

Learning and Development Factsheet

Word Count: 1151

Why learning and development activities are of benefit to individuals and organisations.

The benefits of having a clear and accessible learning and development policy in your organisation can help determine how successful both your employees and organisation becomes. In terms of attracting talent, a 2021 Gallup Survey showed that 57% of workers listed 'learning new skills' as the third most important perk when looking into job applications, only behind disability benefits and health insurance, (Amazon, 2021). However, whilst attracting talent is important, it is equally important to retain talent. Research conducted by LinkedIn explained that 79% of L&D professionals said it is more expensive to attract talent than to retain them, which ultimately shows how by offering L&D opportunities to your employees, you will not only retain staff but also save in terms of costing. (LinkedIn, 2022). Employees also benefit as they feel like they are valued and are given opportunities to grow, which can improve employee performance and keep boredom and negative attitudes at bay.

Different face-to-face and blended learning and development approaches.

There are many types of approaches to learning and development. Training being one of them, this is the most common approach used in L&D, and according to CIPD (2022), I designed to develop skills and is led by an instructor, whether that be a line manager or an instructor from an external company. There is also a facilitation approach, as Waite et al (2021), describes this approach as "more hands off" than training, and is more focused on supporting the learning process rather than delivering learning. Coaching and Mentoring are also seen to be effective ways in developing employees. Whilst similar, Coaching is seen to focus on skills and goals and mentoring is when a guide passes off their own knowledge to an employee. Other Learning and Development approaches that can be beneficial could be online learning. This could be due to employees choosing their own learning space and modules tend to be flexible meaning employees can work at their own pace. Waite, et al, (2021) emphasises the importance of using different L&D approaches to appeal and cater to a variety of Learning and Development styles. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many face-to-face training was moved to online sessions and the CIPD and Accenture survey reported that 79 per cent of organisations are using some form of technology to support e-learning.

At least two methods of evaluating learning and development and its impact

Assessing and evaluating our learning and development activities means that we can use our evidence and results to continue to improve and develop our activities, this way we will always aim to give the best development opportunities to our employees. We are also able to demonstrate the value and make the best use of our resources. The CIPD (2022), lists the Kirkpatrick model as a way of evaluating training. This model is broken down into four ways in which you can evaluate training, these are reactions, the way learners reacted to the learning. Learnings, how well they acquired the intended knowledge. Behaviours, how the learner's behaviour has changed because of the learning. Results, improvements made as a result of the training. We can collect this information in numerous different ways, such as statistics and scoring, or personal opinion and comments. Waite et al, (2021) criticises the evaluation practice as most organisations tend to evaluate once the learning has been completed, highlighting the importance of evaluating from the beginning through to the end of the learning.

Types of learning needs and reasons why they arise for individuals and organisations

As defined by Waite et al, (2021), learning needs are a gap in which what someone is required to do and what someone can do. According to Johnstone, (2017), there are five types of learning needs. These are relevance, experience, motivation, engagement and reinforcement. As all employees have unique learning needs it is crucial that as an organisation, we recognise this, and are prepared for when new ones can arise. Some reasons why these can arise could be due to legal change, for example, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees across the world had to adapt to different ways of doing their job in line with the law at the time. Another example could be due to technological changes. In a world that is heavily influenced by technology, organisations are frequently developing their systems or services. This would then call for a need of employees to be upskilled and trained on these new services as it is important that they understand what they need to do to make the best use of them. However, the biggest drive of learning needs is change, (Waite et al, 2021), as this could call for an organisational restructure of job roles and pay systems. However, it is important to note that managers should understand that whilst individuals have learning needs for their roles, they may also have their own personal goals they would like to achieve, which could bring forward new learning needs for the individual.

How, in the design and delivery of learning and development initiatives, individual requirements and preferences must be accommodated.

People management practices need to support all employees to thrive and take an individualised approach to do this, (CIPD, referenced in Waite et al, 2021). Depending on the job role and the individual, different employees require different learning and development needs and line managers should understand and be accommodating to that. This can seem to be quite easy when working with an employee or learner one-on-one, as we can take the time to discuss with them in depth about their learning needs and requirements and advise what the best learning approach would be for their needs, so they are able to get the most of their development. It is extremely important that we advise employees rather than try and mould them to fit into a specific learning style. By doing this, employees should be able make their own decisions on what learning style is best for them without any pressure from line managers and therefore, also helping line managers understand what learning style fits that individual employee. After delivering training of any kind, Waite et al, (2021), emphasises the importance for whoever carries out the training to ask themselves a variety of self-reflective questions. These could be, Was this training style the best fit for their learning needs? Or how could this be better for this individual?

It is important to note that when leading group training, not every individual will have the same learning requirements. Therefore, Waite et al (2021) discusses how it is important to deliver the objectives of group training sessions and how this is going to be achieved at the start whilst having room to make tweaks for different learning requirements. Trainers should also be frequently asking if the individual learners needs are being met throughout the session.

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