New World, New Me

Rediscover the power of learning

"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it" – Albert Einstein

insights®

Introduction

As we all know, learning doesn't just stop after formal education.

We are constantly learning and growing as people. Learning new things and progressing is something that happens naturally throughout our lives, but there are ways to actively work on elements of ourselves, such as having a 'growth-mindset', actively looking for opportunities to learn, or even challenging ourselves to develop a new skill entirely. All of these things can help set us apart – or set us up for success.

When we say learning, we don't mean picking up a totally new language through DuoLingo (although that is certainly a great way to develop!); we mean personal and professional development through the power of learning - focusing on what's right for the individual, the demands of the role they're in, and the skills their organisation needs in the new world of work.

62% of learning and development professionals have said that closing the skill gap is in their top three key goals. For example, did you know that reports are suggesting that nearly 120 million workers over the world's 12 largest economies will need to be retrained and reskilled over coming years as a result of Artificial Intelligence (AI)? This means the role of learning and development professionals – and the L&D strategies they choose to roll out – are more critical than ever.

Learning is essential, especially for career development. But where we see the real benefit is when organisations thread learning through their entire employee experience and actively promote a lifelong learning culture. We have all approached learning a certain way but now it's time to re-evaluate how we're delivering it and for what purpose, which is exactly what this eBook will explore.

Like you, we're here to rediscover the power of learning within our new world of work!

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.

Benjamin Franklin

Chapter 1
What we mean by 'learning'

The word 'learning' refers to the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience or being taught. But what is the reason for learning? Learning is a means to acquire and improve knowledge or skills that will later aid in reaching personal, emotional, career goals, etc. Learning is what drives many of us.

Most definitions of learning include an acknowledgement of change. Nick Shackleton-Jones, a consultant and L&D expert, defines it as "a measurable change in behaviour or capability as a result of memory." Sometimes learning and education get mixed up, but the difference is important. Education describes a process that involves memorisation of information in order to pass a test, but it does not typically change people for the long term.

Shackleton-Jones' definition of learning is built on the general theory of learning that he calls the Affective Context model, which says, in brief, that learning occurs by encoding affective (emotional) responses to experiences. The key part of this model is a recognition that people don't remember information; they remember their affective responses to experiences. Those are our memories, and when we "remember" something, we are accessing the emotional responses we had to an experience and then recreating that experience in our minds. A person's reaction to an experience is determined by what matters to them. Because people differ in what matters to them, two people can have the same experience and yet

remember very different things about it. This also explains how two people can have the same experience that is life-changing for one, but not for the other.

This theory has important implications for learning and learning design. It reminds us how important it is to keep the learner at the centre of any design we do. People learn about what they care about. If someone cares about something, they will learn it.

This is what is behind the popular self-determined learning approaches that many organisations are beginning to support. These recognise the value in encouraging learners to identify their own learning needs; and instead of the organisation trying to direct people's learning journeys, providing easy access to resources where learners can find the answers they need. Sometimes those resources result in true "learning" where the person will create a new memory that changes behaviour; however, sometimes a resource can address a need without requiring true learning to take place. This is called "learning elimination" and actually is an important component of learning design. Where a problem can be solved by a resource or a performance support tool, rather than

requiring something to be kept in memory and accessed for behaviour change, that's great!

But what does learning then mean for an organisation?

