

Performance Enablement

A New Paradigm for the
Distributed Workforce



 **Rallyware**

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Introduction

The last decade has seen an extraordinary bounty of technology innovations for distributed workforces. Companies have transformed all levels of their operations with a wide variety of digital tools which have allowed unprecedented flexibility and connectivity in growing the productivity of their distributed workforces. However, questions remain, namely – where is workforce technology headed? Which investments are most worthwhile? Which paradigm can best deliver results given today's challenges?

Spending on digital transformation is only [predicted to continue growing rapidly](#), from \$1.8 trillion in 2022 to \$2.8 trillion in 2025. Digital transformation is an organizational priority for 87% of senior executives, [according to Gartner](#), and those who lag behind will see major operating and revenue deficiencies, [reports Bain](#). Yet companies want to know what the value is of such transformation. Is there a more efficient, effective, and productive way of digitally transforming the core of their businesses, the distributed workforce?



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Tech Stacks and Singular Platforms

The extended period of piling one of-the-moment solution atop the last has brought us to an inflection point. As [Toppan Merrill puts](#) it in a recent publication, “[A giant stack is] inefficient, expensive, and introduces immense organizational risk.” For example, if a company has one solution for learning and another for engagement, this adds costs and makes it harder to rely on performance data, which here stems from separate sources. Put simply, siloed, one-off applications cobbled together with workaround integrations have become expensive, unwieldy, and outdated. [According to Deloitte](#), over 50% of the average IT department’s budget is spent on maintenance.

+50% of the average IT department’s budget is spent on maintenance

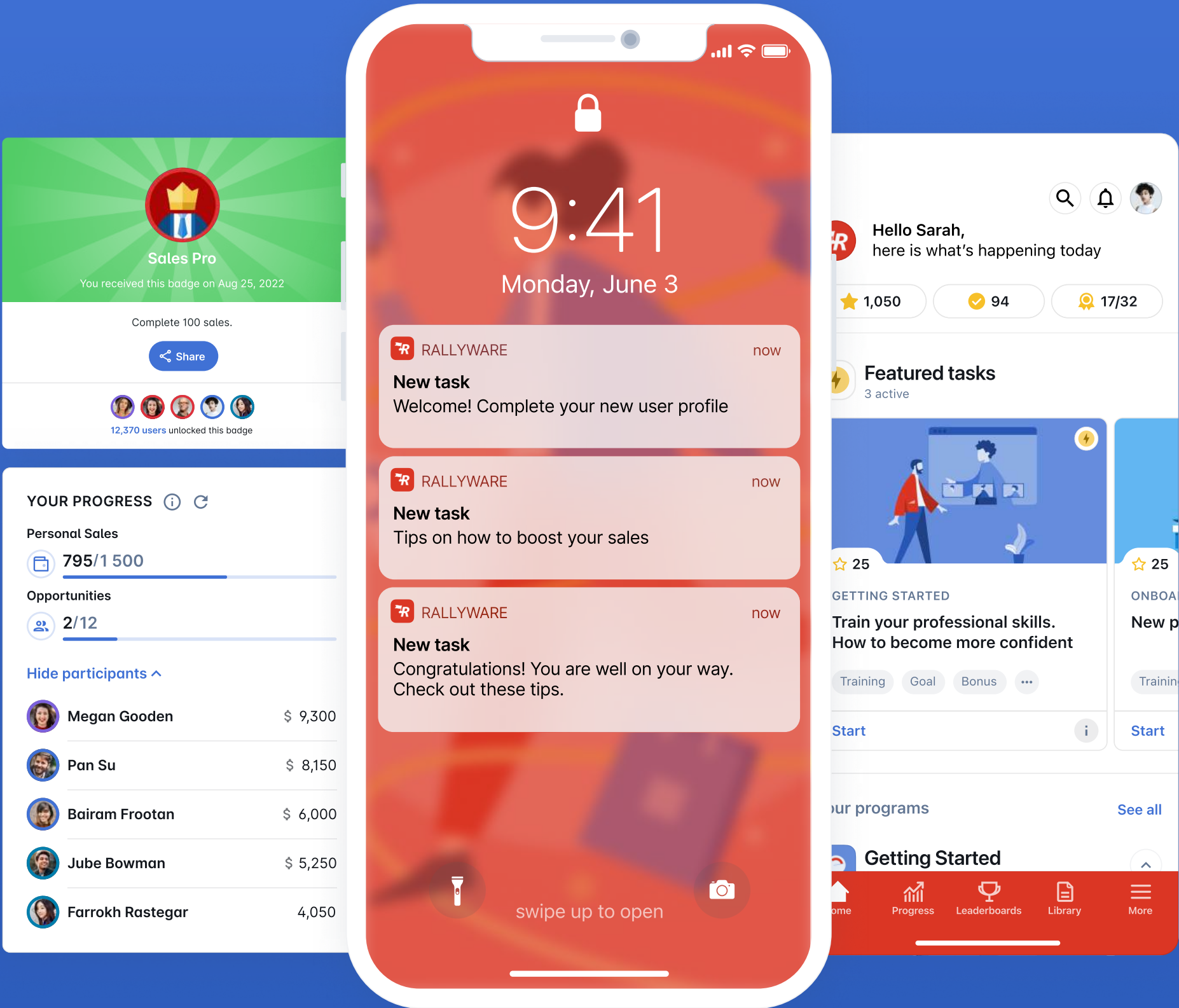
Furthermore, the old models of learning and enablement are not suited to the lower margins, tighter labor markets, and more complicated workforce arrangements of today. Nor do they adequately capture what is possible in technology today. The “classical” model of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and Learning Experience Platforms (LXPs) simply engage the workforce on the organization’s terms, telling the end user, “This is what the company thinks you should do next.” This could be called learning for learning’s sake, simply to educate the workforce. Rather than this model of technology delivery, which enables from the top-down, using directives based on company success, companies need a model which entices the workforce toward higher KPI achievement on the basis of their own personal success.

