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Learning and development evolving practice

Explore the 10 'shifts' that L&D professionals need to consider to drive organisational performance

Introduction

Learning and development (L&D) departments are facing various challenges to ensure they deliver on their organisation's expectations. Rather than waiting for change to happen, L&D professionals need to be at the heart of change and embrace the opportunities and the challenges it brings.

This factsheet explores '10 shifts' in L&D which provide a framework for L&D professionals to measure themselves against to audit their current practice and the overall goal they want to achieve. It allows practitioners to consider gaps, progress, actions and priorities for each. There're also links to further information within each area.

The CIPD is at the heart of change happening across L&D, supporting practitioners in providing insights and resources. Connect with us through our Leading in Learning network.

What are the 10 shifts in evolving L&D practice?

There's strong evidence for L&D professionals' central role in driving organisational performance. To achieve this, they need to go beyond offering training courses and work closely with the business to provide resources that addresses current and future

organisational capability demand. Our <u>Professionalising learning and development</u> report highlighted that L&D professionals' desire to move from a traditional approach to one that embraces the areas that are mentioned in this factsheet. However, over three quarters feel their organisation's senior leaders preferring a more traditional L&D offering and are blockers in moving to a future-focused approach. We believe there are clear opportunities to engage learners and drive organisational performance by embracing the 10 shifts. Find out how specialist learning and development knowledge fits into our <u>Profession Map</u>.

Advances in technology, changes in the workforce make up, definitions of work itself, demands from learners and the need to demonstrate impact on performance, all play a part in L&D professionals asking questions about the focus and approach learning and development needs to take. The 10 shifts we've identified come from the findings of a number of CIPD research reports and insights, starting with our 2015 report <u>L&D: evolving roles, enhancing skills</u> to more recent ones such as our 2021 <u>Learning and skills at work</u> and <u>Learning cultures</u> reports. The 10 areas demonstrate where and how L&D professionals have an opportunity to drive organisational performance, build learner engagement and evolve their practice.

The 10 shifts may well challenge a traditional training approach to meeting organisational needs. However, whilst challenging it, we believe there's still a place for formal facilitated learning when addressing relevant performance gaps, as well as taking advantage of relevant technological development.

Within each shift outlined below, an initial question frames the focus, followed by a number of others to prompt a review of current practice and collaborate with stakeholders to drive change in L&D within each organisation's unique context. The questions are not intended to be a one-off 'tick list' approach to offering L&D, but a means of checking against the organisation's strategy to demonstrate the value L&D can offer.

Shift 1: Focus on business needs, not just L&D priorities

To what extent does L&D really align to the organisation and its strategic goals and direction?

This shift ensures that L&D strategy is aligned to organisational strategy and addresses performance gaps.

- What or who is driving the learning priority?

- How does the learning we provide address the opportunities or problems for the organisation's employees?
- How can we help learners be equipped to influence the business?
- How does our own learning keep pace with sector needs and what is on our horizon?

To find out more, listen to our podcast Aligning L&D with business objectives and emerging practices.

Shift 2: L&D outputs informed by metrics, not guesses

To what extent does L&D mine the rich sources of data across the organisation?

This shift challenges L&D professionals to use and align to business metrics.

- What metrics are we using to underpin our learning; how do we demonstrate value?
- What strategies do we have about measuring the impact of our learning activities on organisational outcomes, in one, three and six months?
- In an environment of challenges to budgets how can we support learners to demonstrate the impact their learning is making?
- How do we link key performance indicators (KPIs) to our content – for instance if we are undertaking any tips on recruitment, are the recruitment functions KPI's included and updated as required?

Read our factsheet on evaluating learning for more insights, as well as the multi-agency work on the Valuing Your Talent framework.

Shift 3: Learning underpinned by research and evidence

To what extent does L&D activity look at how the brain works to inform learning design and delivery?

This shift encourages L&D professionals to consider latest evidence to inform how learning interventions are designed and delivered.

- How we do we routinely build our evidence-informed practice?
- How are we integrating evidence-informed principles into our learning design and delivery, for example, human centred design, the SCARF, RAD and AGES models?
- Are we using out-dated learning theory, for example learning styles such as VAK (Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic)?
- Do we really understand the models we use in our design and delivery (for example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, applying stakeholder management, 70:20:10) and the intentions from the originators?
- What support are we giving to learners to manage cognitive overload and neurodiversity?

Read our learning theories factsheet for more insights.

Shift 4: L&D shifting to a curator-concierge approach, not just creator

To what extent does L&D default to the solution being a specially-designed course?

This shift demonstrates a way for L&D to signpost resources rather than designing courses from scratch.