Whether aware of it or not, all organisations are learning organisations. Learning and adapting in organisations is a fundamental requirement for sustained existence. But a substantial learning organisation will actively invest time and resources into developing a better learning culture and implement company-wide learning. In doing this, they are actively learning to get ahead of the competition. It is important to note, however, that learning is different from training. Training is described as "teaching, or developing in oneself or others, any skills and knowledge or fitness that relate to specific useful competencies. Training has specific goals of improving one's capability, capacity, productivity and performance". Whereas learning is about actually absorbing that trained knowledge and the ability or want to understand it. Someone may be trained in something but may not have learned how to execute it properly.
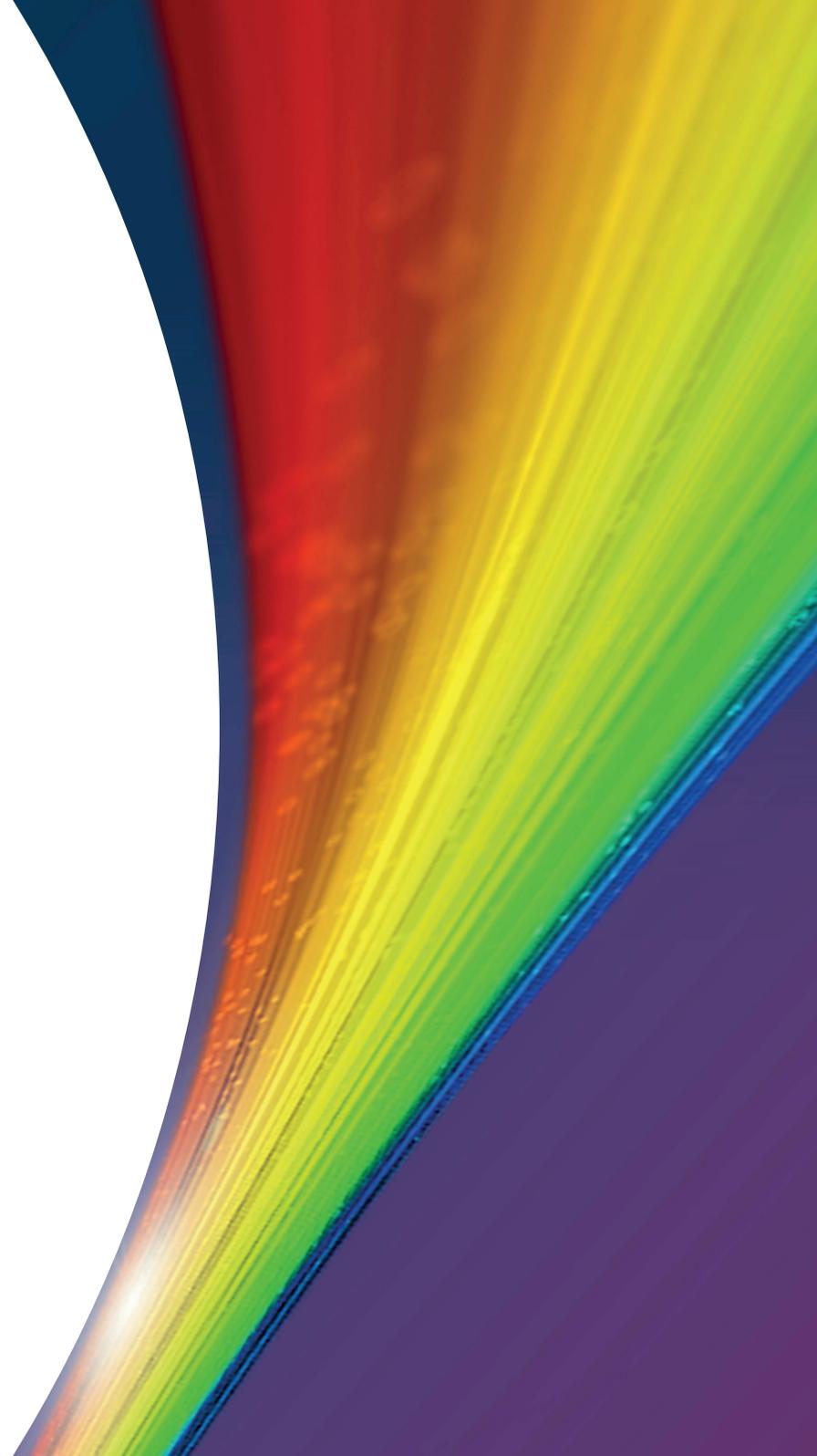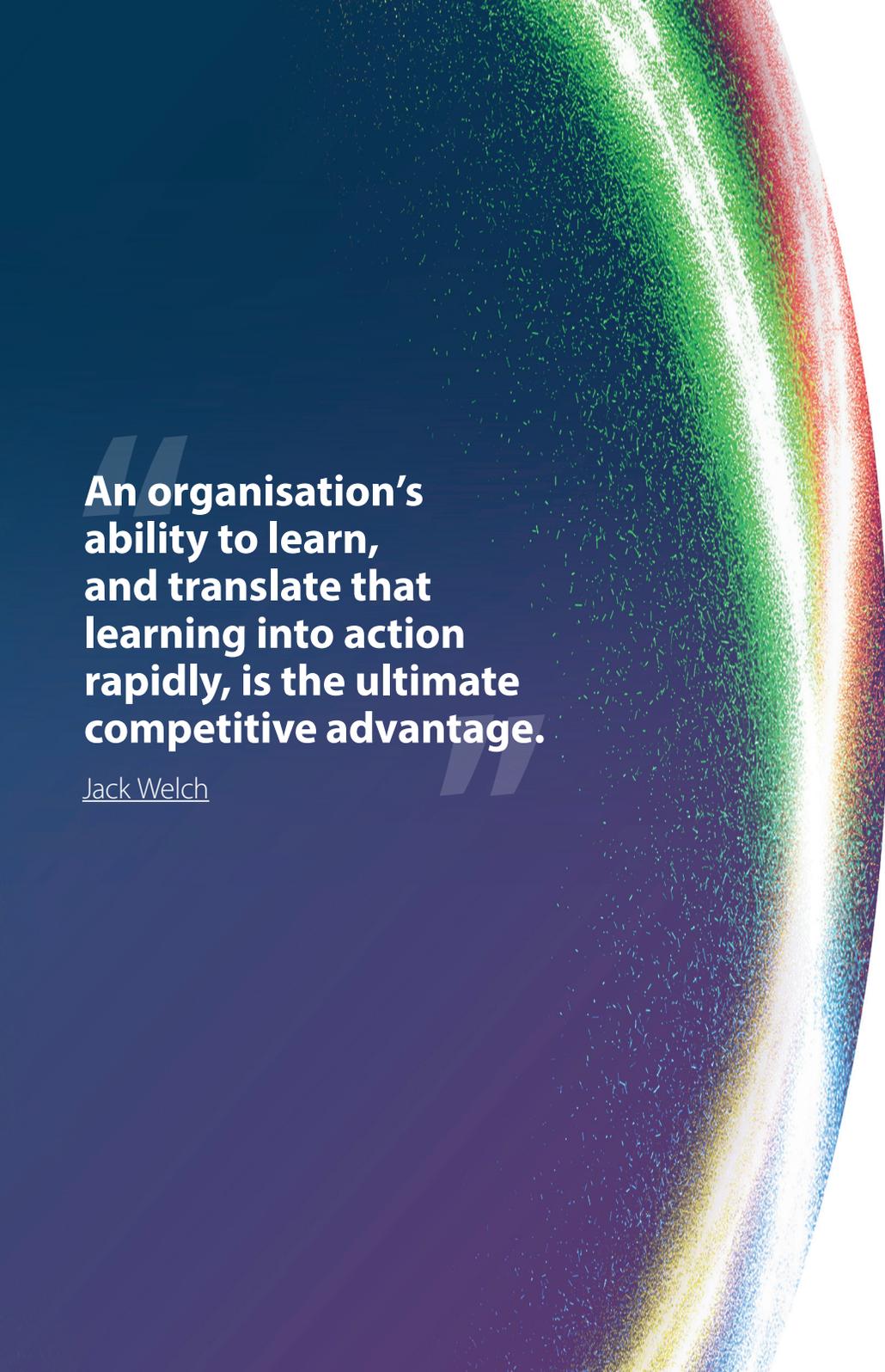
> ## An organisation's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.
>
> Jack Welch

