

How to consolidate learning

One of the key areas of focus for L&D teams is training, with teams looking for the answers to questions such as:

- How can we maximise learning?
- What is the best method of delivery?
- Are we hitting our learning targets and are we meeting compliance needs?

But, there are parts of the training program that often get ignored, the **pre-** and **post-learning** periods.



Did you know that the right learning environment is needed for learners to absorb the learning they are undertaking? Or that frequent revisiting of learning is needed to consolidate the knowledge learners have just gained?

It's easy to forget, as within L&D departments the focus can often be on providing the knowledge and then leaving the rest up to the learner-missing the vital step of checking to see whether the knowledge has been assimilated. We are not talking about post-learning tests and quizzes-though these do have their place-but understanding whether a learner has just passively consumed the knowledge or actually retained the information and is able to use it in the future.

To fully get a handle on the L&D journey, L&D teams must look beyond the training aspect and focus on the learner journey as a whole. This includes pre-learning and post-learning, as well as the actual training in the middle. This complete picture is what will set L&D teams apart and instead of just simply providing the means for a learner to gain new knowledge, they will be able to ensure that the learning provided leads to real behaviour change.

How can you incorporate pre- and post-learning methods into your learning and development journey to ensure your learners are equipped with the skills and tools to act upon the new knowledge gained?

Pre-learning period

Engagement: How can L&D professionals engage with their learners before the learning takes place?

Addressing any preconceived barriers is always a great place to start. There are three major barriers to motivating employees around training:



A feeling that they have a lack of time to commit to learning and development.



The perception that the information is not relevant or applicable to them.



There is a company culture that does not support training.

To engage learners, you need to overcome their main perceived barriers to learning. Consider these barriers and try to build a campaign to address these issues. Make it clear how you will allocate the time for them to commit to learning and show them why it's important, and how they will benefit afterwards. By showing and evidencing how you will support their training, this will help encourage them further; one example of this is allocating a member of staff who has the knowledge of the topic to be a 'leader' or 'SME' (Subject Matter Expert) that other employees can go to for advice.

Setting up study groups, forums to discuss the learning, workshops or competitions, can also be helpful and engaging to new learners. Research undertaken by us through a learner survey showed that **44%** of learners like the opportunity to discuss learning with their peers.



Another great way to engage learners in the 'pre' stage is to build up their intrigue and excitement around the learning. Show them why this presents them with a great opportunity and how they will benefit, both inside and outside of work. As part of this, people like to see the learning undertaken by more senior members of the team, as it helps instil its importance and sets the culture for learning from top down. Getting senior employees involved at the 'pre' stage helps set the tone for learning moving forward.

Once the engagement has been obtained, L&D professionals can then start to think about the 'learning environment'. The learning environment is a broad term that can refer to a culture, a context, an approach to teaching and learning or a physical location in which education and work take place.

A variety of different components can make up a learning environment. Physical properties such as where you are learning, how the space is decorated and what devices or materials are being used to learn, all contribute. Elements like the activities and tasks being completed, the methods used to assess progress and performance and what kind of working culture is influencing the learning, also form the environment.

For L&D teams it is important to understand how an environment can affect the ability to focus, perform and share or absorb new ideas and information. Research shows a positive correlation between the quality of the learning environment and how enthusiastic, engaged and motivated your learners will feel about learning. Things like lighting, noise levels and even the colour of the room can all affect how effectively people work, so it is important to optimise the space as much as possible.



