



Learning Insights 2018

This time it's personal

 **kineo**
A City & Guilds Group Business

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TO ME, LEARNING SHOULD BE A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES PROVIDED BY DIFFERENT KINDS OF TECHNOLOGY.

Virginia Hanchar, MediaCom

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Sometimes a piece of user-generated content is enough – you just need someone to share their expertise.

Stu Morens, GSK

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Our job is to look at what learners need and want to be able to perform their jobs better. As a profession we’ve spent too long telling learners what they need to learn. I’m looking forward to asking more: what’s the one thing we could provide to help you do your job?

Anthony Williams, Mitchells and Butlers

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WE’RE BUILDING TRAINING FOR THE FACEBOOK GENERATION. A GROUP THAT WANTS TRAINING ON THE SKILLS THAT THEY THINK THEY NEED, ON A DEVICE THEY OWN, DELIVERED AT A TIME OF THEIR CHOOSING.

Jeremy Hoyland, PepsiCo

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If you can put together a really effective engaging learning and development journey for an employee they will enjoy it more and stay longer.

Ben Walton, PizzaExpress

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Introduction

Welcome to Kineo's latest Learning Insights report – our annual pulse-check on the learning and development world. As usual we have compiled this report after asking you what's going on in the market. What you'll read here is the result of interviews and an online survey which gave over 200 L&D professionals the chance to share their thoughts.

Working on Learning Insights is always my favourite activity of the year. It gives me a chance to hear directly from our clients about their success stories, their challenges and what's driving their ongoing development. We often say that the best thing about Kineo is the amazing people we work with – and, of course, that includes our clients. Without their ambition, determination and willingness to take a risk now and again, we simply wouldn't get the chance to work on such exciting projects.



We asked: what are the biggest new trends in L&D?



So I'm interpreting this year's title – *this time it's personal* – in two ways. We discovered that personalisation for the learner is a big preoccupation right now. Whether that means tailoring the content you offer, allowing employees to determine their own development pathway or being aware of each learner's technology requirements, it's on the minds of our respondents.

For me, the title also means making it personal for each participant and each reader. When compiling a report like this it's natural that we look for the trends – what's consistent or similar across the responses? And of course there were plenty of similarities. If I had a penny for every time I heard someone say they wanted their LMS to become a 'destination', for instance...! That's great because it means we can understand and support each other, and learn from others' experiences.

But each interview was unique and no business has exactly the same challenges as another. What's right for one team or organisation may not work out for you. More than that – what's working for one specific L&D leader may not work for another because we all bring different skills, strengths, experience and character to our roles. I love hearing the passion with which our interviewees describe a project they've been close to. So often there's a distinct personality shining through the finished product – and it's clear that your learners recognise and appreciate that. Making it personal means recognising that learning is about people-to-people interactions. We even prefer interacting with a learning management system if it has been given a name and identity!

I hope we've managed to reflect some of that individuality in this report, and that you'll find something that resonates with you on a personal level.

Jenny Lycett,
Marketing Director, Kineo



WE IDENTIFIED SIX BIG THEMES THIS YEAR:



power
to the learner



RE-IMAGINING
LEARNING
PLATFORMS

SUPPORTING
PERFORMANCE
AT THE
RIGHT TIME



WHAT DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION
MEANS FOR



LED



THE
CHALLENGES
OF
GLOBALISATION



BE A CONSULTANT
FOR YOUR
INTERNAL CLIENTS

1

Whatever happened to the heroes?

So, what about the big themes we identified in last year's report? Did they enter the mainstream with a bang or fade away with a whimper? We take a look at what has changed in a year.



Progress over perfection

The rate of business change hasn't slowed and L&D teams must still respond quickly. Our interviewees told us that if a learning need arises they'd much rather get a solution out in time to make a difference – even if it isn't perfect. But there's another trend at play here: we heard that L&D teams are up-skilling so that they can handle smaller projects in-house rather than spend time briefing a supplier. They're interested in creating a true partnership – where their external L&D solution provider can deal with larger projects while empowering and supporting the in-house team to be more self-sufficient and nimble.

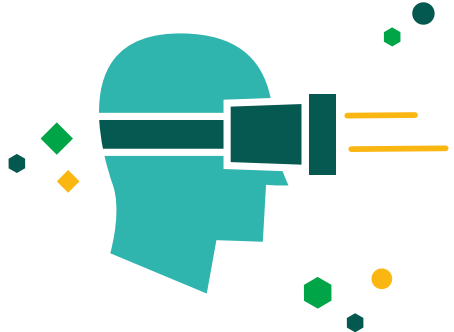


Have a go heroes

From 'we're just going to have a go' to a far more defined 'we're trialling a few new things to assess what suits our requirements' in one short year. There's still something that compels L&D professionals to try out new technology and to stay abreast of tech changes. But in most cases it's tempered by a very sensible, frugal and business-aware strategy. Last year's dalliance with AR and VR hasn't led to any dramatic change, although virtual reality is gradually gaining a place in the L&D mix – only when it's suitable to the project and practical for the work setting.

