



Learning reimagined

The four big shifts L&D
need to make in a new
era of work

EY Lane4
Workforce Transformation

About EY Lane4

The combination of EY and Lane4 focusses on harnessing the power of people.

Powered by technology, EY puts humans at the centre of business transformation. Lane4 takes people beyond performance, giving them the skills and mindset to achieve things they never thought were possible.

We've come together to deliver on our purpose – to build a better working world.

We believe that organisations need to put people at the heart of their decision-making. Not only will this create long-term value for stakeholders inside and outside the business, but it will help ensure success across large-scale business transformations. At EY Lane4, we bring together some of the biggest and influential leaders around the world, drawing on their insight to shape how we support our clients with their people and transformation challenges.

Understanding the psychology of learning and knowledge retention is at the heart of our approach. Our people also bring a wealth of experience from performing at the highest level such as in Olympic sport, the military, the arts and business. This unique combination allows us to walk alongside leaders, acting as trusted advisors to challenge and support them throughout their transformation journeys.

However, at EY Lane4 it isn't just about senior leaders. We believe that everyone deserves access to world-class learning and development. Our global reach, digital learning solutions and innovative service delivery allows for consistent development across multiple levels of the organisation.

This means people can develop behaviours that will not only help them to perform at work, but in all parts of their life. It gives people the confidence and belief to try new things and truly thrive.

All this combined allows us to build a better working world.

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A new age of reskilling: why learning matters more than ever

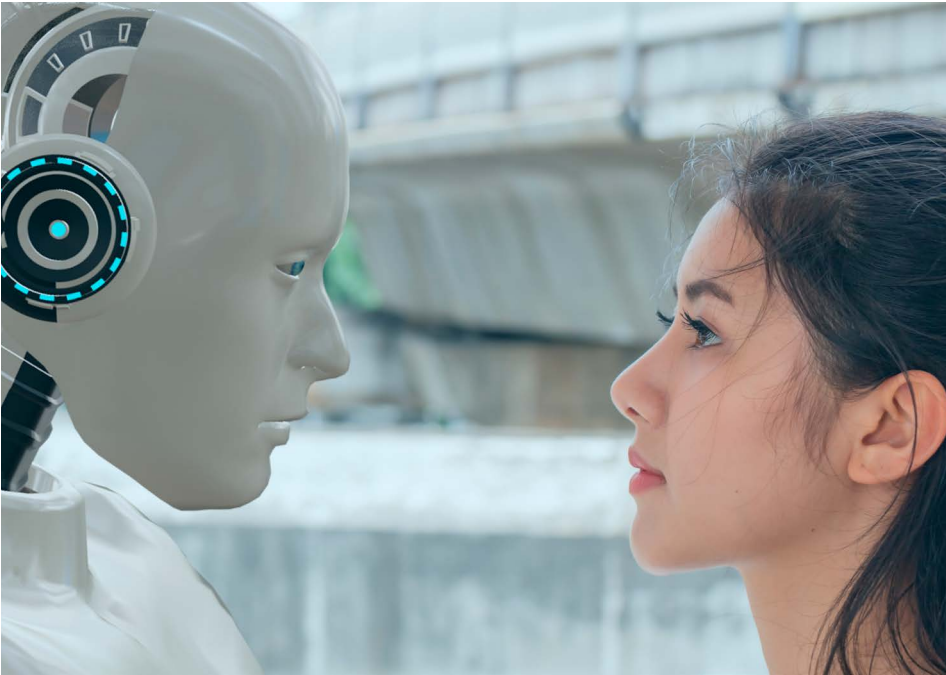
Reskilling isn't a one-off phase, it's the new business age. To remain relevant in today's fast evolving markets, organisations across all industries need to continuously pivot and transform to keep up. The days when people trained and qualified early in their career and then progressed steadily with those same skills are gone. Learning and relearning is at the heart of sustained success.

Reimagining workplace learning is no 'luxury item' on the leadership agenda. The World Economic Forum predicts that automation will cause 85 million jobs to be displaced and 97 million new jobs to be created by 2025¹, with 1 in 3 jobs likely to change radically as individual tasks are automated and adoption of technology increases.²

As future-ready organisations embrace a perpetual state of digital transformation, seizing the opportunities afforded by automation, robotics and AI, reskilling becomes a defining issue. For those in the C-suite who want their business to stay relevant in the market, the only alternative to reskilling will be to embrace the huge cost and disruption that comes from waves of recruitment, redundancies, and buy-outs. In the long run, developing a workforce that can adapt and morph their skills to fit the ever-changing needs of the business is the better option. It's better for individuals who get stability of employment along with opportunities to grow. It's better for organisations who have loyal workforces who can be redeployed to meet its changing needs. It's better for society, which avoids the social and economic costs of unemployment.