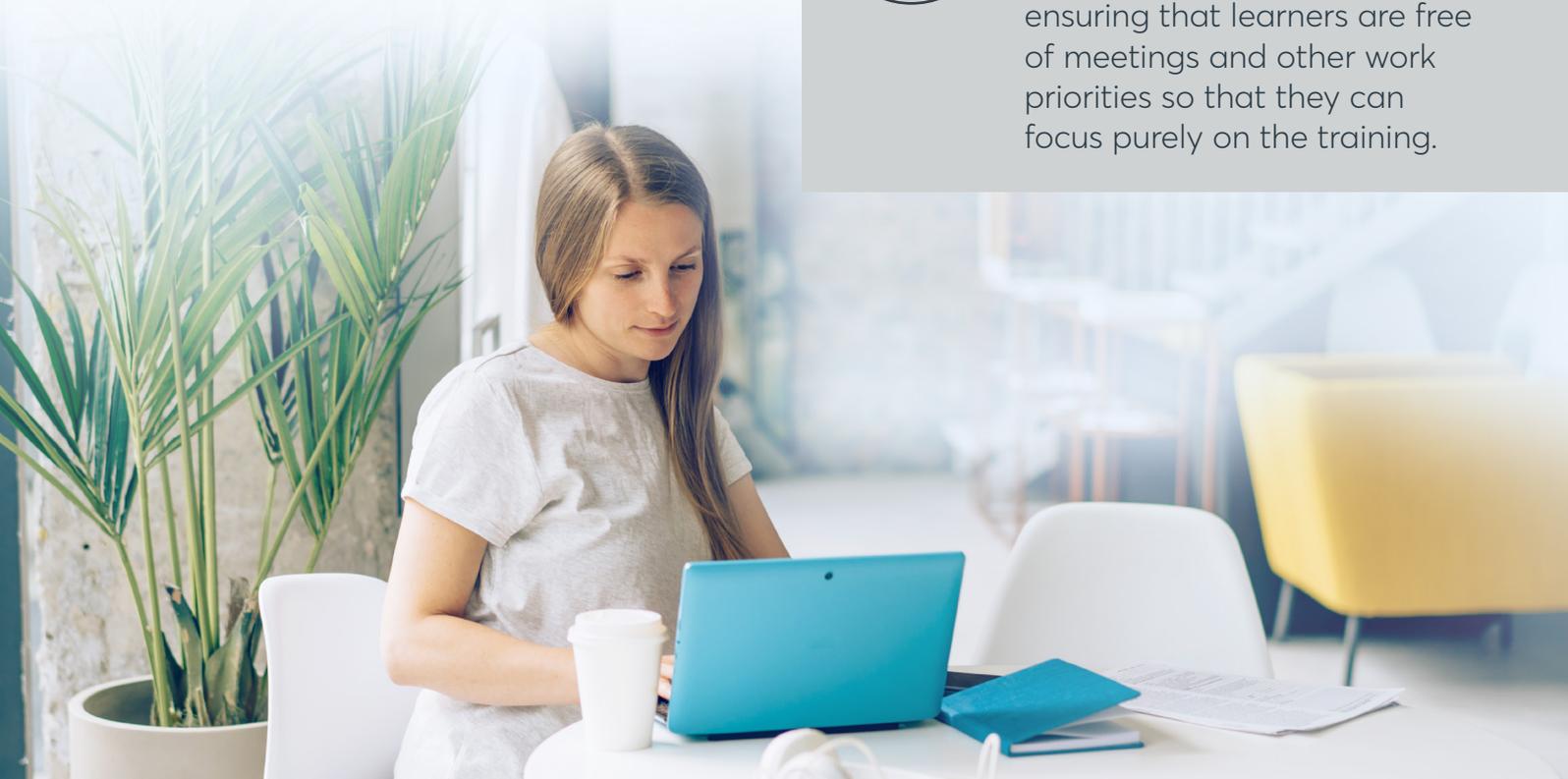
Space

If learning is taking place online, ensure dedicated space is available to conduct the training in. This could be anything from quiet rooms to working from a coffee shop or home or a place within the office that allows for no distractions.



Time

Creating dedicated time for learning is also essential, ensuring that learners are free of meetings and other work priorities so that they can focus purely on the training.



Learning approaches

It is also worth noting that not everyone learns in the same way. Ensuring you use a variety of different digital formats can really help, such as videos, downloadable resources, PDFs etc. This will ensure the training is suitable for a wider audience. For further information on available digital resources and their benefits click [here](#) to view our report 'Creating Training to Suit the Learner'.