From courses to resources

The phrase 'resources not courses' is still a poster boy for the way workplace learning really works, or *should* work. More and more we hear that our clients are aiming to provide performance support and a range of tools for their employees to access when needed. Aside from mandatory compliance requirements, the traditional 'course' is well and truly out of vogue.



Social learning and the wisdom of crowds

Our respondents are taking a far more sophisticated and considered approach to social learning now. Of course, learning from each other and sharing knowledge still happens naturally and we want to tap into that, but we're not going after 'social learning' just for the sake of it. In fact, the phrase 'social learning' itself didn't really crop up in many of our interviews – a buzz-phrase no more. Instead we heard about ways of allowing learners to share and collaborate (both off and online), and allowing subject-matter experts in the business to create content of their own.



Content curation

Sure, content curation is still a big issue and there's still a consideration for those L&D professionals seeking to develop this skill set. But actually when it comes to curation the concern is largely with the learning platform and how it will handle this. Does it have a powerful enough search function so that employees can actually find the content

they need? Does it allow for curation in different ways – into a career pathway, for instance, or content that's tagged by other learners? Will it allow users to generate and upload their own content?



Development pathways

As we'll see, personalisation is a big trend this year. The development pathway is part of that – allowing individuals to follow or create their own course of learning. And forward-thinking businesses are looking to show employees the next step – what do I need to do or learn to be ready for the next stage in my career? Again, the big challenge for our interviewees is making sure their learning platform caters for this.



2

All power to the learner

We've known all along that learning is about the learner, haven't we? The clue is in the name. So why has it taken us so long to shape our L&D offering accordingly?

This has come up in our Learning Insights reports for the past couple of years – the idea of L&D professionals 'letting go' and relinquishing the 'control' they've had over learning in their business. But... do we really want to talk in such 'them and us' terms? We're all aiming for the same outcomes, after all. Of course it makes sense that each employee is in the driving seat for their own development and our role in L&D is to facilitate that and make it as good a process as we can.

Even when it comes to serving a wider business goal or delivering mandatory training – it's still about what the learner needs to gain knowledge in the best way. And our most effective tool is simply to ask. In our online survey we asked what kind of help would be needed to meet L&D goals. Only 57% of respondents cited 'information from learners about their needs' – a massive uplift on the 42% from 2017, but still only just over half. Can the other chunk truly be providing a useful and effective learning experience without this information?

One of our interviewees summed this up very well:

"Our job is to look at what learners need and want. As a profession we've spent too long telling learners what they need to learn. I'm looking forward to asking more."

Another interviewee described what happened when they did ask. They surveyed every employee in a particular function and created personas based on their findings.

The results helped to challenge some assumptions we're potentially all making – for instance, their employees like to learn in a different way at work from how they'd learn at home. In their own time they'll happily learn from a YouTube video but at work they would prefer to talk to someone directly. Insights from this simple survey will help our interviewee focus on creating a great learner experience in the coming year.



Getting personal

The loud and clear message from this year's interviews is that it's no longer good enough to create standard elearning courses, upload them to your LMS then measure completion rates. Firstly because we've now recognised that the majority of 'traditional' elearning courses are not fit for purpose as aids to getting the job done.

As one interviewee said:

"Learners want an answer to a specific question. In the past the only way was a piece of elearning – and somewhere within that 20-minute course was the answer you needed."

That's clearly not a great experience, nor a good use of your employees' time, particularly as we hear again and again just how time-poor everyone is. Far better to create a place where people can search for or filter a set of resources to find what they need when they need it. That makes better business sense and creates a far more efficient use of time. It means that a resource can be used exactly when it's required to do the task – rather than waiting until the time allotted for learning. We remember from last year's interviews that time officially set aside for L&D is shrinking, whereas allowing learners to schedule in their own personal development (or even learn outside of official work hours) is on the rise.

But more than that – there's a feeling that it's what our employees now expect. After all, we're dealing with "the Facebook generation" – people's expectations are now so much higher in terms of how much is tailored to them and how it's delivered.

And actually this is not a generational phenomenon, rather a consequence of our friend 'digital transformation'. A powerful computer in your pocket, websites that suggest purchases based on your browsing, micro-learning apps that serve challenges based on your ability – no wonder we're all a little more demanding when it comes to our workplace learning!