Indeed, the workforce has changed. **In 2022, workforce productivity slumped by the sharpest rate going back to 1947.** At the same time, the workforce has grown more remote and distributed, with the gig economy of freelancers and independent contractors [projected to grow about 17% per year.](#) After the ravages of the COVID pandemic, having saved money, individuals want to command their own labor without responding to a top-down form of management. With most gig platforms providing single, all-in-one apps that help contractors provide their services – everything ranging from food deliveries to repair work – organizations have to be able to keep up if they want to return productivity from its current fall-off.

In short, older enablement platforms do not matter to the individuals who use them. They tell the workforce, “Do this because it benefits the company; it is how we do things.” The workforce of today wants to hear, “Do this because it benefits you; it contributes to your success.”

Beyond that, there’s the question of time. Businesses need an empowered, productive workforce, and soon enough the core of that workforce will be Gen Z. As analysts at *The Guardian* [make clear](#), this generation expects companies to “embrace the latest if it will help them be productive.” If you’re not leaning into that as much as possible, you’re essentially destined to fall behind.

What kind of technology can respond to this need?



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Retailer Workforce Pain Points

Diving briefly into the retail industry, one popular furniture retailer's workforce faces challenges that its technology cannot solve and in some ways exacerbates. Upon discussion with members of this retailer's workforce, we learned that their technology was dispersed across multiple tools (8 apps), with associates having to jump from one app to another in order to manage learning, sales incentives, customer service, and other productivity boosters along with communication tools, information repositories, and digital libraries.

They lacked information ready to hand, such as their personal sales progress, and had to ask their managers manually for such data. They couldn't at a glance compare their sales to their goals and to one another. Thus, the frontline were disassociated from their goals, whether that be commissions or just recognition for a job well done. Notably, this stemmed in large part from the sheer separateness of their tools, the "siloeing" we have already mentioned.

