

The importance of investing in your learners



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Foreword

Investing in your learners should be a given. Creating a training and development plan that helps staff truly develop and improve seems like an obvious thing to do, but what does this investment look like? How does a company actually ensure that the training they offer will deliver tangible results and that learners will see the value in it?

This second report in our Evolution of L&D series sees us examine the reasons why L&D teams need to communicate better with their learners and stakeholders to understand what problems need addressing and what needs to change as a result of the training programme.

After speaking with David James, Chief Learning Officer at Loop, Author and Host of the L&D Podcast, it's evident that things need to change rapidly and the traditional way that L&D is set up places too much emphasis on the individual learner.

"The problem is because it's not focused on what people are trying to do, it's focused on what L&D teams think people should learn and there's a massive disconnect here."

- David James



This report showcases our interview with David where he chats with Niro Sritharan, our Partnership Development Manager, about the importance of investing in your learners, covering topics from 'how organisations can make learning more appealing' through to 'what are the ultimate benefits in organisations investing in their learners, for both parties?'

In addition to this, the report draws on the survey we conducted with over 2,000 of our learners, to better understand their needs from L&D, pulling together content on the following topics:

Consolidating learning: Addressing the importance of having a planned approach to both the pre- and post-learning periods, and not just the training that falls in between

The benefits of L&D to employer and employee: What are the main benefits received by both parties when the responsibility for learning is shared?

L&D in practice: A case study that highlights what a good L&D programme looks like, and the results received from this investment

Taking accountability for learning: How L&D professionals can show stakeholders the value of learning and help learners' breakdown the barriers they face

Through our survey it was established that **83.11%** of respondents felt that the responsibility for professional development should be a shared one between employer and employee. Read on to find out how you as a business or L&D professional can benefit from investing in your learners.

In conversation with David James

Niro Sritharan, Partnership Development Manager at Virtual College met **David James**, Learning & Development expert, Author, Host of the L&D podcast and Chief Learning Officer at Loop to talk about **'The Importance of Investing in your Learners'**.

Looking to tackle this wide topic, Niro and David spent a couple of hours together discussing a number of elements associated with this question, and here we summarise their key points in the aim of providing you with some helpful hints and tips when it comes to approaching all things related to learner investment.

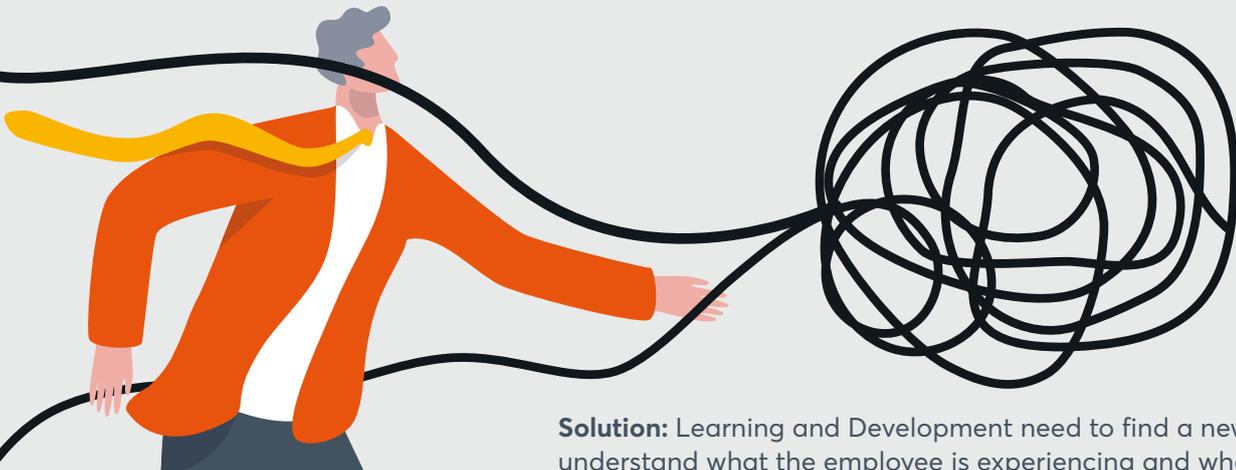


Responsibility for Learning

"Do both employer and employee share the responsibility of learning?"

"Not only do I agree, I actually think that there's loads more that both parties can do."

Problem: The way that traditional L&D is set up places too much emphasis on the individual. Providing them with content without context expects far too much from them. Relying on them to take this new content and relate it to their role and the objectives set by the organisation is unrealistic.



Solution: Learning and Development need to find a new way to understand what the employee is experiencing and what they are expected to do and then meet them in the middle.

"How can they share this responsibility so that they can both really add value to professional development?"

There is one **simple answer** to this...

Analysis

L&D teams are used to doing a 'learning needs analysis' but the issue here is that they take the 'problem' being faced by the learner and try translate this into a learning solution, however this is largely remise of context.