Research shows that 66% of L&D professionals globally report that they are focused on rebuilding and reshaping their organisations,³ and yet rebuilding isn't enough. Past approaches to learning won't be sufficient in this new era of rapid change, disruption, and reskilling. Learning must be reimagined to match the changing nature of work and jobs.

In this paper, we'll explore exactly how to reimagine learning in your business. We will look at how L&D can support the success of ever-evolving strategic priorities by making continuous reskilling second-nature to an organisation's workforce.



The evolution of learning: where L&D is, was and needs to be

The L&D industry has come a long way since organisations first recognised its strategic importance. L&D leaders must, nevertheless, make substantial further leaps to successfully transform into an organisational reskilling function.

The foundations of the L&D industry

In the past, learning was often highly structured and linear. Cohort-based development programmes and lengthy face-to-face workshops dominated the market. During this phase, great effort was expended in reaching an evidence-based perspective on how adults learn and how to shift behaviour in a sustainable way. The industry recognised the importance of experiential learning and the active role played by the learner, whilst simultaneously dismissing learning ‘myths’ such as learning styles.⁴

Despite undeniable progress, the traditional approach to L&D soon came under attack. Learners and organisations alike questioned the need to take people out of the office for days at a time. The one-size-fits-all programmes meant that learning was only inconsistently appropriate for people’s unique challenges and development needs. The strong face-to-face foundation of learning also led questions to be raised regarding the value for money.

Many organisations invested in ‘bite-sized’ digital learning, partially in a response to the criticisms levelled at the more traditional approaches to upskilling. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Learning Experience Platforms (LXPs) entered the limelight and began to get traction in the L&D industry as a way of delivering learning at scale.

The L&D industry today

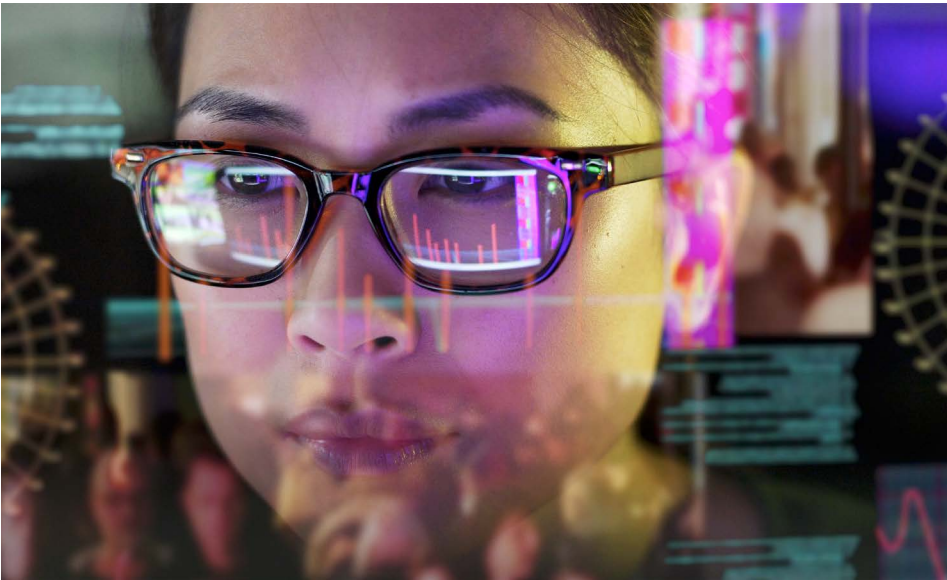
The COVID-19 pandemic truly provided a watershed moment for digital learning, with the attention on both synchronous virtual experiences and asynchronous digital learning rising exponentially. It has become the norm for people to have access to wide-ranging learning at their fingertips, such as curated content, videos, virtual classrooms, webinars, and e-learning modules. People have never had so much choice when it comes to their learning and development.

However, in the world of L&D, does more choice automatically translate to more impact?