“Before we treated everyone the same. Now it's how do we customise and personalise – and help learners to self-serve.”

So, the first level of personalisation may be to allow each person to access information and resources according to their own choice. But, there will be times when you need to be a bit more prescriptive than that. Your employees may be new to a particular career pathway and unaware of what they'll need to know. They may be completely new to the world of work or, for whatever reason, require a little more in the way of guidance.

You may also need to plot out a specific development pathway that leads to credentials or levels of certification. In cases such as these, our interviewees described using a learning platform to offer a tailored L&D journey. That could be tailored for a specific role or job family, or even personalised to each individual. We spoke to a consultant at a large insurance company who described developing a quick assessment that employees can take when they first visit the learning platform. Someone joining the business with previous experience of the industry will have very different requirements

from someone without, for instance. A diagnostic such as this aims to present a learning pathway designed for the specific requirements of each user or personal.

And that leads on to a third level of personalisation – using artificial intelligence to diagnose and select what each learner needs. In *Time to Transform* – a collection of our thoughts around digital transformation – we talked about the award-winning online training platform, Filtered, which uses AI to personalise the learning experience for each user. Its 'globalfilter' also incorporates a chat bot to provide rapid-fire content suggestions based on your profile.

So the learner chooses when, where and how much they want to learn, and the content is pushed depending on the information they provide. Of course, the content it serves up must still be relevant, rich, good quality and truly useful – in fact that's even more important. If you have a bad learning experience once, will you bother returning again?

A handful of our interviewees discussed the biggest benefit of creating a good learning experience: staff engagement and retention. This is particularly important where there is a high staff turnover rate, or where it's a sector that isn't perceived as particularly attractive or dynamic for younger employees (to quote one interviewee, "what's fun about working in finance?"). If you're aiming to attract and retain an effective workforce, having a strong culture of continuous development is key.

ME | MY LEARNING | MY TEAM | MY REPORTS

Manage programs ▶ Induction ▶ Induction - Front of House

Induction - Front of House

“IF YOU CAN PUT TOGETHER A REALLY EFFECTIVE, ENGAGING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY FOR AN EMPLOYEE THEY WILL ENJOY IT MORE AND STAY LONGER.”

Ben Walton, Pizza Express

January 2015 | Due date: 20

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Category Name

Getting sociable

Allowing and encouraging employees to learn from each other – with just a little bit of structure – is still a hot topic among our interviewees. As we discussed earlier, there doesn't seem to be the same burning need to jump onto the 'social learning' bandwagon any more. This has gone from a trend ('I must put social learning in place this year') to a recognised and nurtured part of the learning and development strategy ('how can I help my people collaborate and share knowledge?').

Virtual mentoring and coaching is a popular approach to up-skilling a specific group of people who don't have bags of time to get together in person. Many businesses are also exploring how to use their learning platform to encourage conversation around learning topics – either as a continuation of a face to face session, an addition to curated content, or just a discussion forum. One interviewee explained the importance of a place where employees could simply say 'I don't understand' and get support directly from peers.

The next step may be to create a platform where in-house experts can easily create their own content and upload it to help others. Our interviewees often referenced the challenges of obtaining information from subject-matter experts and converting it into learning content without losing any of the value. But why be a middle man here?



“SOMETIMES A PIECE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT IS ENOUGH – YOU JUST NEED SOMEONE TO SHARE THEIR EXPERTISE.”

Stu Morens, GSK



If SMEs could be empowered to create a resource themselves – something like a PDF checklist, screen grab or quick selfie video explaining a concept – it may just do the job.

We interviewed the Learning systems advisor at a global chain of coffee shops and heard about one way in which some user-generated content could add value. Employees occasionally post videos on YouTube or Facebook showing off some of their achievements and skills as a barista. The next stage could be to bring some of this content onto the in-house platform so that people can learn tips and tricks from colleagues in other global locations. Everyone feels empowered – the learner who's picked up a quick tip and the employee who has been able to share something they're good at.

Of course, social learning will not be suitable in the same format in every business or sector and that's fine. One interviewee explained: "the challenge with MOOCs and social learning is how we transition from some free content to formalising and accrediting it". Employees need to prove they understand what they've learnt and to receive a credential that will allow them to move on in their career – in this case social learning would not be suitable on its own, although it could support a more formal training element.