Top tip

Focus on what employees are trying to do and what they are not able to do efficiently and effectively and then provide them with the tools, the insights, the know-how and the information in order to fix this problem.

Want to hear Niro and David tackle this in more detail? [View the full clip here.](#)

Engaging learners in L&D

"Companies are keen to conduct a 'training needs analysis' as a way of identifying problems, then produce a course to solve this problem, but provide no follow up and are surprised when nothing changes. What are your thoughts on this?"

"The problem is because it's not focused on what people are trying to do, it's focused on what L&D teams think people should learn and there's a massive disconnect there."

Problem: Learning and Development teams can often think all they need to do is provide the plan and programmes to help people develop, but unless it is structured to actually solve a problem being experienced by the people they need to influence then people won't care!

Solution: Capitalise on opportunities when people are most open to listening:

- **When employees are new to an organisation**
- **Are unfamiliar in their role**
- **Or when they are expected to adapt**

People still view L&D through the traditional lens of providing '**courses and e-learning**', it is a dance that everyone knows. Stakeholders ask for training, learning and development deliver the training and employees go on the training, but what isn't discussed often enough is what actually changes as a result of that?

Companies then focus on the externalities of this training and reason:

"It's good for engagement"

"It's great to bring people together"

"It's a positive experience"

"L&D teams need to be more intentional in addressing the actual problems. So instead of learning and development being an unsophisticated dance like a conga line, where everyone jumps on board, L&D at the front and everyone kicks their legs and feels great immediately afterwards, but nothing actually changes, they need to think about what people are actually trying to do and if we are going to relate it to a dance, perhaps it should be a Waltz or Tango instead of a Conga Line."

Want to learn more about the L&D Waltz or Tango? [Listen to what David had to say here.](#)

Changes to L&D Approaches

"How can organisations make learning more appealing?"

"Rather than making learning more appealing, the last 12-18 months have focused on making learning more relevant – this is key."

With the impact of COVID-19 L&D teams quickly changed their approach to support remote working and remote management and then immediately changed focus to supporting the wellbeing of employees. It wasn't something they did to make it more appealing, i.e. making it more interactive or animated, it was just about providing people with what they actually needed to allow them to work in this new way.

Lightbulb moment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, L&D teams focused on the biggest problems facing employees at that particular time, and because of this there was incredible takeup. This proves that learning doesn't necessarily have to be made more interactive, it just needs to be made more useful and closer to the point of need, and that way teams will see a higher level of engagement.

Useful steps for future planning using this model:

1. Find ways to get closer to the point of need of employees
2. Use this insight to guide and support performance
3. Allow employees to determine what's useful and when it's required
4. Seek data to support these needs and solutions
5. Learn from these solutions

Want to review this section of the interview? [Click here.](#)

Engaging Stakeholders

"How can L&D teams look to rebrand themselves so they are seen as more than the team you go to when you want to do a course?"

"First of all it's just about being outcome focused. There isn't a rebranding exercise that needs to be done before action, L&D teams need to try something, in a new way and have conversations about what needs to happen as a result of an intervention and not what should be included or how that should be presented."



Top tip

L&D teams need to speak to stakeholders differently to improve their 'service' so when a stakeholder requests some training they need to look to ask questions such as:

- What do you want to achieve as a result of the training?
- What's not happening now?
- Who specifically do we need to influence?
- Who is responsible for the way the work is done and therefore the results?

This shows that as a team they are interested in making a difference.

Once L&D teams have this insight they can produce a more focused training solution to the problem that it is less risky and will ensure that the outcome addresses the initial difficulties these stakeholders were facing. This means that L&D teams start to solve real problems, one at a time.

"This shift will see L&D teams moving away from being order takers to being consultants with the ability to help drive real change."

Hear David expand on why he thinks L&D teams don't always take this approach by [clicking here.](#)

"There can be a lot for L&D teams to think about when pulling together the L&D plan so how do they manage 'upwards' in terms of the senior leaders in the business?"

Having the confidence to engage in a conversation about outcomes will increase the credibility of the team as a function. Once you have this buy in, it is easier to get employees along on this journey.

"What seems like the best response is that you say 'yes'. You take the order."

It's a simple equation:

L&D teams have conversations with senior stakeholders and learners about the desired outcome.



They then provide the learners with what they need to resolve this problem and achieve the outcome.



Learners who can predictably and reliably perform in their role and fulfil their potential.

The most resistance doesn't come from the senior leaders but actually from within the L&D teams themselves. They don't often wish to engage in performance conversations just in case the learning suite of solutions don't match up. However, engaging in these types of conversations with stakeholders can help give teams that insight and therefore, the solution becomes more apparent.

[Hear David and Niro discuss this in more detail here.](#)

Investing in L&D for the Future

"What are the ultimate benefits in organisations investing in their learners, for both parties?"

"You have employees that have trust in both the organisation and learning and development function, to do what is important by them, and then as an organisation, you're not losing good people."

It comes back to the same point, understanding what both parties are trying to achieve and working together to create a solution that efficiently and effectively helps them do that. It's not hard, it's just a very different approach.

