patterns and correct misinformation when it appears. But the answer is not to avoid learning from peers. The answer is to guide it.

Because whether an organization supports peer learning or not, employees are already learning from each other. The only question is whether the learning is accurate, visible, and useful.

The Best Learning Often Starts as a Conversation

In many workplaces, the most useful learning moment does not look like training. It looks like a conversation between two people who are trying to get through the day.

Someone asks why a report looks wrong. Someone else explains what usually causes the issue. A new employee is unsure how to handle a guest concern, and an experienced colleague talks through the decision. A manager notices the same mistake happening across shifts and brings the team together for a quick discussion. None of this may be tracked in a learning system, but it may have more immediate impact than a formal course completed weeks earlier.

This is not because informal learning is always better. It is because it is closer to the work.

The problem is organizations often leave these moments to chance. Some teams have experienced employees who naturally explain things well. Others do not. Some managers make time for short learning discussions. Others are too busy or do not see creating learning moments



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as part of their role. Some properties develop strong local habits. Others repeat the same mistakes because no one has created a space to talk about them.

A peer learning approach does not need to make this complicated. It can begin with a simple question: what are the three or four situations employees are struggling with right now?

This question changes the starting point. Instead of beginning with a curriculum catalog, the organization begins with the work. What is causing rework? What creates guest frustration? What confuses new hires? What do experienced employees know that newer employees have not yet learned? What questions keep coming back to managers, support teams, or trainers?

Once those patterns are visible, a manager can turn them into short learning moments. A team huddle can focus on one recurring issue. A strong employee can demonstrate how they approach a workflow. A supervisor can compare two examples and explain which one better matches the standard. A learning team can listen to these discussions and decide whether the training materials need to be updated.

The last point is important. Practical learning in the flow of work should not only push knowledge out to employees. It should also bring information back into the organization. When people discuss the work honestly, they reveal where the process is unclear, where the system design creates confusion, and where the training does not answer the real question. The feedback is valuable. It helps the organization improve both the learning content and, when needed, the underlying process.

Hospitality Makes the Learning Gap Easy to See

Hospitality is a useful place to examine peer learning because the work is both procedural and human. Hotel employees follow systems, policies, brand standards, financial controls, and operational checklists. At the same time, they deal with guests who may be tired, frustrated, confused, excited, late, upset, or simply unfamiliar with how hotels work.

This combination makes the training challenge more difficult than it may appear from a distance.

A front desk agent may know the basic check-in process, but still need judgment when a card declines, a deposit does not match the reservation, a guest disputes a

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charge, or a room assignment needs to change. A night auditor may understand the checklist, but still need to recognize which blockers matter, which issues can be resolved, and which ones need to be clearly documented for the morning team. A manager may know the standard, but still need to coach an employee through the tone, timing, and confidence required to handle the guest well.

In those moments, employees are not only recalling steps. They are interpreting situations.

This is why learning from experienced colleagues can be so powerful in a hotel environment. Experienced employees carry a great deal of practical knowledge that may never be fully captured in a course. They know which questions reveal the real issue. They know how to explain a policy without sounding rigid. They know when to slow down and when to move quickly. They know where newer employees are likely to click the wrong option or misunderstand the meaning of a system message.

A large global hotel brand can invest heavily in formal learning and still miss this layer if it does not create ways for employees to learn from each other. The brand can provide the standard, but the property has to bring the standard to life across shifts, roles, and guest situations. This happens through practice, feedback, observation, and discussion.

The same point applies outside hospitality. Any organization with complex frontline work has this challenge. The more judgment the job requires, the more important it becomes to help employees learn from people who have already developed that judgment.

The Hidden Expert Is Not Always the Person with the Title

When organizations think about expertise, they often look first to leaders, trainers, system owners, or official subject matter experts. Those people matter, but they are not the only experts in the organization. In many cases, the most useful peer teacher is someone closer to the work.

It might be the employee who is especially good at explaining a process to new hires. It might be the person who stays calm during difficult guest interactions. It might be the team member who understands the system well enough to spot small mistakes before they become bigger problems. It might be someone who would never describe themselves as an expert, but whom everyone else already treats as one.

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This kind of expertise is easy to miss because it is not always loud. It may show up in small ways. People ask the employee for help. New hires watch how they handle situations. Managers trust their judgment. Support teams hear their name because they ask clear questions. They may not be the most senior person, but they have credibility.