At its core, a lot of learning is about mindset, attitude, and awareness. Learning starts with an acceptance that we may not have all knowledge/skills or information on a certain factor. This acceptance then turns into drive and motivation for us to seek out the answers we want independently, whether that is simply asking questions, or discovering through research using the resources available.

Did you know:

94% of the employees say that they would stay at a company if there is an investment in their learning and development?

It could be argued that because of this, the definition, and even expectation of learning is changing. We are in a world where the status of L&D is climbing the priority ladder. This is reflected in the fact that the 2021 LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report shows a whopping 63% of L&D professionals agree that Learning & Development have a seat at the executive tables within their organisation, and 66% agree that this coming year, rebuilding and reshaping their organisation will be their focus.

Chapter 2

Learning as individuals

Because learning is connected to the concerns of each individual (their preferences, goals, challenges and interests), all learning is more effective when awareness is activated. Individuals will have more motivation for learning – and adopt the right mindset to ensure it sticks – if they develop their awareness of:

Why

Why do they need/want to learn?

Consider why developing this skill or changing this behaviour matters. If someone is aware of WHY they want/need to learn something, this increases motivation and provides resilience to push through the challenges that always occur when changing behaviour.

What

What do they need to learn?

If someone has the freedom to direct their own learning, they will be much more invested if they identify their own gaps, or the specific behaviour that needs to change, and then find resources to help address those things. If the training is mandatory, by approaching it with awareness of where their strengths and gaps are they'll know when and where to focus attention and energy to get what's necessary from the course.

Organisations can support activating awareness for performance by taking a learner-centric approach rather than a content-centric approach to learning design. Activating awareness about what matters to individuals and groups of people, and providing the resources and experiences to address these concerns will make learning more effective and impactful.

Where a person already cares about a topic or a skill or a behaviour, all they need are the resources to support behaviour change. For example, if someone is passionate about diversity and inclusion, they'll devour a toolbox of resources such as correct terminology, inclusive design techniques and challenging unconscious bias. In some cases, a "performance support" tool allows the person to address their concern effectively without having to formally 'learn'.