L&D teams need to expect more from themselves, rather than just being responsible for providing content and delivering programs, they need to prove they understand what is required of them through conversations with stakeholders, backed up by the solutions that they provide, giving people what they need in the context of where they work and when they actually need it.

[View the final part of this conversation here.](#)



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 programme 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.

So, 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, including:



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, it 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. Our research 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.



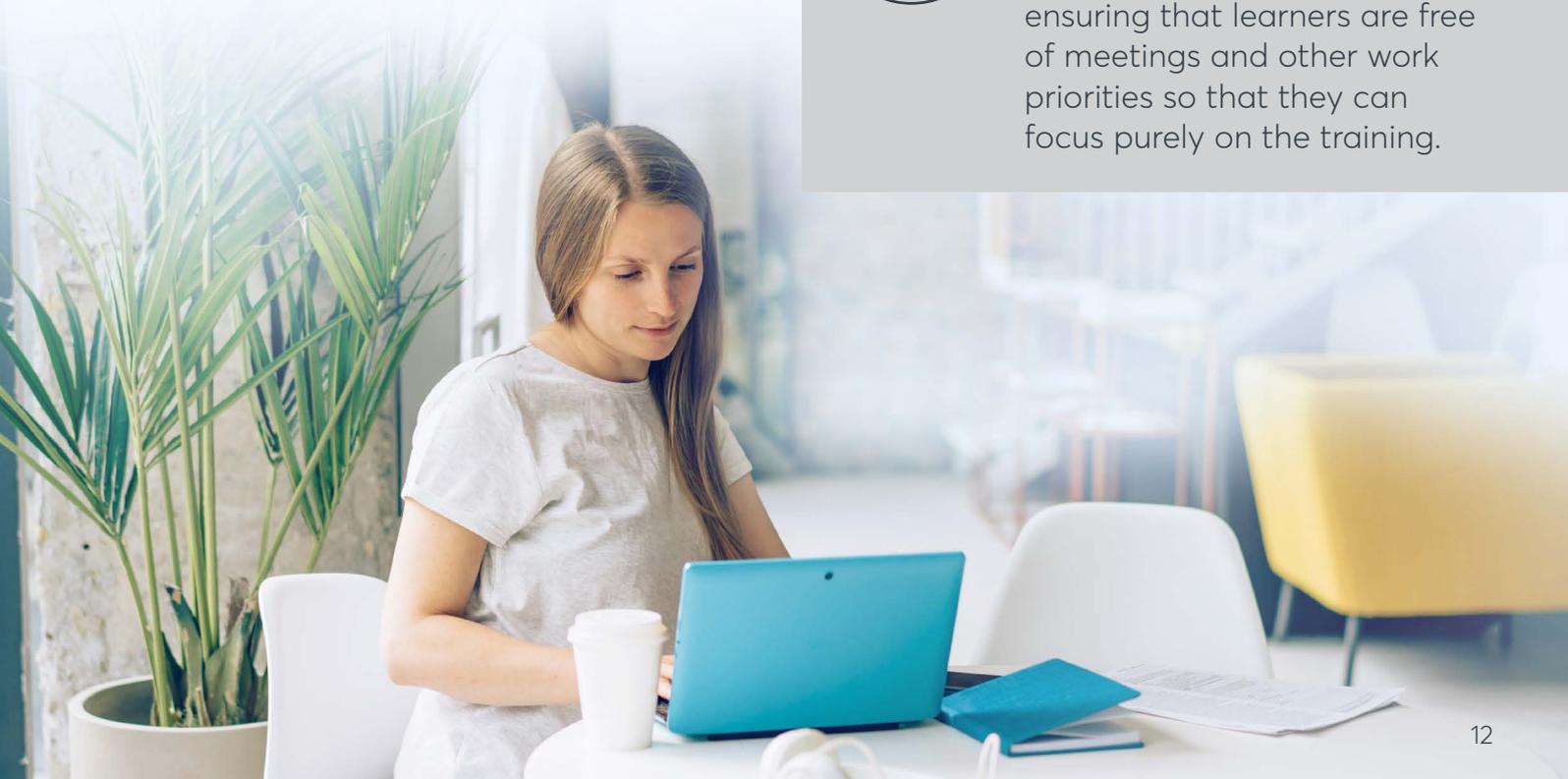
Space

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 the 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 programme 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, a post 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 and 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 programme. Through our survey it was identified that **66%** of respondents like to test their knowledge learnt following any learning programme and 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 programme 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 programme may be more difficult to digest and therefore, offering refresher training in bite-size chunks can offer a follow up where 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 programme 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 programme been developed using the right methods of content delivery?
- Has a time been arranged to meet with the learners before the programme 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?

