

Booz Allen Hamilton Unlocks Talent Retention and Productivity Through Upskilling

Booz | Allen | Hamilton

Industry

Professional Services;
American Management
and IT Consulting Firm

Number of employees

28,000

Number of learners

27,000

Company HQ

McLean, VA

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Thanks to Udemy Business, Booz Allen has armed our workforce, specifically data scientists, with highly relevant and in-demand tech skills that are enabling consultants to stay ahead of big data trends and raise the bar on proficiency, skills, and competencies to meet client demand.



Jim Hemgen
Principal for Booz Allen Hamilton

Key Business Outcomes Supported by L&D:

3%

Increase in billable hours

93%

Retention rate for program graduates

93.5%

Students rated as highly proficient in data science upon completion

65%

Learners have indicated *“a positive impact on productivity”*

The Challenge

Address growing need for highly proficient data scientists to work on client engagements, while tackling a critical hiring shortage that makes talent upskilling and retention essential.

The Solution

Udemy Business powers a Booz Allen Hamilton learning & development program that trains thousands of data scientists while improving career development and elevating revenue.

Headquartered in northern Virginia, Booz Allen is a global firm of approximately 28,000 diverse, passionate, and exceptional people driven to excel, do right, and realize positive change. Booz Allen created the concept of management consulting more than a century ago and this culture of innovation empowers their employees as creative thinkers, bringing unparalleled value and ingenuity to clients and their challenges.

Booz Allen employees provide world-class, industry leading expertise in the areas of Strategy and Consulting, Analytics, Digital Solutions, Engineering, and Cyber across industries ranging from defense to health to energy to international development. Innovation has always been core to company culture—and through the **Technical (Tech) Excellence** program the organization has reaffirmed its commitment to clients through an investment in its people.

Challenge

From highly-skilled technical talent to improving engagement, robust learning is critical for Booz Allen

In recent years, organizations in all industries—from health, to national security, to finance, to energy—have realized the benefits of employing highly-skilled technical talent. Consequently, the demand for such talent has exploded, making it very difficult to recruit and retain these individuals. In fact, the demand for certain skill sets literally outweighs the supply.

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As learning experience architects, we had to think carefully about every aspect. We needed to build a compelling ecosystem that featured high-quality, curated content, and it had to be delivered efficiently, securely, and at scale for our globally distributed firm. Udemy Business has been core to our successful ecosystem.



Jim Hemgen
Principal for Booz Allen Hamilton

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We're taking action and accelerating our data science growth, investing in key technology and training partnerships to arm our employees with the capabilities they need to support our clients' most pressing challenges for years to come.



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Looking within Booz Allen, many employees with the necessary technical skillsets did not have the required clearance levels; and conversely, few with the required clearance level had the necessary technical skills. As a result, sold and funded positions often remained unfilled, sometimes for several months and even at the cost of the loss of the contract. The firm quickly realized that to position itself as a leading provider of solutions in technology, it would need to aggressively commit to reskilling and upskilling existing and newly hired employees

The Learning and Development (L&D) team partnered with leaders across multiple business units and talent acquisition to determine where greatest needs existed across the workforce. The team analyzed volume of unfilled job requisitions to determine hard-to-fill jobs, interviewed leaders challenged with lack of qualified candidates, and assessed reasons why cleared applicants did not complete hiring process. Data showed the firm experienced talent shortages in four technical domains – 1) Data Science, 2) Cyber Engineering, 3) Modern Software Development, and 4) Cloud Engineering.

One major business group identified 30 highly cleared candidates were turned away for incomplete qualifications. Further analysis showed this population lacked 20-30 percent of skills compared to those that were successfully hired. The L&D team probed other business groups dependent on highly cleared talent to discover similar hiring challenges.

The proposed solution was to establish a centralized, firm-sponsored program to develop in-demand skills and provide experience for junior, cleared talent to create a pipeline of qualified talent for in-demand roles. The desired business outcome was measured by recovered profitability loss resulting from unfilled sold and funded job requisitions.

Leadership outlined distinct goals which the L&D team translated into design requirements for their solution search.