Think of a map, or an instruction manual, or a recipe. These are examples of performance support tools that help us address a concern in the moment but may not be committed to memory. Incidentally, a "resource" (or "job aid") is only truly a resource if it's made readily available and usable for all learners.

The opposite is also true.

If a person does not care about something, they will not learn it. At least not easily.

If we want people to learn something they don't care about, the first step is to find a way to make them care about it. The best we can do is create an experience that causes people to care about the topic, and thus motivates them to seek to alter their behaviour. The experiences that are the most effective are those that spark emotions as we discussed in the previous chapter.

Often these two components of learning design work together; we may design an experience that grabs people's attention and concern, and then persuades them to make use of the available informational resources.

A good example of this is in compliance training, which is often not very exciting on its own. However, experiences that capture the emotions of individuals around safety or ethical concerns can then lead to people being more likely to use mandatory checklists or follow ethical reporting processes.

We need to understand what matters to an individual in order to design a resource or learning experience that will result in an effective response that drives a change in behaviour.

With this in mind, it's important, especially for L&D professionals, to ensure we give equal learning opportunities and make learning accessible to every individual in the organisation. Remember, we cannot give people the drive and motivation to learn without also providing the tools and resources to make that possible.

It is also important for leaders to set a learning example for employees.

If leaders model the motivation to learn and grow, it will better inspire teams to do the same.

While some employees may find it difficult to find spare time for learning and development, data shows that making time for it in a work environment can lead to a significantly positive difference in an employee's overall working experience. According to a LinkedIn Learning annual report, employees who spend five hours per week - as opposed to one hour or less – are more likely to know where they want to go in their career, find purpose in their work, and can even be less stressed at work.

What's the difference between ignorance and apathy?

I don't know and I don't care.

> We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.

- Peter Drucker

Chapter 3

The impact of learning

Learning, especially continual self-learning, offers a multitude of positive impacts on the learner, as well as their team and the wider organisation. While we've discussed the fact that L&D will play a pivotal role for organisations in the future and is becoming an increasing priority, research into the benefits of self-directed learning within the workplace has been done as far back as the 1990s. Some research has suggested that individuals who have developed high self-directed learning skills tend to perform better in jobs that require a high degree of problem-solving ability, creativity, and adaptation to change (Beitler).

Learning promotes personal growth and can benefit many elements of life. Learning can help individuals develop stronger problem-solving skills by giving them the ability to identify problems and seek effective solutions.

Learning anything is learning to adapt – and adaptability is success. The ability to adapt to changing situations is a desirable quality for anyone, professionally and personally. More recently we can see that adaptive and proactive learning individuals are becoming sought after by organisations as a way to seriously invest in lifelong learning and career development. Companies want employees who actively learn and strive to attain that extra knowledge.

As we know, the world we live in is perpetually evolving and changing. With the advancement of technology, especially throughout the pandemic we're still enduring, we've had to continually adapt and learn how to be productive and thrive in - for most of us - a totally alien environment. In order for us to keep up with our changing world we need to continue learning, developing, and adapting.

Individuals that are adapting and continually seeking personal development are likely to be more resilient during times of change and will be key players in helping your organisation to respond and move forward. This positive learning attitude can highly influence others making these individuals role models for a learning culture, and encouraging others to adopt a similar approach.

Building organisational agility by upskilling and reskilling people to meet changing business and market demands is absolutely essential in the ever-changing world we are currently in. Considering that 94% of employees would stay at a company that invests in their learning, if an organisation is able to implement a successful training programme and create a strong learning culture, they will typically see a swift rise of retention rates by between 30-50%.

Diversity, equity & inclusion efforts within the workplace use education to build a fair and equal workforce where everybody has the chance to develop and grow, regardless of their background. This means that not only is learning encouraged, but it is also freely offered and strongly supported.

Another benefit of learning that you can leverage as a business is how it enhances your employee value proposition. Being seen as an organisation that invests in lifelong learning builds your reputation as a great place to work and helps you attract the best talent. Linking to that, learning also aids employee wellbeing, by supporting personal growth, new opportunities and career stability. With increasing organisational responsibility for, and awareness of mental health and wellbeing concerns, especially throughout the pandemic, learning can be instrumental in helping organisations support their people going forward.

94%
of employees would stay if their organisation implemented a successful training programme

30-50%
increase in retention rates

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other"
John F. Kennedy

Chapter 4
Self-learning

Self-learning, also known as self-directed learning or autodidacticism, is defined as learning without the guidance of 'masters' or institutions. Essentially, it's taking initiative and seeking information yourself - and with the offerings of the internet nowadays, people can learn pretty much anything via search engines like Google and video platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, and many other business-focused learning platforms/ Learning Management Systems (LMS).