At Kineo we talk about the 'learner power continuum' – as a business starts to reduce top-down control of L&D, it proportionally increases the freedom an individual has to determine and drive

their own learning needs. There's no wrong or right answer here. It isn't a race to hand all 'control' to the learner, nor is it a case of simply replacing formal learning with informal. It's just a case of working out where you are on that continuum, and where you'd like to be (realistically) based on your business culture and needs. Once you know that, you and your learners can work on getting there together.



**Are you curious about the continuum?
Find out more about Kineo's thoughts on learner power.**

bit.ly/learnerpowerarticle

3

Supporting performance at the right time

As the balance shifts and learners get comfy in the driving seat for their own learning, it's time to reconsider the L word itself. Is everything we deliver about learning as such? Our interviewees consistently said that it isn't. They're focusing more and more on supporting performance and providing information or tools for a specific need at a particular moment in time.

This is nothing new: in last year's report we talked plenty about 'resources, not courses' and even then we acknowledged it had become something of a hackneyed phrase in L&D. The difference is just how frequently this occurred as a theme – whatever the business size, context or sector. There's a deep understanding that 'learning' is only one of the ways in which we must support employees. To be enabled, empowered and ready to do one's job, it's likely that one will need and use a series of resources too. And – like social learning – this is just an extension of how we all work naturally anyway.

As one interviewee said:

"If someone wants to do something like raise a purchase order, I just share my screen and show them how. They'll get help when they need it, not six months later."

It's a natural reaction – I need to perform a task, I'll look for the simplest way to find out how. The chances are the simplest way won't be looking back at the notes I took in my training course six months ago. Nor will it be repeating a piece of elearning, in the hope that "somewhere within that 20-minute course was the answer you needed."

“To me learning, should be a variety of different experiences provided by different kinds of technology.”


Virginia Hanchar, MediaCom

So – a performance support resource can be anything that’s accessible and applicable exactly when it’s needed. And if that’s going to be a large focus for our L&D offering, we’d better make sure the resources we produce are good! Our recent guide, *The Micro Manual*, looked at using a variety of media and formats – PDF, video, audio, slide decks – for different needs, depending on the content and context. In this situation asking your learners what they need really will pay dividends. At the point of need will they be at a desktop? Using their phones? Will they be able to hear an audio recording or a video? Is a checklist appropriate – and if so, are they likely to print it? Context is vital before you decide what’s going to be the most useful.

Along with the resources themselves comes an understanding of how job performance improves, and the need for on-the-job development. In some cases a ‘look-up’ resource is sufficient – in other cases it may not be suitable to look up help each time, so the skill needs to be practised and embedded. Performance support may also include allowing the time to embed a new skill, feedback from a colleague or manager and a way of tracking progress. More than one of our interviewees talked extensively about the need for performance and development pathways with clearly marked assessment, review or practice points along the way.

“Don’t just send people on a course, or log into elearning – while these can help develop knowledge only application can develop capability.”





**“WITH SHOPS ALL OVER THE WORLD,
IF WE CHANGE A SYSTEM
OR PIECE OF EQUIPMENT,
HOW DO WE GET THE
NEW LEARNING MATERIAL OUT
QUICKLY ENOUGH?”**

4

The challenges of globalisation

Folk say 'it's a small world' and it seems to be getting smaller. Better, faster, cheaper forms of technology bring us all closer together, both in terms of how long it takes to travel and how quickly we can get in touch or access information.

For the L&D professional that may mean that your patch is actually getting larger and larger. And more diverse. Many businesses we interviewed identify themselves as 'global' with a workforce in more than one country – often in more than one continent. That can mean 10,000+ learners speaking several different languages in several time zones with different cultural contexts.

Sure, technology means you can deliver the same piece of learning content to all of those learners, more or less at the same time. But should you? Will it 'translate' (both linguistically and culturally)? Are the regulatory conditions the same in all of your markets? If you're using imagery or video, does it represent a diverse workforce and show locations and settings that will resonate with all?

We interviewed many people grappling with these precise issues. Their role heading up the L&D function has been designated as 'global', but what kind of control really should be held globally, or centrally? With differences in language, context and culture – to name just a few issues – does it make sense for one person or team to take responsibility for all learning across an international organisation?

In some cases central teams are liaising with locally based satellite teams, responsible for localising learning content or troubleshooting technical issues on the ground. In itself this is causing challenges of communication, budgeting, resourcing and trust.

Success story

We talked to a large global corporation who'd successfully rolled out a blended online and offline training programme for front-line sales people across the world.

With around 15,000 sales staff over Europe and sub-Saharan Africa and a high level of turnover, the team needed to find a way of getting new people up to speed as quickly as possible, with minimal travelling or time away from the day job.