The Future of Distributed Workforce Technology: Performance Enablement Platforms (PEPs)

As discussed, traditional LMS and LXP technologies can target certain important workforce goals like learning, training, and engagement – but they are limited by their structure. First, they are not as a rule calibrated to target core business KPIs like productivity and sales performance. They might have the workforce get trained and initiated better, but are these tools continually raising performance in smarter and smarter ways?

For her company, Joan uses an app that shows her learning content. Once she's learned all she needs to, she has no use for the app. She deletes it from her mobile device; she's fully onboarded. But truly modern technology views learning as a flexible, ongoing process, one that changes and transforms along with Joan's goals, progress, and productivity.

Second, LMS and LXP are limited by their architecture. Are they incorporating elements like sales performance data into the learning content being delivered? Are they driving disparate elements through a single smart notification system? Simply put, these platforms view "learning" as a good in itself, whereas recent advances in technology view learning as one part of a multi-angled, singularly coherent model for driving workforce performance, a model consolidated into a single experience.

This model, or paradigm, is called **performance enablement**. Performance enablement began cropping up in thought leadership as a “[solution for the Great Resignation](#)” in spring 2022, though it’s worth noting that certain platforms have been delivering technology to intelligently enable performance for years. As often, thought leaders are now coming to understand a transformation that has already been in place for many innovators and market leaders who foresaw changes in the labor market and have adopted such systems.

Briefly, performance enablement deepens and broadens this principle by not only meeting the workforce’s learning and engagement needs, but driving their performance upward and reinforcing the most productive, proactive behaviors. It is enablement not merely for the sake of training or engagement, but in order to increase measurable KPIs continuously. The PEP model of technology disrupts distributed workforce tech by targeting specific gains in productivity in real time, using data from multiple consolidated tools to maximize personalization, and thus outcomes.

Is your platform ready to enable performance?

System Architecture	Yes or No?
Consolidates productivity & comms tools	
Uses learning to target KPIs	
Personalizes user experience	
Drives positive behavior changes	



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“Just for Me!” Technology: Personalized Experience Guided by Performance Data

Using KPIs to Guide Personalization

Defining the best ways to achieve and measure growth is critical. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) quantify the elements of organizational strategy, enabling leaders to monitor, analyze, and adjust accordingly. This has been a constant in business for generations, but over time KPIs change along with the market; and not only do KPIs change, but the way we measure them changes.

However, one of the major elements of what makes LMS and LXP technologies obsolete is just this – that they stop at measurement and tracking of KPIs, rather than driving them in a personalized way for each user. Here we have one of the core competencies of PEP as a model.

Establishing KPIs begins with asking the right questions: What drives our revenue and end-customer service delivery? How does our workforce create this value? Which elements of performance matters the most? KPIs translate these organizational aspirations into an infrastructure which makes them tangible and measurable. **Further, PEP transforms KPIs into livewire aspects of work itself, dynamically increasing from day to day as each individual’s behavior changes, rather than something static to be tracked after the fact.**

Traditional LMS and LXP architecture merely measures KPIs; historically, industry experts considered LMS KPIs as static and [focused on learning in itself](#) without consideration for return on investment (ROI) and revenue. The PEP model goes beyond this “dummy” use of performance data, leveraging KPIs as a way of forming and shaping every element of the user journey in real time. In the case of PEP, for instance, a direct seller will not only have learning activities, but learning and to-do activities that are surfaced live for distributors as they make sales progress. Multiple aspects of the work process are intertwined and inform each other to personalize the experience for the company and the end user.

This smart process of “surfacing” activities gets driven by the “business rules engine,” which uses pre-defined rulesets to determine the kinds of things that end users see – for example, an individual whose performance is dropping will receive a notification with a suggestion for how to improve it.



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Combined with these pre-set rules, **the business rules engine uses individual performance data to figure out the right action for the right person at the right time.** The distributed workforce doesn't feel in the dark anymore. Their platform is there for them – think of the Uber app pinging a driver about a nearby rideshare opportunity, only instead the platform is suggesting ways to improve performance at the moment an individual is struggling: certain former customers to follow up with, selling tips for the new collection, or a reminder on current monthly bonus progress. “This notification is just for me!” the user ought to think. “Just at the moment I needed it!” That’s a profound shift.