The research we conducted shows that people's preferences can vary and the need to understand these preferences is imperative if the training plan is going to engage all learners and provide them with the right medium for learning.

What elements or aspects of digital learning do you enjoy?	Response
I can access it at anytime	85.48%
I can complete it at my own pace	84.54%
Downloadable resources	56.66%
Interactive elements	54.83%
Practice questions	48.72%
It can be accessed on a mobile phone or tablet	42.98%
It usually takes less time than face to-face training	38.12%
The appearance	19.74%

What digital formats do you think enhance learning?	Response
E-learning	77.44%
Videos	67.78%
Different styles of interactive questions	67.05%
Scenarios	47.78%
Games	29.19%
3D elements	9.87%
AR or VR	9.24%

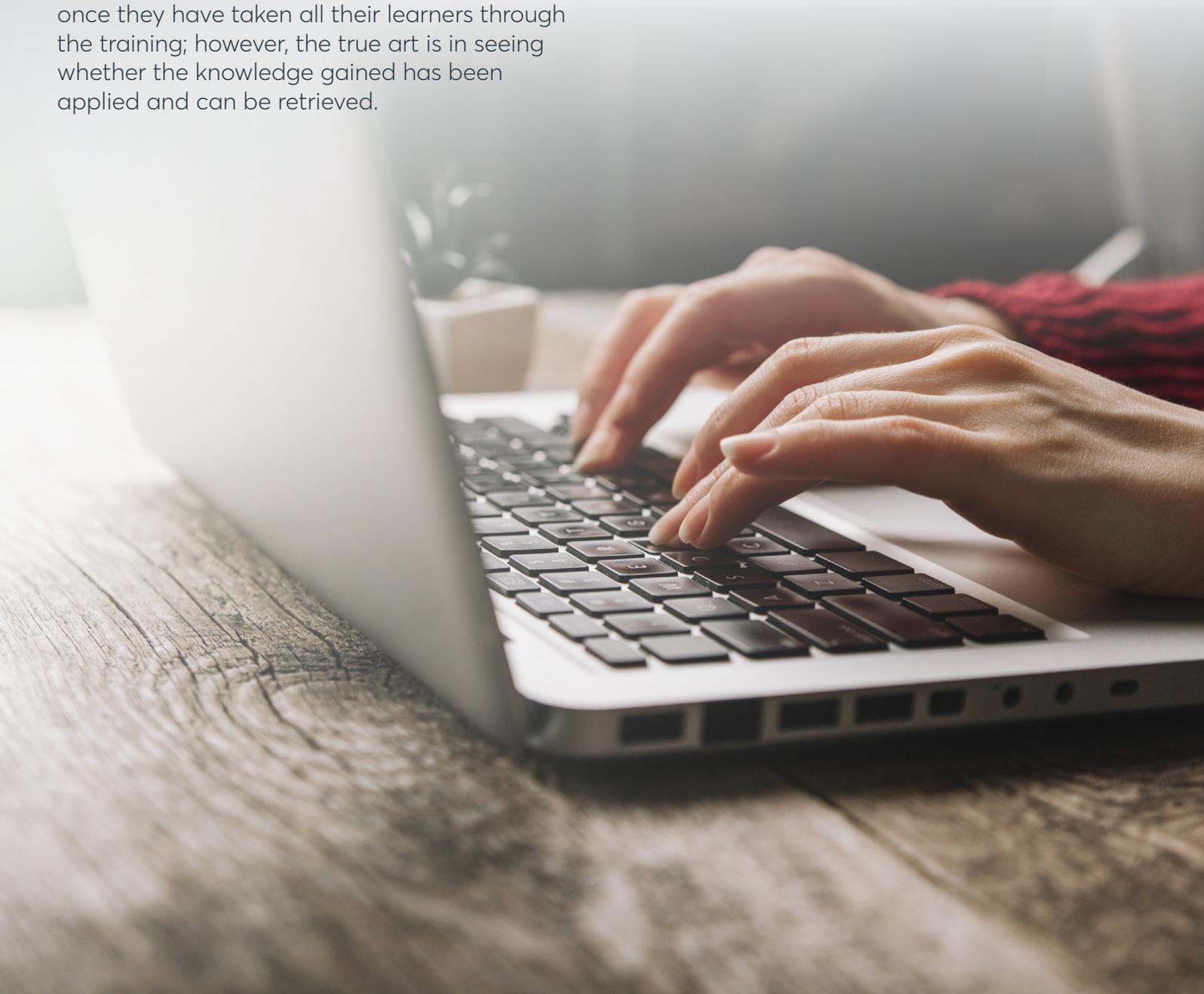
Both questions allowed for multiple answers.