Getting the balance right for both hiring and upskilling

Because the DC metro area is exceptionally competitive for talent, the L&D team knew it wasn't practical to consider hiring the necessary number of skilled workers outright. The most advantageous approach would be a "build and buy" strategy, wherein some workers would be recruited and hired externally, and the remaining would be internally upskilled through formal training. Of course, new hires wouldn't all be ready-made experts on day one. Many would also need to be trained in some capacity to meet Booz Allen's growing business needs—as well as its need to retain critical talent in such an aggressive market.

"Striking this balance," says Jim Hemgen, Principal for Booz Allen Hamilton, "was a challenge we knew required the right online learning partnership and the right talent acquisition playbook to both hire and upskill efficiently." With training as the linchpin of its new initiative, the L&D team had work to do.

Clear objectives translated into solution design requirements for Booz Allen L&D:

- 1. Boost revenues** by competing for and winning most complex client solutions contracts. Close the gap in opportunity loss resulting in lack of qualified candidates.
- 2. Attract top diverse talent** in alignment with firm's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.
- 3. Create a sustainable approach for building technical talent** within Booz Allen while continuing to increase the technical workforce representation 10 percent over three years.

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Striking a balance between training new hires to meet Booz Allen’s growing business, and retaining critical talent in this aggressive market, was a challenge we knew required the right online learning partnership and the right talent acquisition playbook to both hire and upskill efficiently.



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Solution

Udemy Business elevates Booz Allen learning program to unprecedented engagement levels

Booz Allen Hamilton’s status as a federal contractor means the firm always conducts due diligence with a comprehensive search and evaluation—and the quest for a new online learning partner was no exception. After careful consideration of multiple vendors, Booz Allen ultimately found Udemy Business checked every box on its wish list, from exceptional content to security, scalability, and ease of use.

The L&D team then designed a very flexible new framework, powered by Udemy Business, that gives learners easy access to the content they need to reach their learning objectives. The framework features a blended approach of asynchronous learning, instructor-led courses, mentoring, and capstone projects.

As a firm, Booz Allen Hamilton wanted to do more than simply navigate the world of data science—**they wanted**

to be game-changers in the field. That meant filling the firm’s talent pool with experts who could intelligently translate data insights into profitable business outcomes for clients. That’s why, Booz Allen launched its first **Tech Excellence** program focused on Data Science, backed by Booz Allen’s leadership, setting a bold goal: to employ 5,000 skilled data scientists.

Tech Excellence in learning from the top-down

Senior leaders spoke to the program's importance in All Hands meetings and written communications - "We have built our data science practice over the last five years, but the availability and complexity of data, data structures, and data sources only continues to grow. We can't let our ourselves or our clients lose sight of finding and leveraging new insights that are actionable and meaningful. In all transparency, organizations that are unable to keep pace with the volume of data growth will get left behind," Shares Hemgen. "That's why we're taking action and accelerating our data science growth, investing in key technology and training partnerships to arm our employees with the capabilities they need to support our clients' most pressing challenges for years to come."

Powerful words from leaders like this encourage managers and participants to understand that the Tech Excellence program is an investment in employees, clients, and the firm. The development team deliberately incorporated Booz Allen's BE3 promise—Be You, Be Booz Allen, Be Empowered—into the program to deliver on the firm's broader employee value proposition, enabling employees to learn without limits and develop newfound confidence. Before long, the program grew to 500 participants. And today, the count has grown by **an impressive 300% from its starting point**, with over 2,000 employees leveraging the data science learning program alone, in just four years.

With fewer than 40% of Booz Allen employees engaging in their previous solution, in its place they deployed the Udemy Business online system designed to entice learners with top-quality courseware and a personalized learning program—something that showed employees The firm was eager to invest in their long-term career development and retention. From the start the new solution needed to be something that a lean L&D team could easily support, Udemy Business as come through for us. "As learning experience architects, we had to think carefully about every aspect,"

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In L&D, we often are constrained by limited resources and think in terms of operational excellence. Udemy Business has supported our ability to scale our learning program effectively, adeptly achieving this milestone objective.



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65% of learners have indicated a positive impact on productivity here at Booz Allen. Even more impressive, we estimate that the acquired knowledge and experience afforded by Udemy Business’s content is helping our consultants close client projects three times faster.