Below are the three core capacities for platforms which actively target KPIs. Rather than just “workforce development” or “learning experiences,” these are active processes that dynamically shape the workforce experience (WX) and drive positive behavior change.

Is your platform driving KPIs?

System Architecture	I have it
Calibrates user journey in real time	
Delivers on-time activities	
Personalizes experience	

Using KPIs to Guide Personalization

Activities are the building blocks of WX, in that they show individual workforce members what to do and when, at the same time building necessary skills and know-how. Their completion drives productivity, but the problem is that on older platforms, activities are only focused on learning without driving value.

As an evolution in B2B technology, the PEP model surfaces the right activities to drive performance, and by extension organizational KPIs, ever-upward. Activities become more attuned to each individual's performance needs the more he or she uses the platform. Breaking it down, activities types might include:



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Learning activities:
upskilling, reskilling for
maximum impact on
KPIs

To-do activities:
concrete, real-world
actions to perform to
reach goals



Learning activities target skill gaps surfaced by performance data, while to-do activities are optimized for real-time daily business activity.

What Are Learning Activities Like?

Build Teams

"I need to learn more about team empowerment to progress my career!"

Reinforce Knowledge

"I really need to bone up on my knowledge to reach my sales goals for the week."

Develop Pitch

"I'm unsure about my pitch for that product. I'll watch that tutorial right now!"

What Are To-Do Activities Like?

Reach Out

"I should reach out to that customer – they'll love this item."

Refocus

"I'm behind on my productivity goals! I need to focus on this new product line."

Incentivize

"Wow, only \$200 more in sales and I get a watch. Let's go!"



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The more users engage with the platform, the smarter it becomes at tracking knowledge absorption and application, and the smarter its triggers become at generating real time value. Beyond simply collecting intelligence, the platform then uses that “smartness” to target KPIs in ways that are immediately relevant to the individual’s success. As we have already outlined, the platform isn’t saying, “Do this activity because the company wants you to”; it’s saying, “Do this because it’s going to help you” – yet in a way that’s calibrated to the company’s core performance metrics.

Positive Behavior Changes

The smart development and reinforcement of positive behaviors is central to PEP models of technology. By continuously collecting, tracking, and interpreting data in relation to KPIs, PEPs continuously introduce and reinforce positive behaviors suited to those KPIs. In the Rallyware analysis of 2.4M data points for 285K users, completed personalized activities increased distributed workforce productivity by 21.8%.

+21.8% productivity for distributed workforce after completion of personalized activities

Beyond productivity, continuous upskilling and reskilling are crucial for engagement and retention. **29 percent** of millennial and Gen Z workers are more likely to stay with an organization that offers opportunities for professional growth, and rank learning and development first in their reasons for choosing their current organization. Across all generations, studies show that **94 percent** of workers would stay affiliated with their organization if the enterprise invested in their growth – an investment manifested in technology that actively supports their success.

Technology Workforce Industry Pain Points

OwnBackup wanted in 2021 to find a platform that could drive more net pipeline opportunities for their complicated sales process in a streamlined manner.

As a Salesforce App Exchange partner, OwnBackup leverages Salesforce sellers, account executives, and solution engineers to recommend their technology to their customers, requiring a complex procedure that moves from virtual meetings and account mapping sessions to discovery calls with customers.

The PEP they chose helped them access more Salesforce personas faster, in part because those who signed up for sales “contests” could choose their own adventure. The highly personalized PEP, they found, molded the user experience to an individual’s self-defined sales goals, rather than employing a “one size fits all” methodology premised on the company’s success instead of personal achievements.