Post-learning period

To complete your L&D program and consolidate learning, you must include some form of evaluation period. If there is one thing that research has shown us over the last few decades, it is that there is more to learning than just encoding- than just trying to embed or cram the information inside your head. In fact, what seems to matter more is quite the opposite.

L&D teams may think their work is finished once they have taken all their learners through the training; however, the true art is in seeing whether the knowledge gained has been applied and can be retrieved.

To do this there must also be a focus on the post-learning period, whether it is ensuring there is a refresher course a certain number of months down the line, an evaluation form, or some smaller quizzes. The aim is to not test but to ensure that learners have understood the learning outcomes and are comfortable applying them in their roles.



How can you test the process?



Manager 1-2-1

Learning should be supported and championed by a learner's line manager. Offering post-learning support is a great way of ensuring the learner's expectations have been met by the learning provided. Talking about how this learning can be applied to their role can also help identify further areas of required training or skills development.



Quizzes

These can be a fun way of ensuring knowledge has been learnt and retained from any training program. Through our survey it was identified that **66%** of respondents like to test their knowledge gained following any learning program. Why shouldn't this be in a fun and engaging manner?



Sharing success stories

People often like to share when things have worked for them, as much as when things have not, and there is no difference in learning. Giving learners the opportunity to talk to others about the learning program and share knowledge and situations of when they have used this new learning can help others with ideas on how they can embed their learning too.



Refresher micro-learning

Certain elements of the training program may be more difficult to digest; offering bite-size chunks can be an excellent follow-up when needed.



Review with trainer

Sometimes a good way of learning is to question the learning, sharing thoughts, opinions and getting feedback. **55%** of survey respondents said that to make a compelling learning experience they wanted to be able to ask for help or advice on elements they were unsure on, so adding this into the program can help give them this opportunity.



Learning application

It is easy to forget new knowledge and skills if they are not put to the test, so giving learners the chance to put what they have learnt into practice is a great way of consolidating this new knowledge. This also evidences the need for the training if the learner can see the benefit of their new knowledge in their day-to-day role. Over **70%** of survey respondents said they need to be able to see a link between the training and their role to make it worthwhile.

Defining your pre- and post-learning process?

By asking and then answering these questions, you can build a true picture of the current pre and post-learning approach in your business. This will give you a good place to start, enabling you to work towards designing and implementing a more successful pre and post-learning period for your employees, encouraging them to fully engage with the learning materials before, during and after.



PRE-LEARNING:

- Has a full analysis of needs and skills gaps taken place on which to develop the training plan?
- Have the stakeholders and learners been approached to help identify the needs and purpose of the training?
- Do the learning outcomes align with wider business objectives and goals?
- Has the program been developed using the right methods of content delivery?
- Has a time been arranged to meet with the learners before the program commences?



POST-LEARNING:

- Is there a clear post-learning plan, allowing learners to consolidate what they now know?
- Are there interactive elements allowing them to test their new knowledge?
- Are there planned options for follow-up/refresher courses?
- Can they share new knowledge with others to check their learning?
- Are learners clear on their next steps to learning?