According to a CIPD study, 66% of employees don’t understand why they are

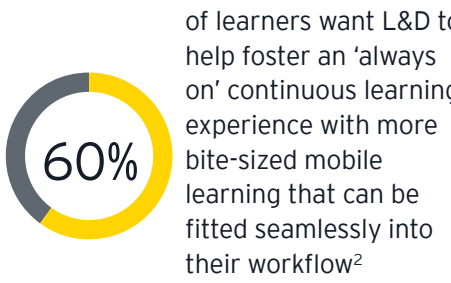
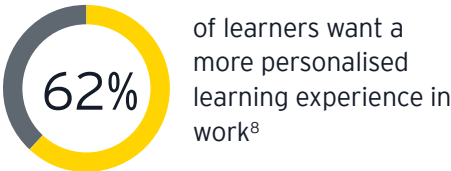
engaging in learning and development, and 68% of employees report that they aren’t encouraged to reflect on what they learn in their day-to-day job.⁵ Furthermore, two thirds of frontline employees say their training isn’t easy to understand and retain, that it’s slow-paced and that it doesn’t contribute to their confidence on the job.⁶

These statistics paint a stark picture: more isn’t more when it comes to learning. It’s clearly not enough for L&D teams to open the pandora’s box of learning options and offer an unnavigable buffet of content and formats to people. The L&D marketplace will need to adopt a markedly different approach to successfully reskill the people and organisations of the future.



The future of L&D

80% of people indicate that their strongest motivation to learn at work is to do their jobs faster or better.⁷ As technology advances and jobs evolve more rapidly, it’s therefore not more choice people need but more relevance to their role and specific context. Learners’ needs and expectations of L&D are shifting:

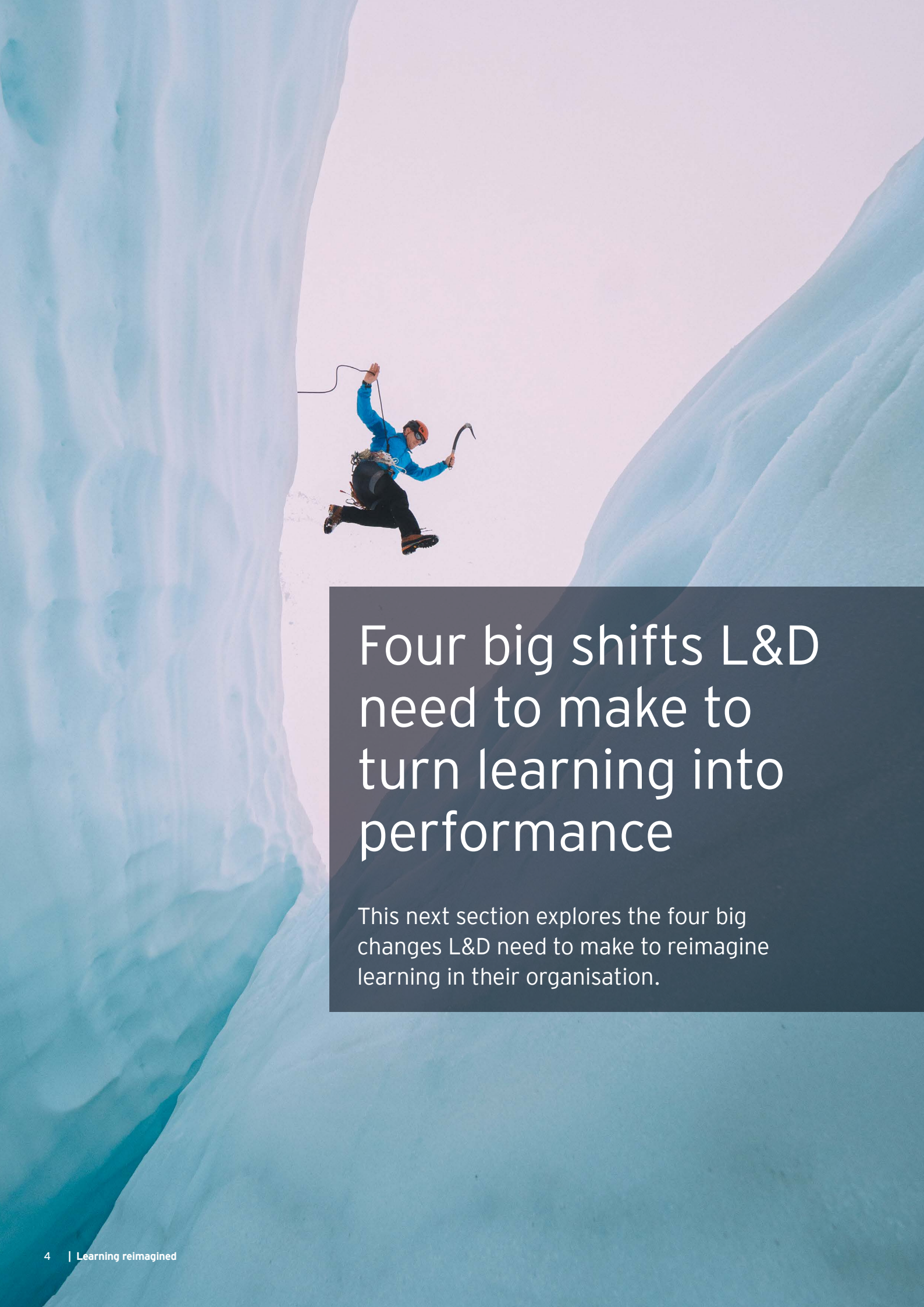


In the future, L&D will more concerned with performance than learning per se. It will need to help people to continually evolve and adapt as the nature of their role changes, with a spotlight on real-time needs and immediate real-world application. Learning will no longer be ‘just in case’ but ‘just-enough, just-in-time, and just-for-me’.

In this white paper, we present four strategic shifts that L&D need to make to create this new era of learning:

- 1 Integrate learning-in-the-flow-of-work and work-in-the-flow-of learning
- 2 Develop adaptable, autonomous learners
- 3 Build a culture where continuous learning is inevitable
- 4 Give learners what they didn’t know they needed





Four big shifts L&D need to make to turn learning into performance

This next section explores the four big changes L&D need to make to reimagine learning in their organisation.

Shift 1: Integrate learning-in-the-flow-of-work and work-in-the-flow-of-learning

There is increasing demand for learning that's shorter, faster and integrated within an individual's day job. However, it's important L&D teams don't only focus on integrating learning into the flow of work, but also work into the flow of learning.

Since 2018 when Josh Bersin first coined the phrase 'learning in the flow of work',¹⁰ there has been huge interest around how to make a learning experience so streamlined and ergonomic people almost don't notice learning is happening. For example, someone encounters a difficult situation and an intelligent chatbot or quick video immediately pops up to offer the exact support needed at that moment.

Offering learning that's timely and frictionless will be defining feature of this new learning era. However, immediate support in the flow of work, is only half the picture ...

Just as learning needs to be integrated into the flow of work, work needs to be tightly woven into the flow of learning. Evidence has long flagged the importance of minimising the time between an individual learning something and putting that learning into practice (whether it be to their role, to a specific business challenge, or live in a situation). In fact, if new information isn't applied, studies have shown people forget about 75% of it after just six days.¹¹ A body of evidence further demonstrates how practice-based methods are the most effective.¹²

However, statistics indicate that the importance of quick application of learning to real-world scenarios is common knowledge, not common L&D practice. As discussed earlier, 68% of learners aren't encouraged to reflect on what they learn within their day-to-day job;⁵ furthermore,

benchmarking data, from 700 global L&D leaders, highlights how the amount of practice-based activities provided to learners remains a key differentiator of "Top Deck" high-performing learning organisations.¹³

Top tip for L&D leaders:

Focusing on real-world application isn't new and isn't shiny but it is crucial if you want learners to have an exceptional experience. Specifically, L&D teams need to be:

- ▶ Using subject-matter experts (SMEs) to co-create and deliver content, providing learners with real-world best practice advice and top tips for their role and context
- ▶ Amplifying the use of practice-based methods (such as role plays, simulations, and case studies)
- ▶ Encouraging learners to bring real-world projects to learning sessions so that they can apply what's learned in real-time

Scottish Water is one company that's leading the way in terms of utilising subject-matter experts within the business. For a recent Skills Academy, not only did the L&D team engage their most experienced high performer to provide observation and mentoring to learners, but the SMEs were also closely involved in identifying training needs, designing interventions and delivering those interventions effectively.⁵

Shift 2: Develop adaptable, autonomous learners

Life-long reskilling hinges on having a core set of underlying skills: “self-regulation” and “unlearning”

Over the past decade L&D departments have been striving to give people more autonomy and choice, with self-directed learning becoming increasingly prevalent. This evolution has been in response to modern learner expectations, with 84% of learners now preferring self-directed learning,¹³ and based on the evidence that increased autonomy enhances people's intrinsic motivation, which in turn increases learning effectiveness.¹⁴

However, in the rush to create a more self-directed learning environment, two crucial skills are often overlooked, namely: self-regulation and unlearning.