The majority of training now takes place through an app integrated with the LMS. Because it can be used offline, employees are no longer bound by challenges of connectivity, nor limited to training in the office or at a particular time. The content can be downloaded when there's a good internet connection, then run whenever it suits the individual. Interviews with sales people show that they particularly like the flexibility this offers.

Another big win is how the content was created and deployed. The platform itself was created centrally, but then the team relies on colleagues in local markets to tailor, translate and localise the content and upload it to the site. It even has local sales people doing the narration, rather than professional voice artists.

This 'glocal' model has proved a success with its target audience who appreciate the effort to provide a solution that suits their working style. It uses one centrally-agreed and approved approach to training, but takes into account regional differences and circumstances.

Connection and the constraints of tech play a part here too. The learning is perhaps devised in a location with easily accessible wifi networks and a propensity of handheld devices. It is broadcast out to countries with patchier networks or more challenging security (more than one interview respondent cited challenges with 'The Great Firewall of China', for instance).

Different regions may well have very different expectations when it comes to technology. And different hardware – will your learning content and platform adapt for whatever kind of device is going to be used? Later on in this report we'll take a look at how taking a flexible approach to your LMS can help here.

A hand is holding a smartphone in the center of the page. The phone's screen shows a video of several people sitting around a table in a meeting or conference. The background of the entire page is a blurred crowd of people, all tinted with a teal color.

**“GLOBAL VERSUS LOCAL IS
ALWAYS AN ISSUE. WHAT
MUST WE DO TO MAKE SURE
STANDARDS ARE BEING MET
AROUND THE WORLD?”**

The transformers: definitely more than meets the eye



5

The transformers: definitely more than meets the eye

At Kineo we're not really into fads. If something seems to be the next big thing – a buzzword or trend within the L&D industry – we like to pick it up, give it a good shake and explore under the surface to find out what's really going on. And that's what we did with 'digital transformation' last year.

In our guide, *Time to Transform*, we concluded that we won't know something has transformed until the change has happened and is well embedded. Think of how ingrained mobile phones are into everyday life, for instance. The same is true of L&D – we're already transforming. The interviews for this report returned again and again to a 'shift in mindset' – those responsible for workplace learning have realised that, in the words of one interviewee, "if you don't keep up you'll be obsolete".

And that's not just the responsibility of the L&D team. Whole businesses are looking to develop a more agile, future-focused culture that will be ready for changes as they arise.

“THE WORLD IS CHANGING FAST. WE MUST HELP OUR EMPLOYEES TO THINK AHEAD, THINK MORE CRITICALLY AND COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS.”

What the world expects

The end consumers in the chain of what we all do – our customers’ customers – don’t live and breathe L&D. In fact they may not even know what L&D stands for. How we train our front-line staff is not their concern – they just want to receive good service every time they interact, whether it’s in retail, hospitality, finance, or any other sector. And their expectations of what good service means are, of course, shaped by digital transformation. We now expect instant information, rapid solutions to our problems, touch-screens at our shops, restaurants and banks... and those needs have opened up a bunch of new skill-sets.

Take the world of banking as an example: we’re used to a paperless system, apps and instant cash withdrawal. We expect the staff we deal with in a branch, online or on the phone to be *au fait* with the latest technology a bank has at its command. Our task in L&D is to up-skill those employees who’ll be using new technology so that the end experience for a customer is seamless.

In one interview we discussed the challenge of training front-line restaurant staff to take orders using a tablet or mobile phone rather than the traditional writing pad. There’s the obvious issue of learning your way around the functionality and becoming familiar with which button is where. But there’s also more of a behavioural side to consider – how do you maintain a good, natural relationship with your customers when you’re looking down at a new device? Similarly, how do you transfer the good customer service skills you’ve developed from a phone call to an online chat box, for instance?

And transformation is never complete, of course: it really isn’t a given that your employees are all tech-savvy and will navigate your new solutions with ease. One interviewee described a high level of support enquiries relating to learners’ lack of technical knowledge – downloading an ebook to their device, for instance. It could be that using an app or a new device in itself is the challenge. Learning must cater for this too, rather than getting swept away in admiration of the new.

Some interviewees suggested approaching these challenges in two ways: make the training as much like real life as possible, and back it up with on-the-spot resources. So – a systems training simulation on a tablet with a clearly-marked screenshot to access if you forget what to do when the time arises. Or an interactive video that simulates an online chat situation. Immersive plus just-in-time – what learning blend could be more digitally-transformed than that?

More from
Kineo



Time to transform

How is digital transformation affecting L&D?