There is a staggering volume of information available which can cover everything from change management, software design, sales strategy, team collaboration, and even personal development. With all this readily available information at the touch of our fingertips, individuals have become more familiar with self-learning.

But self-learning goes beyond having a quick Google to help you fix a problem or understand a new term and involves allocating time to work on your own personal development with the help of a pathway, course, tutorial, workshop, etc. This not only helps develop the learner's knowledge/skills, but it also helps with other useful elements such as time management, reskilling, upskilling and even unlearning.

Some organisations are looking to encourage self-learning, whether that's through having an established LMS, personalised learning journeys, bite-size learning modules, team learning sessions, skills-based learning, or even giving people their own budget to spend on learning that supports their role and career aspirations. The first part in encouraging self-learning is making these learning systems and tools accessible and available, and the second is to make them part of everyday work culture. Encouraging employees to integrate self-learning into their practices, whether that's through regular promotion of learning opportunities, or establishing regular time and plentiful resources, lets your people role model lifelong learning throughout the organisation.

One example of an organisation using employee learning for organisational development is Adobe. This software sovereign, along with being consistently recognised as one of the "Best 100 Companies to Work For" by Fortune Magazine, is dedicated to the wellbeing of its employees, open communication, integrity, and transparency. Adobe provides a plethora of learning opportunities for all employees through the media of online courses, mentor/leadership development programmes and even education reimbursements.

> ❝ **You cannot have a learning organisation without a shared vision… A shared vision provides a compass to keep learning on course when stress develops.** ❞
>
> Peter Senge
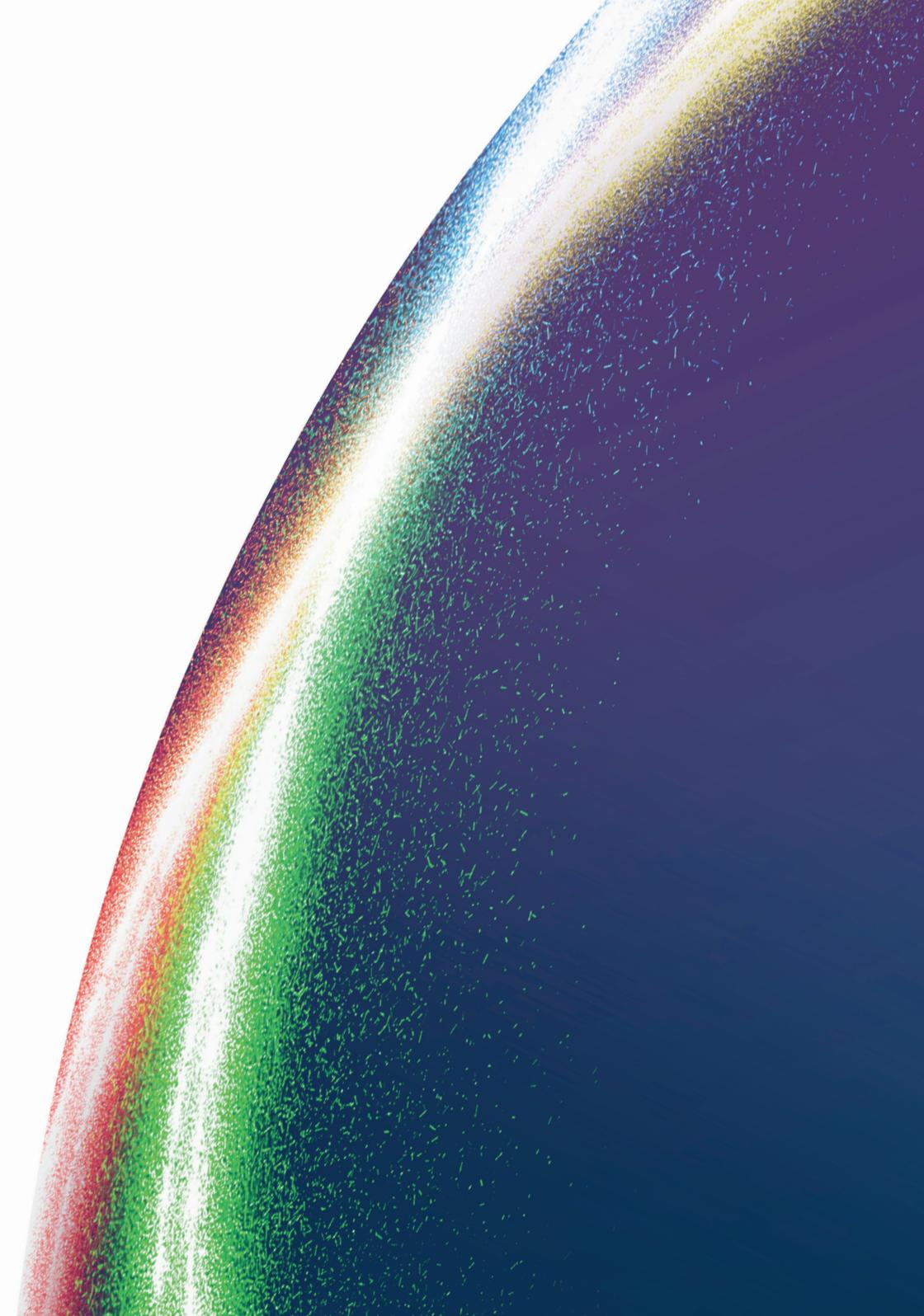
Chapter 5