Self-regulation

As the learning landscape becomes more autonomous, with people given more choice over the time, pace, and place of their learning, it's important to support learners to be skilled in self-regulation.

Specifically, self-regulation is the cyclical process whereby learners consciously engage in planning, initiating, organising, monitoring and evaluating their learning.¹⁷ An array of skills underpins an ability for self-regulation namely: critical thinking, problem solving, metacognition (i.e., the ability to reflect on yourself as a learner and the learning process

itself), goal setting, time-management, environment structuring (i.e., selecting/creating an environment conducive to learning, for example, that's quiet and free from distractions), emotional control, self-motivation, monitoring (i.e., using feedback and paying attention to one's performance) and help seeking (i.e., feeling comfortable asking for help and knowing when, why and whom they should turn to).¹⁸ Furthermore, research shows a high level of self-belief is necessary; with someone's belief in their capability to succeed exerting a strong, positive effect on their goal setting, effort and level of persistence.¹⁸

Defining terms:

Self-regulation: the ability to actively assume personal responsibility for one's own learning, take action to achieve learning goals and persevere in the face of challenges.¹⁵

Unlearning: the deliberate act of putting aside outdated 'ways of doing things'; with past routines, beliefs and habits intentionally discarded in response to changes in context.¹⁶



Top tip for L&D leaders:

As well as upskilling people on the numerous strategies and tactics they can use related to specific self-regulation skills (such as self-motivation), individuals could also be encouraged (via their managers) to create a living personal development plan. This will help people get into the cyclical habit of planning, initiating, organising, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning. Specifically, a 'living personal development plan', is a continuous, performance improvement exercise that requires people to regularly ask themselves:

What: am I noticing about my own performance? challenges or recurring issues do I face? aspects of my role am I less comfortable with? do other people observe about my strengths and development areas? could be the underlying issue, skill, or knowledge gap?

Why: is this important for me and/or the organisation to improve on?

And follow this reflect up with effective:

Goal setting: where do I need my performance to be? What would good look like? How will I know if I'm making progress?

Planning and implementation: what type of learning activities could help me develop my performance? When and where will I undertake this learning? What support and resources do I need to be successful?

Monitoring: how am I progressing with my goal? What feedback could help guide my focus? What relevant metrics or indicators suggest my performance has improved?

Unlearning

Change and transition within an organisation doesn't simply depend on people learning new skills and ways of working, it also requires them to relinquish the past habits and beliefs that are getting in the way of their ability to do something new or differently. Continuous unlearning is a key feature of learning reimagined, with individuals and teams constantly needing to evaluate the ways of working that are no longer helpful to future success.

As organisations go through ongoing transformation, people will need to update the beliefs, routines, processes, and protocols which have become outdated.^{19,20} While unlearning has always been particularly crucial when people transition to a new role, take on a project that challenges them, or join a new team, this is a much wider shift with learning and unlearning vital for everyone to get right regularly. No one can afford to stand still, even within their role.

This is a big change in relation to the premium society has previously placed on experience. Now, senior leaders will also need to keep their expertise and working practices fresh and up to date, embracing the vulnerability and risk that comes with unlearning and learning something new.

In terms of what unlearning entails, it is a deliberate process of letting go with individuals needing to:¹⁵

1. **Become** aware what rules, routines or processes are now outdated and need to be let go of
2. **Relinquish** past habits and ways of doing things
3. **Relearn** new ways of working, embracing more effective routines, processes, ideas and technologies

