

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

BENEFITS, APPROACHES, AND EVALUATION

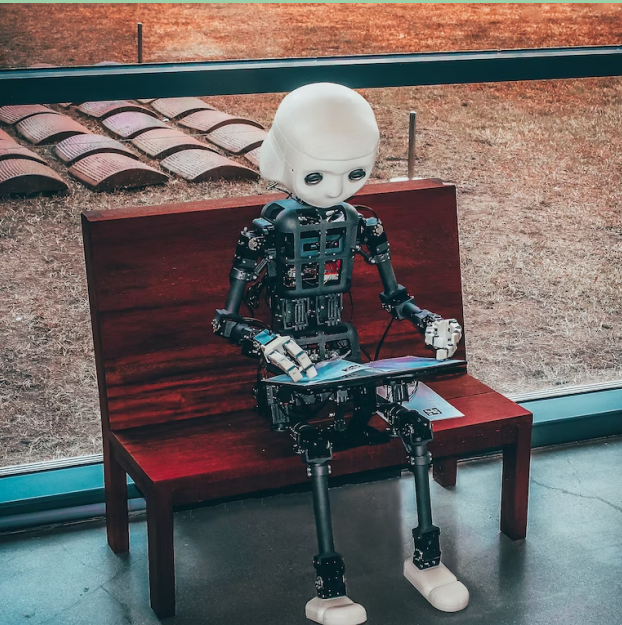
6.1 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS

In today's fast paced technological society, L and D is an essential for successful organisations. L and D addresses skill shortages caused by rapid technological advancement (Waite et al 2021 p208). L and D attracts and retains employees; A Workbuzz survey found (45 per cent) rank a "great" culture as the most important factor when looking for a new job (Mayne, M 2022). Benefits to individuals include, professional qualifications, maintaining current skills and career progression. Collaboration between organisations and employees fosters a learning environment. According to Garvin (sited in Healy, P, J 2020), "A learning organization is skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge, and at purposefully modifying its behaviour". So, it is not enough to just deliver a course and expect everyone to retain information and change their behaviour. We must work together to create a climate for learning. A study of 50,000 employees by Inpulse found that 81 per cent of those who felt trusted by their line managers were engaged in their work (Urquhart, J 2022). Our aim is to support leaders and managers that create opportunities for and supports learning. Where employees feel confident enough embrace change even at the risk of failure, knowing that they will be supported by their managers and co-workers, through effective communication and a supportive environment.



6.2 LEARNING NEEDS AND REASONS THEY ARISE

Learning needs arise from skill gaps. Although these needs usually present themselves as performance shortfalls, there are various reasons why they might arise. For example: An employee may struggle to hit their target of healthcare services in allocated working hours. However, we may find reasons that need different approaches to address their need. For example, issues with traffic in which case their routes could be examined (ineffective organisation), issues with effective delivery of certain services in which more specific training is needed (Knowledge based learning need), the employee may feel obliged to spend a longer time than necessary chatting with clients (Attitude/behavioural need). Therefore, it is vital that we explore the possible reasons for underperformance before we try to fix them. Individual performance gaps are not the only issues facing organisations. Change within the organisation creates the biggest need of L and D and if we want to stay competitive, we must move and change with the times. Change from within includes, a restructure of staff, new leadership, new equipment, new policies in which employees may need training and time to adapt. Change can also come from external factors like, political, technological, economic, or ethical changes. For example, the current debate on assisted end-of-life care could be a huge factor of change within our organisation (UK parliament 2022). Preparedness for expected and unexpected change is crucial.



6.3 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES.

Once learning needs have been identified, we must convert these into learning objectives. These must be clear and concise to avoid misinterpretation. We will next explore 4 different approaches to learning which may be used alone or blended together, and most can be on a one to one, or group basis.

Facilitation

Facilitation is a more hands off approach to learning, where the learner is expected to take more responsibility for their own learning. The facilitator may be on hand, to deliver some instruction, and then step back to let the learners manage their own learning. (Waite et al 2021 p213).

Training

Training puts more responsibility on the trainer as the expert, passing their knowledge or skills to others. However, the learner must not be passive, training activities should be delivered to stimulate the learner. (Waite et al 2021 p212).

Coaching

Coaching is a non-directive approach, where the coachee is expected to manage their own performance and identify their learning needs. The coach is there to assist their development, usually by listening and giving suggestions. (Waite et al 2021 p215).

Mentoring

Mentoring is usually a formal relationship between an employee and their superior in which the mentor acts as a guide. The difference between a mentor and a coach is that a mentor is acting in an advisory capacity, is usually more experienced in the mentees area of work, can be less task related and may discuss work, personal and career issues. (Waite et al 2021 p217).

Blend techniques for optimal learning: Online, face to face, group, and individual.
Benefits include diverse preferences, cost effectiveness, skill diversity, and improved IT capabilities.

6.4 DESIGN AND DELIVERY USING INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCE

As people have individual characters with individual learning needs, they each also have their individual requirements and preferences. One of the most influential theorists of adult learning is Michael Knowles' Theory of Andragogy (1913–1997). Knowles highlights adult learning traits: self-directing, experience based, interested in learning that is work/personally relevant, and are intrinsically motivated (Waite et al 2021). As adults will have had different life experiences, expectations about learning, and different motivational factors, we must design the delivery of L and D in a way that will engage the most employees. Engaging individual learners is relatively straightforward, as we can tailor a very specific programme. Effective group training is challenging considering the variety of learning requirements. To optimise engagement, provide a wide range of learning techniques and methods of delivery. For example, combine group training with one-to-one discussions and interactive online sessions with bite sized content such as podcasts, video clips etc. When delivering a group programme, acknowledge shared experiences and varying engagement levels.



6.5 EVALUATING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A survey of 1,000 L and D professionals found a majority (96 per cent) wanted to measure impact of learning however, more than a quarter (28 per cent) reported "not knowing how to get started" (Baska, M 2019)

Traditionally L and D evaluations would consist of a 'happy sheet' at the end of a training programme to measure the learner's reaction to the course. However, this does not measure the impact it has on the learner, or the value to the organisation.

The CIPD's RAM approach, focuses on the outcome for learner and organisation, rather than response from the learning event. Relevance: how learning provision will meet new opportunities and challenges for the business. Alignment: does it align with broader organisational strategy gives focus, purpose and relevance to L&D. Measurement: Effectively and consistently measure the impact, engagement and transfer of learning activities as part of the evaluation process. (CIPD factsheet 2022).

A case study by L and D consultant Lindsey Saunders shows how by asking the right questions, and by creating a framework that included a timeline which would follow up every learning intervention, her team enhanced the value of L and D projects to the organisation. By carefully selecting questions that would give them relevant data and being consistent in their approach which helped them embed the process with the business and helped them improve evaluation process and give it value to the business by informing future learning (Waite et al 2021).

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