Smart Notifications for Real-Time Enablement

Vital to PEP’s disruption of performance software is not just the “what” of KPI-driven activities and behavior changes, but the “how” of delivery. How does the enablement get delivered to the workforce to maximize productivity in a dynamic fashion? PEPs use high-level automation to grasp where, when, and how to notify users – in addition to “what” to notify them of – in order to drive activity completion and thus productivity. Optimizing delivery reduces friction for the user and facilitates behavior modification. According to internal analysis, 58% of activities surfaced by smart notifications are completed, increasing productivity by 131%.



58%

of activities surfaced by smart notifications are completed



+131%

increase in productivity from enabling smart notifications

Earlier models of technology delivery, such as LMSs and LXPs, have often moved on a linear path toward a pre-determined goal, where PEPs determine the right activity at the right time for the right individual, and then surface that activity.

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The pertinent question is how this feels to the user. It's an experience of simplicity – the right activity to achieve the individual's personalized goals at the moment she needs it.

An employee for a franchise business uses a legacy LMS and receives occasional notifications to complete learning that has nothing to do with her sales goals – such as receiving more in commission. Yet a smart notification will be tailored to her past performance data – learning material she's viewed in the past, sales performance so far, her self-defined goals, and company KPIs.

Behavior modification is further enhanced by a UX grounded in the science of motivation. The [findings of researchers](#) Rebecca Johannsen and Paul J. Zak indicate that “increased perceived autonomy can significantly improve individual and group productivity.” This is borne out by the significance of gig work in the economy – people want to be more autonomous, particularly after COVID and the rise of remote work, and today there are the technologies and business arrangements to support that. How do you use technology to increase the feeling of autonomy to motivate productivity?

The answer is, in large part, PEP, which allows the workforce to be productive and execute on their goals within a single app. Rather than past models, which have shown individuals activities based on how they will benefit the company, PEP drives behavior modification based on activities that matter to the user in a personalized manner. That enhances the feeling of autonomy, because in place of a top-down authority managing their progress, they're motivated and guided by their own success, their own goals.

Rallyware designed an internal study of global clients who each have distributed workforces of at least 50 individuals to assess which combination of tools and technologies contributed most to productivity growth. The study showed a strong correlation between real-time enablement driven by smart notifications and productivity gains.

- Learning activities alone **increased productivity by 8%**
- Learning activities and business activities **increased productivity by 14%**
- Learning activities and business activities delivered via smart notifications **increased productivity by 34%**
- Learning activities and business activities animated with social features and delivered via smart notifications **increased productivity by 38%**

By comparison, a traditional LMS, which combines learning activities with social features, [increases productivity by only 6%](#).

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The PEP Landscape

Survey the landscape of PEP technology as it currently stands. This grid has been designed on the basis of objective criteria such as revenue, employees, and listed features.



Though the PEP landscape is still evolving, this grid shows that there is plenty of innovation and disruption therein. This makes sense for a paradigm of technology that's built for a new world of work.



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Key Takeaways: Transforming Digital Transformation

At a time when the workforce is changing rapidly, becoming more independent and distributed, they need technology that meets them where they are rather than forcing them into an arrangement that no longer matters to them. The older types of systems served an older type of workforce, but today's workforce is more self-driven, favoring a bottom-up approach to management, in other words self-management and self-enablement.

From the gig economy boom to the productivity slump, the workforce is giving leaders a message loud and clear: "We want our own productivity to matter to us." PEP technology is the delivery model that best suits this urgent desire, through elements such as tool consolidation, experience personalization, behavior modification, and smart notifications.

- The needs of the distributed workforce have evolved beyond past workforce arrangements, including LMS and LXP systems.
- Performance enablement platforms (PEPs) answer the deficits of legacy tech stacks by moving from one-size-fits-all, de-personalized technology to real-time enablement.
- Every element of PEP is aligned with company KPIs and individual goals, so that every activity generates real value for the organization.
- PEP uses data to personalize smart notifications, continually reinforcing positive behavior change and increasing productivity.
- The behavioral science of motivation animates PEP UX and WX, increasing the feeling of autonomy.

Ready to supercharge your workforce for growth?

[Schedule your demo](#)



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