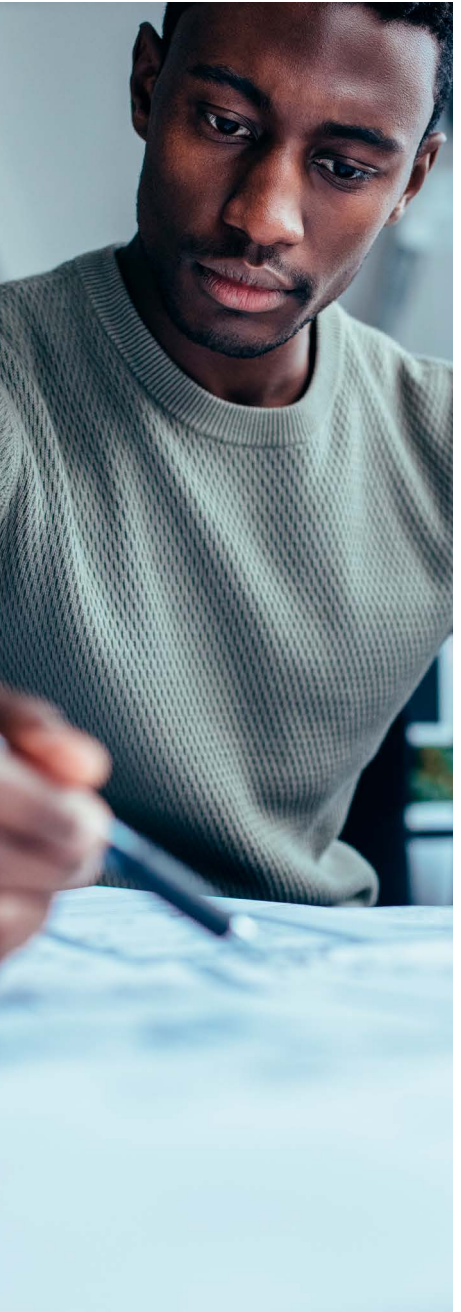
Whilst in these three steps unlearning may seem simple and clinical, L&D shouldn't underestimate how threatening it can feel to relinquish what's previously been valued. It's a process that is imperative to embedding change and ongoing performance improvement, but one that needs to be handled with the utmost care. For example, if as a leader you've always run a weekly meeting based on a certain report format, but now there's new software being used which generates a different style of report it may be daunting

Top tip for L&D:

Raise the profile of unlearning and make it specific

Letting go and embracing something new are key features of any change, but often they are discussed in a vague and general sense by senior leaders, with 'letting go' being something everyone 'just needs to do'. Unlearning is anything but generic. It's a highly personal, specific and often emotional process; one that frequently requires people to let go of an aspect of their identity or feature of their role that gives them confidence or has brought them success in the past. L&D should make sure unlearning isn't a generic plea but an ongoing, deliberate and specific feature of everyday practice, learning initiatives and conversations. For example, this could be achieved by encouraging individuals and teams to do regular unlearning reflection sessions, analysing what routines, beliefs, techniques and processes have, or are likely to, become a hinderance and need to be let go of.

to switch to using this new report style. Consciously or subconsciously, a leader might worry it will impact the quality of their presentation or spark different questions they haven't prepared for.



Shift 3: Build a culture where continuous learning is inevitable

L&D need to drive a cultural change in learning that amplifies the role of coaching, feedback, experimentation, and ownership. These cultural ingredients are vital to creating an environment where continuous learning is inevitable.

The role of L&D isn't to push learning out to people. In fact, survey research shows that when it comes to influence on people's motivation to learn, managers have the most influence (35%), with colleagues and mentors in a close second and third place (15% and 14% respectively), and L&D coming in last, having a 1% influence on motivation.⁷ Instead, L&D's role is to create an environment where ongoing reskilling, development and therefore career success, is inevitable.

Creating this environment partly involves ensuring people have access to the highest quality learning initiatives, materials, tools, and content, but it also involves L&D shaping the culture people operate within and contribute to. L&D needs to



support leaders to drive cultural change around learning, embedding continuous learning into 'the way things are done around here' within their organisation. This includes using coaching, feedback, experimentation, and ownership as defining features of a culture.

Coaching

Coaching is an essential skill for everyone to meet the vision of ongoing performance improvement. By equipping as many people as possible with a solid awareness and skill in coaching, a common set of assumptions and beliefs can be embedded into an organisation's deep culture. Providing people with goal-focused support and honest challenge that aids self-reflection becomes normalised, with people better able to identify when they're stuck and more likely to reach out (or provide) effective, timely support at critical moments.

However, while people should be empowered to use their skills and have timely coaching interactions, as authors Eric Parsloe and Melville Leedham articulate, coaching needs to remain a means-to-an-end (not an outcome in itself):

“

In a coaching culture, most staff use a coaching approach in their daily life. A true coaching culture is just part of the way we do things around here. The emphasis is on delivering results and making each other stronger and more capable. It's not about having coaching conversations for their own sake.