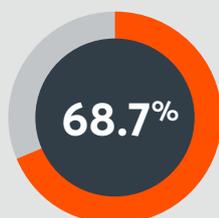
The benefits of learning and development to the employer and employee

Learning at work has many benefits to both employer and employee, which suggests that they both have a shared interest, and thus a responsibility, for training. This is supported by our findings: **83.1%** of respondents believed that the responsibility for professional development lay with both the employer and the employee.

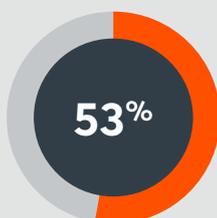
How does learning and development at work benefit the **EMPLOYER**?

Training is no longer just seen as a tick-box exercise, as businesses are recognising the value of the development of employees more and more. Treating employees as assets to the business, by investing and encouraging continuous development, can only positively affect a company's growth and profits.

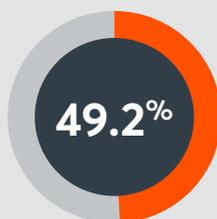
Although companies are still required to conduct regular training to meet legal requirements, our respondents identified the **the biggest reasons for the purchasing of learning at work as being:**



To upskill employees



For accreditation and certificates



For compliance needs

Other main **benefits** for employers to investing in the learning and development of employees are:



Keeping pace with changes in the industry

Lowering employee turnover (and save money via retention of staff)



Enhancing company reputation and profile by attracting top-level talent

Creating scope for internal promotions



Helping to grow employees with potential to develop into great leaders

Allowing businesses to outperform the competition



As employees develop they will likely make positive changes to their behaviour and build new skills at work, meaning employers will also see results in wider areas of the business. By continually investing in the training of staff, companies will also see improved productivity, as well the ability to keep up with their industry and remain competitive in terms of both business and recruitment.

Employees want to work for businesses who care about their development and training needs.

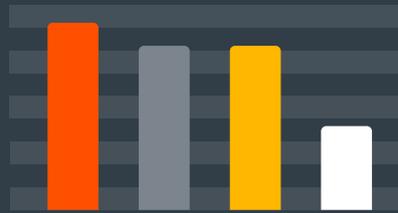
How does learning and development at work benefit the **EMPLOYEE?**



42.9%
of respondents stated they wanted to learn whilst at work "quite a lot"

32.2%
of respondents stated they wanted to learn whilst at work "a lot"

The main **motivations** to learn at work included:



- **Improve skills** (82.7%)
- **Improve at my job** (72.6%)
- **Want to learn** (72.4%)
- **Opportunity for promotion** (38.1%)

What other **benefits** come from learning at work?



Job satisfaction and morale

Maintaining and expanding skills and knowledge



Addressing weaknesses

Increased productivity and adherence to quality standards



The evolution of learning at work now means employees feel continually supported by their employers throughout their learning journey, as well as being offered the opportunity to learn on the job.

When asked how employers supported their learning development:



64.1% of respondents said they simply allocate the training



52.1% said they encouraged them to direct their own learning



49.8% hold regular meetings and discussions about progress and training needs



47.4% help or encourage them to find time to train



These results suggest there is still a need for change when it comes to supporting and encouraging staff to learn at work. Employers are no longer viewed as just people who allocate the training but as those who should inspire and nurture their staff throughout their learning and development.

Going above and beyond for the learners: a success story

It's easy saying that organisations should invest in their learners, but how do they go about it and is it actually worthwhile? To find out what success looks like, let's have an in-depth look at WRAP and their training solution that went above and beyond for the learners.



Who is WRAP?

A charity who works with governments, businesses and citizens around the globe to generate evidence-based solutions to protect the environment, build stronger economies and support more sustainable societies.

What do they do?

They tackle sustainable product design, waste reduction, re-use, recycling and waste management for food and drink, plastic packaging, clothing and textiles.

What's the training?

The pilot of 'Guardians of Grub: Becoming a Champion' – a programme focused on reducing the amount of food being thrown away by the Hospitality and Food Service (HaFS) sector.

Who are the learners?

Staff from a wide range of organisations across the HaFS sector who wanted to learn how to reduce their food waste.



BECOMING A CHAMPION

As part of their targets to reduce food waste across the UK, WRAP wanted to tackle a huge problem the Hospitality and Food Service (HaFS) sector were facing –throwing away over 1 million tonnes of food each year, 75% of which could have been eaten. How could this be dealt with and more importantly, how could it be reduced?

The HaFS sector is complex, and WRAP knew that the key to reducing wasted food is tracking and measuring it. They knew there was a knowledge gap here and that filling it would be instrumental to tackling the problem and encouraging the sector to take action against food waste.

Their campaign 'Guardians of Grub' had a range of resources and tools which would help fill this knowledge gap, but there was no easy way for learners to discover them or link them together, which made it difficult to fully grasp and understand the topic. To combat this, they decided to develop a programme that would not only house this wide range of resources in a way that would make it easy for the learner to navigate, and therefore, learn, but that would also drive the desired behaviour change – to reduce food waste.