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recalls Hemgen. “We needed to build a compelling ecosystem that featured high-quality, curated content, and it had to be delivered efficiently, securely, and at scale for our globally distributed firm. Udemy Business has been core to our successful ecosystem.”

Results

Personalized learning paths scale up employee productivity and engagement at Booz Allen

With Udemy Business as its learning partner, Booz Allen Hamilton employees take full advantage of not only the platform’s top-quality content, but also the engaging features that enable content to be delivered via scalable, personalized pathways. Employees can also further their progress through online assessments tailored to their specific needs, as well as through a blended learning model that focuses on hands-on projects in the classroom. Mentor circles, composed of Booz Allen employees with advanced training, provide additional support and engagement throughout the learning journey.

Combined, these modalities enable Booz Allen learners to rapidly achieve learning objectives that directly impact their day-to-day work—and the results speak for themselves.

93.5% of students are now rated highly proficient in data science upon completion of their assigned courses, and 65% of learners have indicated a positive impact on productivity. Even more impressive, Booz Allen estimates that the acquired knowledge and experience afforded by Udemy Business's content is helping consultants close client projects three times faster.

Not surprisingly, Booz Allen is also experiencing a **93% retention rate for graduates of its advanced learning program**, which is a 9% increase over non-graduates.

L&D initiatives drive bottom-line results across the firm

Thanks to Udemy Business, Booz Allen has armed its workforce, specifically its data scientists, with highly relevant and in-demand tech skills that are enabling consultants not only to stay ahead of big data trends, but also to raise the bar on proficiency, skills and competencies available to meet client demand. As such, Booz Allen is able to translate its upskilling of in-house expertise into competitive advantage in the market, while also saving on the time and expense of external talent acquisition.

Of course, having a greater number of highly skilled data scientists is also paying off in terms of revenue growth. Since implementing its new learning framework supported by Udemy, Booz Allen has seen a **3% increase in consultant billability**, and this growth is expected to continue, as client demand for data science expertise drives new client engagements at a record pace.

Each October Booz Allen conducts a firmwide employee satisfaction survey. When comparing the survey results of the general workforce versus the Tech Excellence graduate population for the 2021 fiscal year, we found that Tech Excellence graduates had an employee satisfaction range of 3.1 % higher than the general Booz Allen population.

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The Booz Allen Talent Marketplace, featuring Udemy Business, will empower our employees to build targeted skills, expand qualifications, and help them successfully navigate careers from within.



Jim Hemgen
Principal for Booz Allen Hamilton

Looking forward

To a thriving future with expanded Upskilling, Certification and Badges Program, plus new Talent Marketplace at Booz Allen

With a new year of growth ahead, the L&D team plans to dive deeper into supporting upskilling and retention. One project involves exploring best practices around compensation increases, particularly as they relate to a robust **badging and certification process**, so the firm can continue to stay ahead in the market while competitively building its capacity; ultimately investing across the organization to keep talent on board.

The team is also excited to leverage assessment data to better understand how skills are applied in the Booz Allen workplace. The goal is to continue guiding employees toward the right programs and aptitudes for optimal long-term career success. This is especially important as the L&D team is set to deploy a new **Booz Allen Talent Marketplace, featuring Udemy Business, which will empower employees to build targeted skills**, expand qualifications, and help them successfully navigate careers from within.

Thankfully, Booz Allen is already leveraging Udemy Business content on its new learning framework to support employees' career journeys and satisfaction. Using badging and certification processes, **consultants are now developing targeted skills and validating their expertise in high-demand subjects**. This has a unique two-fold advantage in that it increases marketability of the firm's services and experts while simultaneously expanding employees' skills for greater internal career mobility, so they can easily move to new projects in a thriving future of learning at Booz Allen.

About Udemy Business

Udemy's mission is to create new possibilities for people and organizations everywhere by connecting them to the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a changing world. Fueled by the Udemy marketplace, Udemy Business helps companies achieve critical business outcomes and stay competitive by offering fresh, relevant, and personalized on-demand learning. The Udemy Business subscription is a curation of top-rated courses taught by real-world experts from the Udemy marketplace. Our content covers key business and technical topics ranging from development and IT to leadership, marketing, design, stress management, and much more. In addition to a curated content collection, we offer a platform to drive effective learning as well as tools for leaders to host and distribute their own proprietary content.