Top tip for L&D leaders:

To support ongoing performance improvement, make coaching a part of day-to-day life (not just a one-off add-on people receive alongside formal training). Procore Technologies, for example, was experiencing rapid growth in 2014 and recognised how a coaching culture would enable the business to successfully attract, retain and nurture the volume of talent needed to expand. Over the years focus has been on making coaching both accessible and scalable, with the Procore team demystify coaching through workshops, playfully introducing people to the premise of coaching during employee orientation, and using 'The Coaching Corner' as a space where insight around coaching best practice can be shared and discussed. The result is a culture where curiosity and capacity for personal growth are part of the way things are done, with managers supporting their teams to collectively navigate towards new solutions.²¹

Feedback

Many organisations have a poor history with feedback, with people typically only collecting feedback as part of formal training or ahead of their annual or bi-annual performance review. In an era defined by continuous transformation and reskilling, this approach to feedback won't help people build the skills they need for the future.

The provision and use of timely feedback must become a part of day-to-day life if people are to adjust their performance and skills regularly and effectively. As the learning environment becomes more independent, feedback forms part of what will help keep people on the right track, correctly assessing and addressing their own performance strengths and needs.

The biggest challenge is to destigmatise feedback. People across the organisation need to be ready, willing, and able to both deliver effective feedback and be receptive to act on it.

Top tip for L&D leaders:

Helping people to become skilled at giving and receiving effective feedback has always been important but now it's essential. For performance to improve at the pace required, people need to be in the habit of harnessing impromptu moments to accelerate learning. Netflix is a company renowned for its feedback

culture, with employees explicitly and continuously encouraged to "say what you really think – with positive intent". This emphasise on positive intent has enabled feedback to become part of everyday life, rather than threatening, feedback simply is about: how can we work better together and how can we improve things? Crucially, frequent

candid feedback is role modelled from the top, with senior leaders and managers encouraged to put feedback on the agenda and regularly demonstrate that they expect their direct reports to give them regular candid feedback that's actionable.

Experimentation

To keep ahead of a fast-changing market, organisations and individuals need to be good at innovating and extracting improvements from experiences, or as researchers Mark Cannon and Amy Edmondson term it 'failing intelligently'.²³

With work life moving quickly, organisations can't afford teams to be tripping over the same mistakes, or letting precious opportunities to innovate slip past unnoticed, but learning fast requires a deep cultural shift that goes against various human tendencies. People like to be held in high regard by others, so instinctively when encountering a mistake, we try to deny, distort, ignore or disassociate ourselves from the failure.²⁴

Left unattended, fear and pride can quickly get in the way of learning, stifling a company's opportunities to innovate and improve.

An environment where it's common practice for people to openly discuss mistakes, analyse failures and 'test and try out' proof of concepts needs to be created if an organisation is to keep up and keep ahead of today's fast-paced market changes. Everything should be approached as an opportunity to learn and improve. Furthermore, with novel solutions to problems and new innovations needed across all industries, this is a cultural shift even those in the most heavily regulated sectors will need to help their people embrace.

Top tip for L&D leaders:

As well as encouraging leaders to role model an experimental mindset and behaviours, L&D should look at what is rewarded within a company. Culturally, people quickly pick up on what behaviours and attitudes are rewarded, so make sure the message isn't just 'we reward success here' but also 'we reward learning from failure and purposeful experimentation'. A good example of this is when Rt Hon Francis Maude introduced the 'The Maude Award for Failure' in the Civil Service. The premise being to help people embrace the learning that comes from failure as part of the innovation process.

Ownership

In the past, when knowledge and skills had a long shelf life and years of experience were prized above all else, it was perhaps possible for a leader in business to have success with a command-and-control approach. Now, in a more chaotic and complex business landscape, where novel challenges abound and there is a need to act proactively and respond swiftly, leaders can't afford to be the sole problem-solvers and decision makers.

Empowering people to take more ownership both in their role and in their learning is a key feature of the modern working world. As author David Marquet articulates:²⁵

“Those who take orders usually run at half speed, underutilizing their imagination and initiative.