**TAKE A PRAGMATIC LOOK
AT WHAT'S REALLY CHANGING FOR US IN L&D**

Download our collection of thoughts, *Time to Transform*

bit.ly/timetotransform-guide



New platform announcement

For lots of our interviewees, the current priority is upgrading, refreshing or replacing their learning platform. Amid plenty of talk about the death of the LMS (from all corners of the industry, for a few years) plenty of teams are actually just resuscitating their ailing platform. Of course, in some cases the platform you've had in place for years really is flatlining – in which case it's out with the old, in with the new.

But why is this the case? Well, we only need to look back at the themes we've already discussed to understand. To keep up with the changing shape of L&D, your platform should probably do some or all of the following:

- Allow you to offer a tailored or more personalised approach to each employee
- Allow the L&D team to curate ready-made resources as well as adding custom-made content and to present it all in a sensible schema or pathway
- Be user-friendly and searchable so that learners can readily find resources when they need them
- Be a collaborative space where people can learn from each other
- Be available offline to give alternative ways for people to access learning content if they don't have a constant, reliable internet connection
- Work seamlessly on any kind of device and look pretty good to boot
- Become a destination where people 'want to go every day'.

“THE LMS PILOT IS PART OF BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE TO TAKE GREATER STRIDES TOWARDS TRUE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE LEARNING OFFER. IF SUCCESSFUL, IT COULD MARK A NEW DAWN IN THE ORGANISATION’S TRAINING APPROACH.”

New platform announcement

This doesn't sound much like a traditional LMS, and is moving towards what's generally called a next-generation learning environment (NGLE). A platform or space that focuses on an evolved way of delivering L&D opportunities including a great user experience, social interaction, content delivered in pathways and – importantly – a way to measure outcomes.

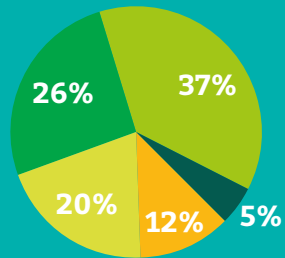
Or, as we described it in our *Time to Transform* guide: a learning ecosystem that makes the most of digital transformation – elegantly using a stack of technology to facilitate learning.

"The biggest priority is introducing the concept of a 'learning ecosystem' to my company."

The words 'environment' and 'ecosystem' are key here: we don't have to restrict ourselves to thinking of this as one stand-alone tool, and our interviewees certainly don't. A learning management system can be the first building block onto which you add other tools that specialise in delivering particular aspects. Think a curation plug-in to help you crawl online content or a platform to host your video library, for instance.

Let's not get too carried away. Our online survey revealed that some organisations are at the stage of needing and installing an LMS for the first time. Right now for some, perhaps what's needed is simply a way to start delivering learning content. But why not plan with the future in mind and make sure the LMS you choose is flexible, scalable and able to grow with your L&D needs?

How important is your LMS to your L&D strategy?



- ◆ Not very important
- ◆ Slightly important
- ◆ Important
- ◆ Very important
- ◆ Essential

Destination learning

"In the world today our employees have tons of choices. So how do we ensure that we are a choice, a destination? A destination has a very different connotation to 'I'm going to do my online learning'. How many times a day do you check Facebook, for instance?"

Virginia Hanchar, MediaCom

If anything surfaced as a buzz-phrase through the course of our interviews it was this: "we want our learning platform to become a destination."

For some it's no longer enough for their LMS to be beaver away in

the background as a pure delivery mechanism for elearning, no matter how powerful or sophisticated. It needs to be a place where employees will actively want to go and seek out opportunities to learn or develop. As one person summed up, the aim is to “drive people back often rather than serving all the content up at once and then the learner never returns”. If our learners are to be truly empowered and self-driven, this is key.

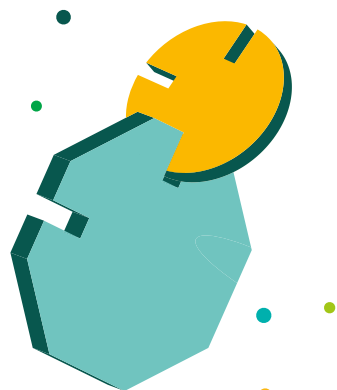
If that's the case, why not give your platform more of a personality? Think of it not as a technical solution but as part of your overall L&D awareness campaign. One of our interviewees has taken this approach literally – the platform has a name and is represented by an identifiable character with a quirky personality. Learners are engaged and encouraged to go and ‘train’ with this character – far more memorable than just logging onto any old LMS.