They opted to go for an online blended approach. They aimed to take the learners on a competency journey, starting with their intent to rise up against wasted food and leading them to practical, demonstrable 'action'. The programme included a vast range of digital elements – everything from e-learning and resources to podcasts and videos – and was underpinned by food waste measurement, with learners inputting daily food waste measures for an 8-week period. This was key to helping the learners and their organisations monitor and fully understand their food waste.

By the end of the programme, they wanted the learners to have gained new skills and improved existing ones that would enable them to capture important data on wasted food. They also aimed to create a network of 'Champions' – learners who had completed the learning and made a pledge to 'Become a Champion': to protect food, profits and the planet.

With funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), they carried out a pilot of the project to test the effectiveness of the behaviour change programme. They shared the training with a small group to begin with – 25 organisations, which included a total number of 114 learners – with the aim of rolling it out to a wider audience in a wider audience later in the year. It is this pilot that we'll be focusing on.



How they invested in the learners

This project stands out to us as one that has truly invested in its learners because it is an all-rounder. WRAP put effort into every area – from the initial research and building of the programme to learner support and gathering feedback – and really took everything into consideration in a way that we don't often see.

Getting the experts on board

The investment started at the beginning. To ensure the training programme hit all their objectives, they knew they had to get experts on board, recognising that others had the expertise to help truly enhance the training programme.

To find their partners they went through an open tender process, but didn't have a preconceived idea of how it would work. So in order to be flexible and adaptable and be open to the insights they gained, the work was procured in three stages, allowing them to decide exactly which experts they needed to be involved.

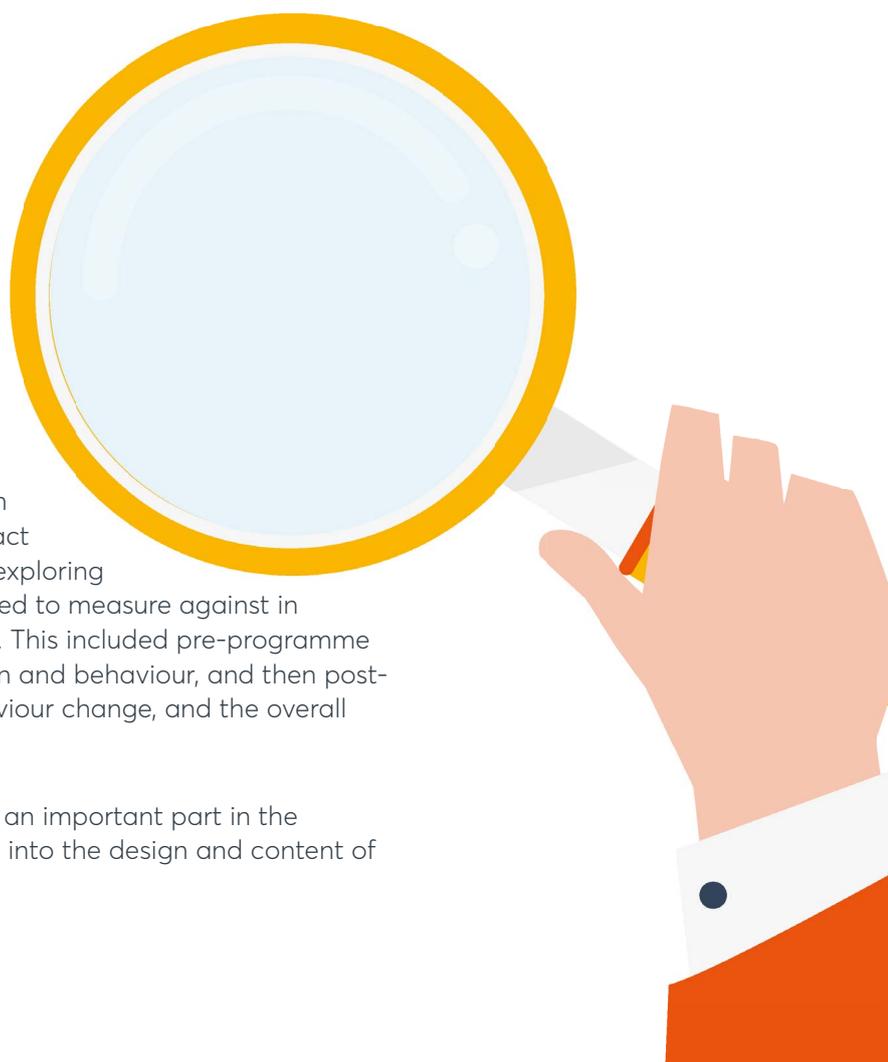
It is decisions such as these that are an important indication of an organisation investing in their learners and the success of the programme, as they want to make sure they have the right people involved to make the training programme the best it possibly can be.

They did their research

They did everything they could to make sure the programme was designed to meet the needs of the sector. This included making time for an extensive research phase, which was carried out at the very beginning of the project. It included online surveys, interviews, roundtable sessions and the establishment of an Advisory Group made up of HaFS sub sectors to ensure the programme would be suitable for all.