Peer learning depends on identifying these people and giving them a simple way to contribute.

This does not mean turning them into formal trainers overnight. In fact, doing it too quickly can be a mistake. A strong performer may not want to lead a class. They may not know how to structure a lesson. They may not be comfortable presenting. But they may be very effective in a short discussion, a demonstration, a scenario review, or a small-group explanation of how they approach a recurring issue.

The organization's job is to lower the barrier. Make it easy for employees to share what they know. Give them a topic, a simple structure, and a reasonable time frame. Help them connect their advice back to the approved process. Recognize the contribution without making it feel like unpaid extra work piled onto an already busy role.

This is where managers and learning teams can work together. The manager sees who has credibility in the operation. The learning team can help turn credibility into a repeatable learning moment. Together, they can build a more practical bridge between expertise and performance.

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Structure Matters, but Too Much Structure Can Hamper It

Peer learning works best when it has enough structure to be useful, but not so much structure it feels like another corporate program layered on top of the work.

Balance matters. If learning from peers is too informal, the organization has no way to know whether the information being shared is accurate. The same bad habit can spread from one employee to another. A workaround can become a local standard. New hires may learn different versions of the process depending on who trained them. In this environment, learning is happening, but it is not necessarily helping.

On the other hand, if the approach becomes too formal, it can lose the very thing making it valuable. A quick huddle becomes a mandatory meeting with a slide deck. A practical exchange becomes a scripted session. Employees stop speaking honestly because the moment feels observed, packaged, and evaluated. The organization gets the appearance of learning, but not the real exchange of experience.

The goal is to create just enough structure. A manager might choose one recurring issue each week and use it as the basis for a short team review. A peer lead might share how they handle a specific situation. The discussion might begin with a real example, move into what the standard requires, and close with what the team should do differently next time. This is enough structure to keep the exchange useful without turning it into a class.

The learning team can support this by creating simple guides, topic prompts, and scenario examples. They can also provide boundaries. What must always be handled according to policy? What local variation is acceptable? What should be escalated? What should be documented? These guardrails help team-based learning stay accurate while still allowing employees to talk about the work in a practical way.

The point is not to build a parallel training department inside every team. The point is to make learning part of the rhythm of the operation.

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Peer Learning Also Reveals What the Organization Needs to Fix

One of the most valuable parts of peer learning is it can show the organization where people are struggling in the real work.

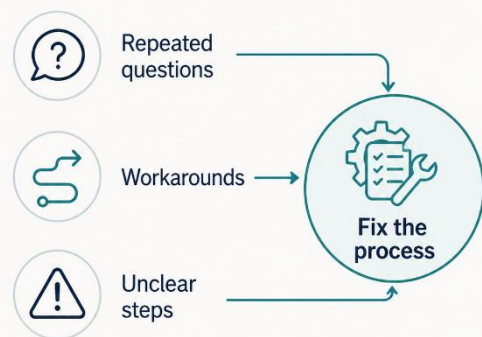
When employees talk about where they get stuck, they often reveal something useful. A procedure may be unclear. A system screen may not match the way the task is described in training. A report may be available, but employees may not know when to use it. A policy may make sense to corporate teams, but feel difficult to explain to a guest. A required step may be skipped not because employees are careless, but because the process is confusing under time pressure.

These issues are easy to label as training problems, and sometimes they are. But often, the discussion points to something deeper. The process may need to be clarified. The job aid may need to be rewritten. The system may need a better prompt or a cleaner workflow. The policy may need a better explanation for the field. The issue may not be that employees were never told what to do. The issue may be the work is harder to execute than it looked on paper.

This is why learning from peers should not be treated only as a way to improve employee knowledge. It can also help the organization listen more carefully to the field. The questions and examples coming to the surface at the team level can help learning teams improve content, product teams understand user behavior, operations teams refine procedures, and leaders see where expectations are not translating into practice.

It is tempting for organizations to hear field confusion and respond with more training. Sometimes more training is the right answer. But sometimes the better response is to ask why the same issue keeps requiring explanation. Is the system too hard to use? Is the workflow poorly designed? Is the policy unclear? Is the job aid answering the wrong question? Is the manager being asked to enforce a process that does not fit the reality of the operation?