And perhaps, as in the case of another interviewee, making a change to the platform will start a revolution when it comes to your learning content too. Rather than ‘lifting and shifting’ your old-style ‘click next’ content from the old LMS onto the new, a new beginning can become a chance to review how learners will actually want to find and consume information. Having a flexible platform managed by the L&D team makes it easier to add resources and potentially to bring some of your content creation in-house. In this way, the platform you choose – and how you choose to employ it – can actually be the cornerstone of your whole L&D strategy and can drive change.

Flexibility will also help when it comes to delivering your global L&D strategy. You may need to present a different set of content to a different group of users, depending on their requirements (or local context). You may want to have a smaller, cloud-based version of your LMS that serves a particular part of your business. Or you may need to integrate an app to provide offline access for learners with web access challenges.

We've discovered that many of our clients are taking a ‘future-flexible’ approach when it comes to choosing a new platform or reinventing the existing one. Using a flexible platform means you can start with the basics, on which you can build and adapt when the need arises. And, as we'll see in our next theme, this approach is not just relevant for platforms!

“What's exciting is, whatever the business needs next year I'll be able to respond to it.”



“IF I’M JUST REPEATING LEARNING THEORY AND DON’T UNDERSTAND THEIR CHALLENGES I DON’T HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY. TO ME THAT’S ONE OF THE GAPS: IF WE WANT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE ELEARNING WE NEED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE CONSULTATION.”

7

Be a consultant for your internal client

This year and last we asked both interviewees and online survey participants what had gone well for them in the previous year. And why it had gone particularly well. The answers were as varied as you'd expect, but a theme kept cropping up in the 'why' answer: stronger collaboration between L&D and the rest of the business.

We heard that projects are generally more successful if there has been a closer collaboration with the 'internal client'. And that this stronger working relationship has stemmed from a deeper trust and understanding on both sides from the outset.

The L&D function requires full buy-in, trust and disclosure about the aims of a project – and would like to be involved as early in the process as possible to be as effective as possible. As one interviewee said:

“We’re trying to shift from being order-takers to seeing what’s coming down the pipeline and being better consultants.”

There’s far more value in having the time to consult with internal clients, listen to their challenges and present considered solutions rather than being asked at the last minute to fulfil a training need.

Of course, trust and respect must be earned and our interviewees are seeking to do that in many ways, two of which stood out. The first is by learning more about their wider business – its strategy, direction of travel, broad objectives and how each team or function will contribute towards those aims. The word ‘culture’ cropped up very frequently – understanding the culture the business is aiming to cultivate and helping colleagues work towards that.

With this knowledge comes a greater degree of credibility – we don't only understand *how* to solve your L&D challenges, we understand *why*. As an interviewee said:

“If I’m just repeating learning theory and don’t understand their challenges I don’t have any credibility.”

To frame why a particular piece of learning content or blended programme will help to address a particular challenge is more, effective and raises the professionalism of the L&D function.

The second way to gain trust is to demonstrate results. One interviewee said his aim is:

“To create learning solutions to empower people, but even more importantly to have the data to prove the solution actually improved performance.”

Without this data, it really is hard to prove the worth of what you've delivered or proposed. That's particularly important when the number one barrier to getting something new adopted is budget and the number one support requirement for new initiatives is buy-in from senior leaders. To get that buy-in and that budget assigned, a little evidence of success will go a long way. Can you measure all of your learning and its outcomes? We work with our partners at HT2Labs to explore how a learning record store can create a single point of reporting for learning and performance, and how xAPI can help you connect all of your systems together.

“Every single thing that is done, I’m relentless about asking how it’s going to impact the business. How is it going to benefit our employees?”

If you're not yet in a position to produce any data from an in-house pilot or previous project, can you find a case study of where something similar has worked elsewhere? At Kineo we love to share stories and celebrate success – if you need evidence of what works, ask us!

“You can make a really high quality solution but without understanding the learner’s present state or having an insight into the effect of the learning, what’s the point?”

To get the full picture of L&D's consulting role we come full circle to our first theme – it really is all about the learner. It's not just about understanding the larger business requirements. To deliver solutions that make a difference you'll also need to know what individuals need and how they are going to use it. One interviewee described her role as “understanding job requirements, what their key performance indicators are and, most importantly, their biggest challenges in their workplace.” It's the same question we encountered earlier: “What's the one thing we could provide to help you do your job?” And if you can deliver on that... welcome to a whole new world of trust, buy-in and love – yes, love – for L&D!



8

What does the modern L&D professional look like?

We take a look at the skills and styles our interviewees use every day in their new-world L&D roles.