The notion of a 'learning organisation'

A learning organisation is known as an organisation that is proficient in creating, acquiring, and sharing knowledge and, in turn, modifying and amending behaviour based on newly learned knowledge and insight.

Peter Senge is an American Systems Scientist, founder of the Society for Organisational Learning, SOL, who developed a notion of a 'learning organisation' and writes about it in his book, The Fifth Discipline. This describes organisations as dynamic systems in states of continual adaptation and improvement.

But while there is the notion of organisational learning developing over time, it's becoming such a key factor in attracting and retaining the best talent for organisations, it's best not to just 'wait' for this to happen. Organisations that are proactive in driving this as a strategic goal are going to be more successful in the long run. Proactivity is key.

As a result of Senge's ideas, along with a multitude of other publications, website entries and workshops, more and more organisations have begun to see the impact of a learning organisation comprised of retraining and upskilling employees.

This has proven to be an indispensable source for L&D professionals during the questionable times we've lived through. With a pandemic shuffling our entire lives upside down, we've all had to learn how to adapt to a new world of work in chaotic, tumultuous circumstances.

But what are the characteristics of a learning organisation?

Research suggests there are <u>five main elements</u> that stand out when creating a learning organisation:

#1

Systems Thinking – creating a collaborative learning culture
Essentially, this element refers to enabling employees to understand the wider ecosystem of their organisation and how each different part interlinks. This lets learners consider different perspectives and appreciate how improving the knowledge and skills within one area or team can benefit the business as a whole.

#2

Personal Mastery – creating a mindset of 'lifelong learning'
Learning organisations often require a forward-thinking mindset. This means developing a lifelong learning perspective in order to understand the importance of continual growth and development.

#3

Mental Models – creating room for innovation
This element is comprised of two sub-elements: acknowledgement and challenge. Learners must assess and evaluate themselves to acknowledge their own limitations. This then leads to learners being encouraged to challenge their limitations, get creative and test new theories and approaches.

#4

Shared Vision – creating forward-thinking leaders
It's absolutely imperative that employees – especially in higher-level management roles – share the same vision for the company and its journey. Ways to promote a shared vision within a company include hosting life webinars and workshops, creating corporate eLearning blogs and online discussions for input, feedback, and shared ideas, being active on social media platforms, and scheduling regular team meetings to solidify your purpose and vision.

#5

Team Learning – creating a knowledge-sharing infrastructure
For any organisation, collaboration is crucial. Creating a knowledge-sharing infrastructure within a company enables employees to further their own comprehension, learn from their peers and work as a collective, problem-solving, effective team.

Chapter 6

Introduce learning to your everyday work culture

To start with an interesting statistic, 76% of employees say a company would be more appealing if it offered additional skills and training.

With the rise in L&D as a strategic priority – evidenced by the 39% rise in L&D professionals who have a 'seat at the executive table' – organisations are striving to enhance themselves when it comes to implementing organisational learning within everyday working culture.

More and more companies are introducing learning initiatives to their workforce, and with the massive open online courses (MOOC) market value set to grow to $374.3 billion by 2026, if learning isn't a part of your company's core infrastructure, it's time to consider making it one. Only at the start of the 2020 pandemic, reports show that 90% of companies were using e-learning training tools to introduce new skills.

We need to realise that employees – whether they're prospective candidates, new hires or existing staff – are humans capable of continuous growth, adaptation, and learning - they don't just have a static skillset. This is reinforced by the fact that nowadays, people can be hired based on their potential and not necessarily what skills they currently possess.