- How proactive are we in finding great existing content and partnerships to supplement our programmes (Seek)?
- What added value are we adding through helping learners contextualise learning for their context (Sense)?
- What system can we use to deliver curated content or point to wider learning (Share)? Examples could be our intranet, virtual learning platforms, MS Teams, and apps such as Slack, Trello Scoop It, and various social media apps.

Martin Couzins has been sharing his insights on curation in L&D for a number of years, and Harold Jarche's approach to curation uses the 'Seek, Sense, Share' model. Ben Betts offers a further insight in the Good Practice podcast Is curation the new king of L&D?

Shift 5: User-choice and co-creation, not prescription learning

To what extent does the employee have a voice in the design of any intervention intended for their learning?

This shift explores the role of the learner in the process of providing and producing resources to aid learning.

- Is learner input an intentional part of our design or is our model 'we do it all'?
- How can we encourage learners to find and integrate content into the programme?
- Are we part of a recognised 'go to' subject matter network with wider influence?
- How much do we know about the knowledge and skills that already exist in the organisation, before designing or curating content?

Our self-directed learning podcast has some thoughts on aspects of this shift.

Shift 6: Social learning, not just formal

To what extent does L&D capture the opportunities from social learning to support formal provision?

Earliest records of social learning are ancient cave paintings, so it is something humans are well versed in. This shift encourages the concept within an organisation's L&D offering.

- What social spaces are we deliberately creating in our programmes?
- If Twitter has been a top learning tool for some years, how are we integrating the use of social media in our programmes?
- What social communities do we have an influence in; do we have a planned and growing online presence?

Check out the Centre for Learning and Performance Technology's top 200 tools for their annual survey.

Shift 7: Just-in-time and in-the-flow learning, not delayed

To what extent is learning provided at the time it's needed?

This shift questions the time delay offered in traditional L&D approaches.

- Do we control when learners can access content or is access flexible?
- Are we focussed on a 'just-in-case' or 'just-in-time' approach?
- How can learners access content in a way which is most convenient to them, not L&D?

We discuss this in our Learning in-the-flow of work podcast and you can explore some of the work from Matt Ashe on agile learning design. Also check out our Learning in-the-flow of work factsheet.

Shift 8: Bite-sized learning, not just feasts

What is the driver and rationale for a full day or several days of formal training?

This shift asks if resources for learning can be offered in small chunks spaced out rather than offering longer courses that bombard people with information with little time to absorb or apply the learning.

- Is our learning 'chunked' for easy use and access?
- How can we create great bite size content – podcasts, video clips, curated links, infographics, forum discussions?
- Have we considered when and where out learners might wish to learn and how we can facilitate that better, for example while travelling?

Our learning theories factsheet outlines the AGES model from the Neuroleadership Institute which demonstrates the importance of spacing. Their website explores the AGES concept further.

Shift 9: Digital-mobile learning, not just face-to-face

To what extent does L&D integrate a variety of options for delivery?

The opportunity to embrace the range of digital opportunities that are at the disposal of L&D teams is central to this shift, using digital solutions to make the most of any face-to-face time available.

- What is our road map for digital inclusion?
- How confident are we to design learning for digital platforms, what skills or roles

may we need?
- Where does digital delivery fit in our aspirations?

Read our digital learning factsheet for more.

Shift 10: Measuring learning value, not volume

To what extent is our current measurement system demonstrating impact on performance, engagement with learning, and transfer back into the workplace?

Traditionally L&D have a 'rear-view mirror' approach to measurement, rather than looking at the value of the learning offered. This shift challenges that approach.

- What things are we measuring that are never really used?
- Is measurement being designed-in from the first shift?
- What time period really allows for added-value to be demonstrated?

As with shift 2, our factsheet on evaluating learning has some insights on this.

Useful contacts and further reading

Contacts

Modern Learning in Practice – blogs by David James

Books and report

BEEVERS K., REA, A. and HAYDEN, D (2019) *Learning and development practice in the workplac*e. 4th ed. London: Kogan Page.

LANCASTER, A (2019) *Driving performance through learning*. London: Kogan Page.

NEELAN, M., and KIRSCHNER, P.A. (2020) *Evidence informed learning design*. London: Kogan Page.

PARRY-SLATER, M. (2020) The learning and development handbook. London: Kogan Page.

Visit the CIPD and Kogan Page Bookshop to see all our priced publications currently in print.

Journal articles

FINCH, S. (2019) The L&D roles of the future. *People Management* (online). 21 February.

HOWLETT, E. (2020) Has Covid-19 sparked an L&D revolution? *People Management* (online). 4 June.

MERRICK, A. (2019) Bite-sized learning. *HR Magazine.* Vol 64, No 1. Spring. pp66-73.

VARNEY, J. (2018) The trend for just-in-time learning. *Human Resources Magazine.* Vol 23, No 1. Winter. pp4-6.

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Members and *People Management* subscribers can see articles on the *People Management* website.

This factsheet was written by David Hayden.