WRAP's partners also carried out their own research necessary to their roles in the project. As an example, our consultants at Virtual College ran impact workshops with WRAP and set KPIs for the project, exploring what qualitative and quantitative data we would need to measure against in order to demonstrate the impact of the programme. This included pre-programme evaluations to enable us to assess current perception and behaviour, and then post-programme evaluations to capture the shift in behaviour change, and the overall success of the programme.

The insights gained from the research phase played an important part in the development of the programme, as they fed directly into the design and content of the programme.



There is no 'one size fits all'

They thought outside the box. They could have gone down a standard route, but they recognised the different ways people learnt and understood that for the learners to truly embed the learning, take it on board and make those behaviour changes, the programme had to use the different formats and present the learning in different ways. So, they went above and beyond to create a truly engaging learner journey.

They didn't rely completely on one style; they used a blended approach making sure to take the best of digital and face-to-face (though, in these Covid times, that was done over video conference software) and using them in the most meaningful way.

Becoming a Champion: Behaviour Change Journey



The Behaviour Change Journey shows just how they did this. The range of digital formats is incredible, with ten different formats being used, making sure to tap into the different needs of the learners and keep them engaged. You can see how considered they were, carefully thinking about what would work best for what type of information.

This huge range of different media types will have been new to the learners, as digital training is often just an e-learning module with some extra media types. But this extra level of detail signals so much to the learner. It signals that it is no usual, standard training programme, but something they can truly benefit from and enjoy. It signals how their organisation feel about it – that it is not a tick-box exercise, it is something they take seriously, and they don't just want the learners to go through the learning, they want the learning to really make a difference and for that behaviour change to happen. They wanted the learner to care.

But they knew it couldn't all be digital, and face-to-face would be needed. This is why they incorporated one-to-one support through the use of 'surgery sessions'. These were fortnightly and delivered via web conference, and Champions were invited to join to share their experiences of working through the programme, both their successes and challenges, and WRAP and Virtual College were also there to provide support and motivation, with occasional guest speakers from the HaFS sector joining to showcase their own food waste reduction journeys and the successes and impacts these had.

Engagement from the start

They reached out to the audience and learners before they began the training programme. They had a number of different channels – the Guardians of Grub newsletter and materials, webinars, a Pilot pack, they held different surgeries for the participants and for the organisations, and they had contact with signatories, such as Courtauld Commitment 2025, who also acted as influencers. This early engagement with the audience is a great way to get the learners excited, curious and invested in the training before they begin, and again, is an indication to the learner that the training is something worthwhile.

The importance of motivation and praise

Though learners like to learn at their own pace, time and location – some of the main attractions of digital learning – they don't want to be left to their own devices completely, and often need some motivation and praise. It's a fine balance to achieve, but WRAP had an engagement plan to help motivate learners to embrace the learning, take it in and embed it. This plan ran alongside the programme, providing weekly motivational messaging to learners as they progressed through the programme, as well as reminders to input their food waste measurement data into the system. The surgery sessions, as mentioned previously, were also an important part of the plan, and organisations were also motivated by monthly infographic reports, which were sent to help them monitor their progress.

A way to praise the learners were certificates of success. These were accessed by the learners at the end of successful level completion, and successes were celebrated at the surgery sessions, which helped the learners feel appreciated as well as being made to feel part of something bigger. WRAP are also showcasing Champions who have completed the programme through their new Champion 'Wall of Fame'. They clearly know this is an important part of the learner experience!

How the training impacted the learners and the organisations

They may have put all this effort in, but what are the results? Was it worth it? This is something they were always adamant to find out, as the impact the training has on the learners and the organisations is imperative to getting that desired behaviour change – reduction in food waste. Assessing the impact was built into the programme journey, and they set out to capture data – both qualitative and quantitative.

The impact is clear – it's been a powerful training programme, and here we share some of the impressive findings taken from the pilot.

Savings	4 week	8 week
No. Covers	15,796	76,679
Weight per cover	38% reduction	23% reduction
£ per cover	37% reduction	26% reduction

These positive statistics are just one of the signs that the behaviour change has begun, as it is unlikely that these reductions would have happened without the training.

Pre and post-training evaluations

They carried out a number of pre and post-training evaluations to properly measure how behaviours had changed, focusing on numerous different behaviours from positive application to communication regarding food waste.

Positive Application:

34% increase in measuring food waste **5-7 times a week** after the programme, compared with before

30% increase in recording food waste daily through programme involvement

Increased Knowledge & Awareness:

9% increase in understanding of the different food waste categories

12% increase in understanding of the impact of food waste on the business

Motivation:

Environmental impact motivation was a key personal driver (**81% pre and 76% post programme engagement**)

5% reduction in environmental motivation, but an **8% increase in financial motivation**

Communications

19% increase in food waste reduction being formally communicated across the business through leadership updates, newsletters and emails

16% reduction in ad hoc, inconsistent communication

Awareness of food waste target **increased by 26%**

22% increase in organisations setting a target



Did they meet the different learning styles?