By implementing learning and progression opportunities, there are so many potential benefits you could see. Learning and development can increase company efficiency and profitability, it can help with employee career development, it can broaden internal knowledge, boost morale, create equal opportunities for all and equip you with a digital-ready workforce. However, this can only be achieved if learning is purposeful, prioritised, and protected.

Again, a lot of organisations are encouraging self-learning by making it accessible, personal, and consistent. If companies introduce learning as part of working culture from the beginning of an employee's journey - during the onboarding process - and then consistently provide them with encouragement, support and opportunities throughout their career journey then they are more likely to create a culture of learning. Understanding the different preferences for learning and giving people the autonomy/agency to choose what works for them can help create a more personal and effective learning journey for each employee.

It's important to remember that learning culture is a culture that values learning, and this is something that must be woven through the organisation's entire culture, not just a subset of the HR function. A learning culture will happen when every employee cares about learning. This can happen through hiring people who already care about learning, or by seeking to create experiences that result in people caring about learning. These may look different for each organisation but are worth creating.

But how can you make learning principles that support effective learning for yourself and those you are designing learning experiences for?

To help introduce everyday learning to your workplace we have listed a few different approaches to learning and how they can benefit both the individual and the organisation.

> **People are social beings and want interaction, and social learning is the primary form of learning, just as word-of-mouth advertising is the highest form of advertising.**
>
> Stephen Covey (educator, author, businessman and keynote speaker)

Spaced learning

For individuals - Don't cram information. This behaviour is often ingrained from school days when the goal was to pass a test, so we tried to cram as much information into our heads as possible hoping it stuck long enough to get it out on the test, but that kind of information is rarely retained. How many of us really remember our biology lessons or how to calculate the volumes of different shapes? It is much more effective to learn in shorter bursts with frequent breaks than to try and focus for hours at a time.

For organisations designing learning experiences – In the past, when most learning was face-to-face, companies tried to make the most of the time together by putting as much content as possible into those days. Week-long leadership development programmes were the norm. People tend to enjoy them because of the networking and camaraderie, but that isn't the best way to actually learn. Now that we have seen that virtual and blended approaches are possible, transitioning learning content from a condensed format to a more spaced-out format is much more effective. Get leaders together face-to-face (if this is possible) up-front to build relationships, network, and get to know each other; and then space their learning out over several weeks or months, with eLearning modules they can complete at their own pace, application challenges to be done in the flow of work, and live sessions held virtually to discuss successes and challenges with peers and mentors.

Interleaving

This means weaving separate but related topics together rather than focusing completely on one topic and then moving to another. This approach is essential for transfer of learning into actual performance.

For individuals – Identify a skill set or group of related behaviours that you, as a company, are trying to change and move around these concepts as they learn. Work with one topic and then another and then come back to the first. For example, organisations may want to learn to listen more actively, ask open-ended questions, recognise emotions in others, and regulate personal emotions more effectively. Rather than trying to move through these linearly, work a bit with one and then the other. This more accurately reflects how companies will demonstrate these behaviours in the course of work life. It is a little more difficult initially, so be ready to feel challenged, but the end result will be much stronger and deliver longer-lasting behaviour change.

For organisations – Design learning experiences that integrate a variety of skills and behaviours. Working in a group to come up with an innovative product idea, preparing a business case and presenting it to a team of judges is one approach. People will need to jump back and forth between skillsets and behaviours as they learn; and this will make the learning more easily transferable.

Linking concepts

New concerns build on old concerns. New behaviours build on old behaviours. New knowledge is best built on existing knowledge frameworks.

For individuals – When anyone needs or wants to learn something new, they think about what they already know about the topic, or about a topic related to the topic. Bringing any existing frameworks in their brain to the forefront before they begin to add to or alter them will expedite learning.

For organisations – Make sure people understand why they are learning something and what other topics it may be connected to. This is especially important in reskilling and upskilling. These will be much more effective and efficient if organisations can demonstrate to the learners how the new skills are an extension, or alteration of something they already know how to do or have a cognitive framework for. This is where analogies can work well also. If a person needs to learn a brand-new skill and they don't know anything about it already, stories or analogies that show the person how it is like something else they DO know or have done before makes a huge difference in effectiveness of the learning experience.

Social/collaborative

Learning from and with others. Albert Bandura proposed social learning theory to explain how humans learn through observation of others. Social learning influences learning effectiveness as well as enjoyment, and is definitely a principle worth building in.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

With all of this information, if you don't already have a learning culture in your workplace, now is the time to start! It's becoming increasingly obvious how much learning and development is valued by employees. And not only is it valued by employees, but when executed successfully, learning can boost motivation, engagement and performance.