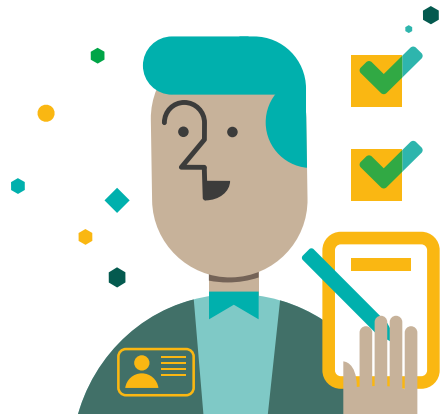
The Business Consultant

Adds value by asking the right questions and providing suitable solutions for her internal clients. Understands the business challenges and the wider context for L&D.



The Market Researcher

Finds out what his customers really want. Asks learners about what'd really make a difference for them. Checks out what other organisations are doing within his sector.



The Digital Producer

Whips up a quick in-house video, PDF checklist or illustration so that she can respond quickly to smaller L&D requirements.



The Translator

Makes sure her learning content is suitable for employees across the globe. Enlists the help of local colleagues on the ground to translate and contextualise.



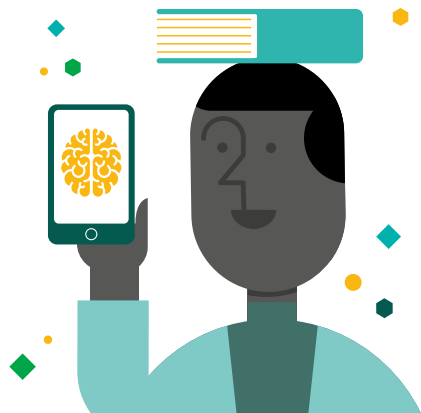
The Curator

Seeks out the best existing content – from inside or outside the business – and makes it easy for learners to find and consume.



The Educator

Keeps an eye on his end goal: making sure employees in his business can learn something they need or be enabled to do their job well.



Final thoughts

Thank you for reading. I hope you found something that will help in your ongoing steps forward, whatever your L&D plans.



I think it's an exciting time to be in learning and development. While there's certainly pressure to keep up with the fast pace of business and digital change, there's never been a better time to have, and demonstrate, a positive impact on performance. And that's great for L&D.

Our HR, learning and business systems are connected by data about our employees, their needs and performance: and with that comes insight into how we can make learning more relevant and impactful for them, and for the business. Personalised experiences informed by this data, and supported by the right technology, will help improve engagement and retention.

The more we can integrate with our employees' workflow and their lives the more we're likely to become an 'essential invisible' part of how they do their job well.

As a provider of corporate learning solutions, our role is to keep up to speed with the latest developments so that we're ready to help you. We're constantly consulting with our clients to find out what's coming along the pipeline. And we have a dedicated innovation task-force, designed to make sure we don't miss any opportunity to support your needs with projects that have a positive impact on your business. Whether it's capitalising on technology –

like artificial intelligence or AVR – or helping you construct a sophisticated learning ecosystem, we're already working on it.

It's particularly pleasing for me to see the focus on personalisation and the individual in this report. At Kineo, and across the wider City & Guilds Group, we know that helping businesses and economies to grow begins with developing skills for each individual. In last year's report we considered the importance of development pathways at all career stages. Key to that is developing leadership and management skills, something we're passionate about. The success of any business relies on engaged, effective people who are fully able to do their job – and to support others in theirs. We believe that's well worth the time and investment, and have the data to prove it.

We remain keen to hear about your learning and development challenges, successes and ideas.

John Yates
Managing Director, Corporate Learning
The City & Guilds Group



A City & Guilds Group Collaboration

We simply can't write this report without your help. The insights contained here don't just come from us – they're the result of honest, thoughtful and fascinating conversations with 30 learning and development professionals. We interviewed clients, contacts and friends across a range of sectors and business types, using a deliberately open-ended set of questions to start the conversation.

This year over 200 people took part in our online survey too, contributing to our understanding of exactly what's happening in L&D. Thanks for your time and honesty.

Participants included:

**Agilent
Technologies**

**Ameriprise
Financial**

**Caterpillar Marine
Costa**

Credit Suisse

GSK

Hitachi

Karmak US

Kohls

McDonald's

MediaCom

MindBoost

Learning

**Mitchells and
Butlers**

PepsiCo

PizzaExpress

S&P Global

VSG Security

Discover how we're shaping the future of learning

Everything we do at Kineo stems from a simple idea - if we design a better learning experience, together we'll get better results.

Kineo helps the world's leading businesses improve performance through learning and technology. We're proud of our reputation for being flexible and innovative, and of our award-winning work with clients across the world.

Whatever your business challenge, we will partner with you every step of the way to find the learning solution that fits best – and delivers results. So, how can we help you?



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