WRAP put a lot of effort into trying to meet different learning styles by ensuring that different formats were used throughout. But, did this pay off? Here are some great statistics which reflect the champions' thoughts.



Qualitative champion feedback

WRAP also made sure to get qualitative evaluation feedback too, so they could discover more in-depth insights about what the champions felt worked best and what they gained. Here are a few examples.

The Participant Surgery sessions have been so useful. The first one really got me going on my journey.'

I liked the mini assessment spread out throughout the levels, as they kept me engaged and felt like mini wins

Great! Great!

The podcasts and case studies were really interesting! I loved the story about the children at the school, and how teaching children about food waste early on can make a difference.

The programme definitely makes you think and encourages more food waste conversations around the business. I've brought lots of ideas and knowledge home too.

Qualitative sponsor feedback

The sponsors of the programme signed up to the organisation, recognising that they needed to address their food waste problem. Here are some of their glowing reports.

Our nominated Guardians of Grub Champions did an excellent job of raising awareness within the teams and inspiring them to reduce food waste. Our teams found that just talking about wasted food influenced change and many of our sites put initiatives in place such as zero-waste dishes, utilising excess stock through menu innovations and donating surplus to the community, all of which were achieved through engagement on the Guardians of Grub: Becoming a Champion pilot'

You were very helpful and if I reached out, there was immediate help at hand.

I think it's a very thought through programme. It is a great idea to have different levels of learning. Each level offers a different learning opportunity

The basic premise of a remote e-learning and data logging system for Guardians of Grub was a good one. It ensured that there was an accessible way to train and engage with the programme across multiple locations during a difficult period where face-to-face contact was very limited.

Overall, the success of the programme – the learners' appreciation for the training and the desired behaviour changes coming about – only emphasises the point we keep coming back to: you must invest in your learners. WRAP went above and beyond to make a learning programme that learners would enjoy and gain some crucial knowledge and insights and take those forward in a positive way – these changes just wouldn't have been possible without the time and investment that they made.

Taking accountability for learning: How can L&D professionals demonstrate the value of learning to their stakeholders and learners?

David James joined us once more as guest speaker at our recent virtual roundtable event and talked us through what taking accountability for learning really means. Joined by a number of senior L&D experts from a wide range of different sectors, the group discussed key trends and this document highlights some of the challenges and trends faced by many organisations when trying to demonstrate the value of learning.

Here we summarise the insight, topics and debates that took place.

Introduction

What David had to say...	What this means in practice...
Accountability is not just providing a suite of generic courses and resources and leaving it to the learner to find their way through it.	True accountability is understanding the requirements for courses and working with learners on their complete learner journey.
If we take accountability seriously, we are focusing on much more than the number of attendees and good evaluations.	It shouldn't be a tick-box exercise, it should be about providing learners with the tools and resources to make the necessary change that the training should be addressing.
It needs to be about the learner, not just covering as much of a topic in an allotted timeslot and providing practice time.	Linked to the above point, L&D professionals need to listen to their learners' wants and needs and create a training plan around these, ensuring a change happens as a result of the new knowledge.
We need to meet the learner halfway.	Doing this means analysing how employees actually work and identifying their challenges and blockers. Then using this information to engage in conversations with them to discover what tools they need, and to create context-specific content that will help them overcome these challenges and master tasks and their roles.
It's not about short cuts or finding the 'silver bullet' – they don't actually work!	This means accepting that training needs are complex and that you can't solve everything with one training course or package. So you need to have the conversations. The conversations with stakeholders and learners about their needs and with senior leaders about what they want to achieve from L&D, only then will you be able to discover what is really going to work.
Learners will be engaged when they are given what they need, when they need it.	It isn't necessarily about leaderboards and gamification, it is about providing the right resources at the right time when learners are ready to engage.

His conclusion: **"Only when you see that the learning is influencing your employees work, and that your organisational metrics and results are being affected, will you really see the value of taking accountability."**



The discussions

The key points from each of these discussions are summarised below in order to present anyone working within L&D with some useful thoughts, hints and guidance on what taking accountability means practically.

1. How can the **L&D professional** take accountability for learning and what are the challenges they face?

- L&D is often perceived as a 'bolt-on' rather than an integral part of a company's culture and mindset, which affects engagement. Creating a supportive environment where people feel able to ask for help and support is key to making this shift.
- Effective learning is all about providing learning in the 'moment of need' so performance is not stopped, it's enabled. Giving learners a choice of formats so they can access learning in the most suitable way for them is imperative.
- L&D professionals need to ask better questions in order to understand what employees want to learn and why within a business. What learning will support people to grow and perform better? What are people struggling with?
- Language can be a barrier – don't use L&D language as this doesn't always resonate with the learner.
- It can be a challenge to engage managers in the process and get buy-in to the level of investment needed. There is a need to show the impact learning is having on performance BUT this is hard to quantify. Be creative in your evaluation process
 - qualitative evaluations are really important. Learner feedback should be focused on the relevance of learning and how easy it was to engage with to help support the mindshift around learning and its purpose within an organisation.
- Don't forget about recognition and rewards. Businesses need to create opportunities for learners to apply their learning and recognise when people 'do things right.' This will drive engagement as learners feel a sense of reward and recognition and will help businesses understand the tangible impact learning interventions are having.