But why is learning more valued than before? Nowadays, people are more concerned about finding alignment and fulfilment from their work and they're also needing more and more skills to help them adjust to working environment changes. In line with this, they need the security that upskilling brings in a constantly changing world. In this new world of work we are still adjusting to, implementing organisational learning can host a range of benefits including increased employee job satisfaction, increased productivity, profits and efficiency, developed leaders throughout all levels, enhanced adaptability throughout the company, and even lower turnover rates.

We can expect more companies to focus closer on employee L&D as a way to show employees they are genuinely invested in their development and wellbeing. As we're moving into 2022, it is likely we will see more organisations shift their attention to employee training and development.

About Insights

At Insights we believe that companies should be relentlessly passionate about personal development and should constantly endeavour to deliver the highest quality development tools. We love the idea of continual learning and self-learning and feel it should be present and encouraged in every workplace.

Never stop learning.

We are a people development company that works with companies all over the world to improve the effectiveness of individuals and organisations. The core of our solutions is self-awareness, which is the foundation on which many soft skills are built, including communication, collaboration and relationship-building.

We've built our content on verified psychology and we've made it so vibrant that people instantly find it easy to use and apply. The language and model are based on four colours, with memorable descriptors that help learners quickly relate. Beyond that, we make learning personal and human, encouraging each individual to make a positive difference through their behaviours and actions. Through this approach, we've already made a difference to more than six million learners.

Find out more about how we help customers face their business challenges at www.insights.com or contact us right now at breakthroughs@insights.com

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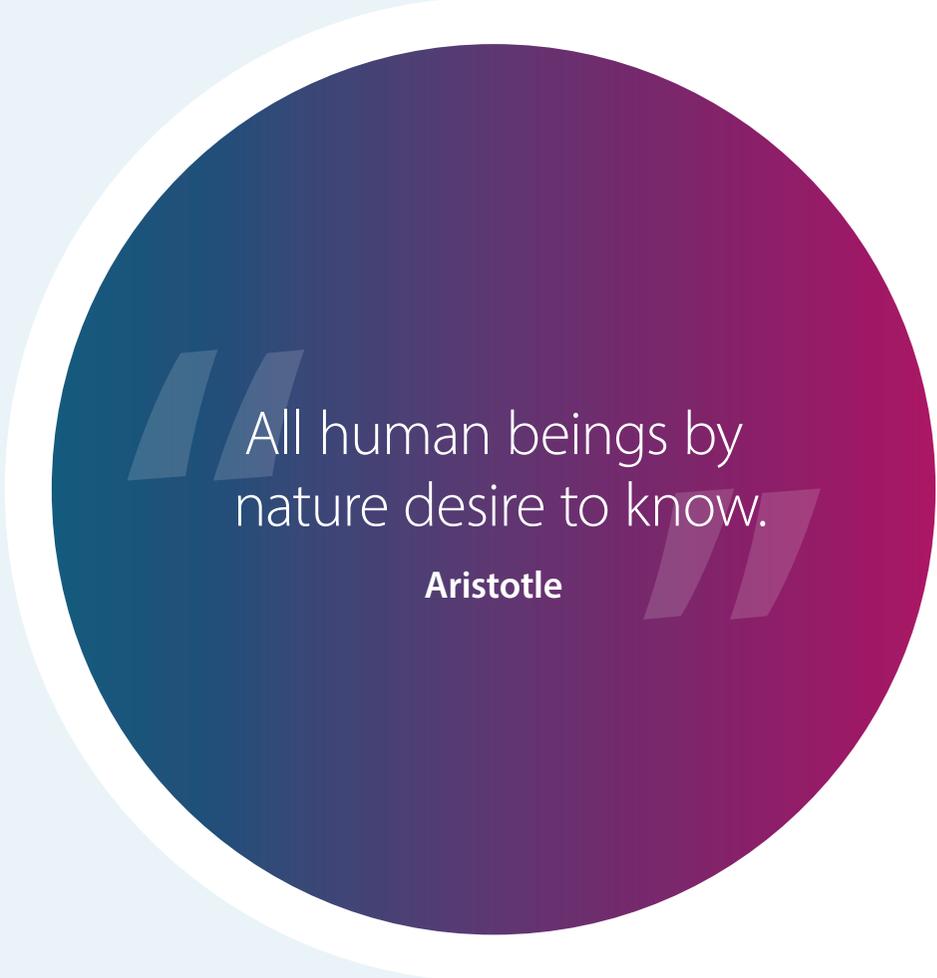
> " All human beings by nature desire to know. "
>
> **Aristotle**

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