Learning Reveals What to Fix



Patterns in discussion expose process, system, and training gaps.

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A healthy peer learning model does not assume all gaps are employee knowledge gaps. It treats the field as a place where the organization can learn, not just a place where standards are applied.

This is one reason I think the manager's role deserves a broader view. Managers are not just there to make sure the team completes training. They are also in a position to see whether the training, process, and system are working together. When they create space for teams to talk through real work, they are not only helping employees learn. They are helping the organization see where the work itself may need attention.

A Peer Learning Accelerator Gives the Idea a Practical Form

For peer learning to work across an organization, it needs a practical model. Not a massive program. Not a new layer of administration. Just a repeatable way to identify expertise, support managers, and turn common work challenges into useful learning moments.

One practical way to approach this is a Peer Learning Accelerator, or PLA. The name matters less than the function. The purpose is to help an organization move from accidental learning among peers to something more intentional and useful.

A PLA would begin by identifying the areas where this kind of learning can make the biggest difference. These are usually not broad topics like "customer service" or "system training." They are more specific. They might be recurring check-in issues, night audit blockers, payment and authorization confusion, housekeeping communication gaps, report interpretation, rate or package setup, or common questions encountered during a rollout. The best topics are close enough to the work where employees immediately recognize them.

The next step is to identify credible peer contributors. These are the people managers already rely on, the employees who explain things clearly, and the team members who understand both the process and the reality of the job. They do not

Peer Learning Accelerator



Focused topics



Skilled facilitators



Short sessions



Follow-up actions

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need to be perfect presenters. They need to be trusted, practical, and willing to help others learn.

Then the organization gives them support. The support can be simple: a short facilitation guide, a scenario, a few questions to ask, and a clear connection to the approved process. The goal is not to script every word. The goal is to keep the discussion focused, accurate, and useful.

Managers also need support. They need to know how to choose topics, when to use a huddle, how to invite a peer to share, and how to close the loop when the discussion reveals a bigger issue. They need permission to treat learning as part of the work, not as something only happening when a course is assigned.

Over time, the organization can capture the patterns. Which topics keep coming back? Which peer sessions are useful? Which questions suggest a content update? Which issues point to a system or process improvement? This is where shared field knowledge becomes more than a local practice. It becomes a way for the field to be heard before the same issues show up in another location.

A PLA does not need to be complicated to be effective. Its value comes from making the organization more deliberate about something that is already happening informally every day.

The Real Goal Is a Learning Organization That Uses Its Own Experience

The real promise of peer learning is not mainly about saving money on training or reducing the need for formal content. Those may be benefits, but they are not the main point. The deeper value is it helps an organization use its own experience.

Every day, employees solve problems, recover from mistakes, answer difficult questions, interpret procedures, and learn what works. Some of the knowledge makes its way into official materials, but much of it stays local. It stays in one property, one team, one shift, or one person's head. When this happens, the organization keeps relearning the same lessons in different places.

Peer learning gives the organization a way to capture and reuse property level knowledge.

It also changes how employees experience training. Instead of seeing learning as something delivered to them from somewhere else, they begin to see learning as something they participate in. The experienced employee has a way to contribute. The new employee has a safer way to ask questions. The manager has a practical

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way to coach without turning every issue into a formal performance conversation. The learning team gets a clearer view of where content is helping and where it is falling short.

This does not happen automatically. It takes intention. It takes managers who see learning as part of their role. It takes learning teams willing to respect practical expertise from the field. It takes leaders who understand not every performance problem can be solved by assigning another course. And it takes enough structure to keep peer learning accurate without making it feel artificial.

Organizations doing this well will not abandon formal training. They will make formal training stronger by surrounding it with discussion, practice, feedback, and local expertise. They will recognize the best learning systems are not built only in platforms. They are built in daily interactions, where people learn how the work actually gets done.

For leaders, the challenge is not simply to produce more training. It is to pay closer attention to where knowledge already lives, how it moves, and where it gets stuck. Once you start looking at learning in this way, managers, experienced employees, team huddles, and daily problem-solving discussions begin to look less like informal side activity and more like part of how the organization improves.

Your organization may already have the experts it needs. They may be answering questions quietly, coaching informally, and helping others succeed without a title or a program around them.

The opportunity is to notice them, support them, and give their knowledge a path to reach more people.