2. What value does a **stakeholder** need to be shown and therefore recognise to invest in L&D?

What challenges can stand in the way?

- There can be a fear of exposure in gaps in their skills/their teams' skills.
- Often the relationship between L&D and stakeholders is just a transactional one, they don't see L&D as a team to collaborate with or consult.
- L&D find it hard to help stakeholders see the impact value as it can be difficult to connect the dots between the stakeholders' objectives, the teams' needs and the business outcome. With this, company objectives/priorities can change regularly, as can senior managements, so it's difficult to keep it all aligned.
- It can be difficult to obtain stakeholder commitment. They can often be too busy/haven't got the time to get involved.

What approaches can L&D teams use to overcome these?

- Apply marketing principles: stakeholders and learners are like consumers and using marketing techniques is a good way to gain buy-in and motivate people to get involved.
- Use interactive approaches such as collecting user needs and then feeding back in a 'you asked, we did' style, and action learning sets to help people find their own way of developing with added support from L&D.
- Invest in a strong communications plan to keep stakeholders engaged and interested in progress and to celebrate successes. If people can see the value in others' stories, they will more likely commit investment.



3. What barriers are there to learners buying into the learner journey?

- Accounting for the time spent learning, as L&D is always seen as an add-on instead of part of the day job. How do L&D teams ensure learners can learn in the flow of work?
- There can be a lack of learning culture within the business, which impacts motivation levels. Learners often like to see learning being undertaken by senior members of the business, as it can highlight the commitment to L&D.
- Commanding language such as 'have to spend 20% of time learning' or 'should spend' can act as a barrier, as learners want to learn at a pace and time that suits them and fits in with their lifestyle.
- The lack of social interaction that some may now experience in newer learning formats. A lot of learners still like to interact and meet with the others to discuss their experience.
- Getting no guidance and support when navigating large amounts of resources, much of which can be a mixture between verified content and user-generated content.



- Lack of support on their journey – especially the last 12 months through the pandemic, where some learners have been encouraged to go online but without the necessary guidance.
- If there is a lack of distinction between different learners' needs, which can often vary depending on their role. Learning needs to be personalised.
- Access to a vast range of resources to read or watch, but with few opportunities to practice or apply learning.
- A lack of curiosity or interest in the learning will always be a barrier, and just highlights the importance of L&D teams listening to learners' needs more.

It is important that L&D professionals, and stakeholders within the business listen to the barriers being experienced by their learners in order to create a solution. Things that do work and can help overcome these barriers include:

- Evidencing the outcome of the training - what will change as a direct result?
- Teaching learners how to navigate new platforms and technologies they are not familiar with.
- Creating opportunities to discuss the learnings and encouraging collaboration.
- Listening to how learners needs can differentiate and try to cater for these differing needs.
- Create opportunities to practice the new knowledge and apply the learning.

Final word

Nicole Horsman, our Director of Sales and Partnerships, concludes this report, sharing her thoughts on why learning isn't a 'tick box' exercise and what we can do to make sure it really is beneficial to both employees and the employer.

This report provides us with some thought-provoking insights into how learning can benefit both the employer and employees; insights which are especially important now as businesses are looking at how they can develop and grow in a changing market.



What key actions can we take to make sure learning does benefit both the employer and employees?

See it as an investment in your business and people

Learning is not a tick-box exercise, it's how an employer supports business needs. Gone are the days when L&D departments are seen as an add-on to a business; instead they must be integral to leadership teams, helping them identify where L&D interventions can be utilised to deliver successful business outcomes, and investing time to identify the needs, as well as the skills and learning that are required to meet them.

Embrace 'learning in the flow of work'

This is a term we hear more and more, and it's essentially allowing employees to learn in a way that meets their needs and learning styles. It's growing in popularity and is affecting the way we learn both in and out of work.

Personal experiences: With the internet and video tutorials, learning is becoming a big part of our lives. Learners want work-based training to reflect this. They need flexibility and the ability to learn at their own pace, time and location.

Work experiences: Employees are most engaged when they are learning something that is relevant – which is great for supporting the business needs too. Where appropriate, bite-size learning and microlearning are useful here – resources they can dip in and out of and easily fit around work responsibilities.

Develop a learning culture

During the current climate of change and uncertainty, it is recommended that businesses develop a learning culture. This allows employees to feel comfortable when developing themselves to meet the demands of the business. A learning culture is more than just the training itself, it's pre- and post-training, dedicated time and a suitable learning environment. It's also a culture that is demonstrated from the top down – the senior team must be invested, otherwise how can you expect the employees to be?

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