Just as people shouldn't be waiting for their learning to be organised for them by L&D, in their day-to-day role, individuals shouldn't be put in the position where they are constantly awaiting instruction from higher up. A culture of ownership needs to permeate right through an organisation, with individuals equipped to be competent to take more control, and leaders urged to trust people with the big picture, specifying why and what needs to be achieved (rather than how).

Top tip for L&D leaders:

Managers and leaders should be upskilled in how to create a sense of ownership in their daily interactions, as Debbie Hewitt, Non-Executive Chairman of The Restaurant Group plc, explains: “As a leader I am obsessed with the idea of how you are present when you are not present. What I mean is, how do you lead in a way that enables your people everywhere to make decisions, even if you're not there, because they know exactly what the mission is, what

your values are, and what decision really matters to the success of the company. As a company gets bigger it is so important that everyone carries that leadership mantle and feels empowered to deliver it.” As well as upskilling leaders and managers, L&D teams can also engender ownership specifically around learning. For example, Kellogg's recently launched an internal marketing campaign around '#IgotThis', emphasising that employees are in control of their own development.²⁶



Shift 4: Give learners what they didn't know they needed

The future of learning involves data and AI but it isn't about data and AI; it remains about performance. Data and AI will change the face of learning and development by helping people access the learning they need sometimes before they even know they need it. This is a train L&D teams cannot afford to miss but they need to climb on board with expertise and ethical caution.

For the first time in history, data and AI can notice what we need before we do. For example, recent studies show data on wearable devices can potentially detect when we are unwell before the onset of symptoms.²⁷ Similarly, Target showed how modelling and predictive analytics based on shopping habits can identify a woman as being pregnant before they tell their closest family members; enabling companies to advertise trimester relevant products they may need.²⁸

Take this into the world of workplace learning and the implications are massive. Data and AI has the potential to support people with the learning they need, before they even realise they need it; for example, by noticing patterns in people's working habits (e.g.,, what time they send emails, log on to their laptops), the upcoming events in their calendar (e.g.,, brainstorming meetings, strategy planning), and even patterns in data that indicate their overall engagement or commitment levels.

This a is big step change in the world of learning, with data and AI having the potential to transform the role, reputation and strategic contribution of the L&D department. Specifically, by adopting a data-driven approach L&D teams can:

- ▶ Start to explore trends and predict what learning people will need and when (based on certain behaviours and performance metrics)

- ▶ Connect the dots between learning initiatives and relevant performance metrics (such as customer satisfaction, speed of service or error rates)
- ▶ Build up detailed learner profiles (with learning becoming increasingly targeted based on an individual's specific role, previous experience, current expertise and career ambitions)
- ▶ Gain insight on how to improve communications, content and learning materials (with engagement metrics informing best-practice principles for specific audience groups)

There are a range of ways data and AI can contribute significantly to ongoing performance improvement, and L&D teams need to avoid the narrow lens of just trying to demonstrate ROI. To create a world-class learning environment, L&D needs to explore how data, analytics and AI can improve the whole service they deliver, making learning ever-more adaptive to people's unique context. For example, supporting people to identify their performance needs, offer context-specific support, timely job aids, pulse feedback, and targeted content and communications.

As L&D teams increasingly adopt a data-driven approach, the big challenge won't be demonstrating ROI but navigating the complex ethical terrain of data and AI. Algorithmic nudging tactics, for example, are coming under increasing scrutiny

already with some early adopters accused of focusing too much on delivering outcomes which benefit the company and not enough on the wellbeing of the individual.²⁹ Despite these challenges, the potential for AI-nudges remains huge in terms of improving an individual's performance, safety and wellbeing.

Top tip for L&D:

Embracing data, analytics, and AI is the only way to deliver an adaptive learning experience where people receive learning completely tailored to them and their performance needs. With most companies pursuing digital transformation and data management practices becoming increasingly sophisticated, now is the time for L&D to get involved and capitalise on the transformation from a learning perspective. However, to seize the opportunity effectively you'll need specialist expertise. L&D teams should therefore look to recruit experts in data analysis, data science and machine learning. Ethically and from a GDPR perspective, L&D will also need to tread carefully in this revolutionary but uncharted territory.

Conclusion

With continuous reskilling a feature of the modern working environment, and technology opening up new possibilities, learning is entering a fundamentally different era. There is a real opportunity for L&D teams to step forward and reimagine what learning looks like in their organisation, creating a future-fit offering that delivers people exactly what they need, right when they need it.



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