crf
CORPORATE RESEARCH FORUM

THE FUTURE OF
LEARNING

CRF members gathered in-person and online on 10th November 2022, to explore CRF's research on the Future of Learning. We discovered that the future of learning is strategic, collaborative and continuous, and evidence-based. Building on these three research themes, we considered:
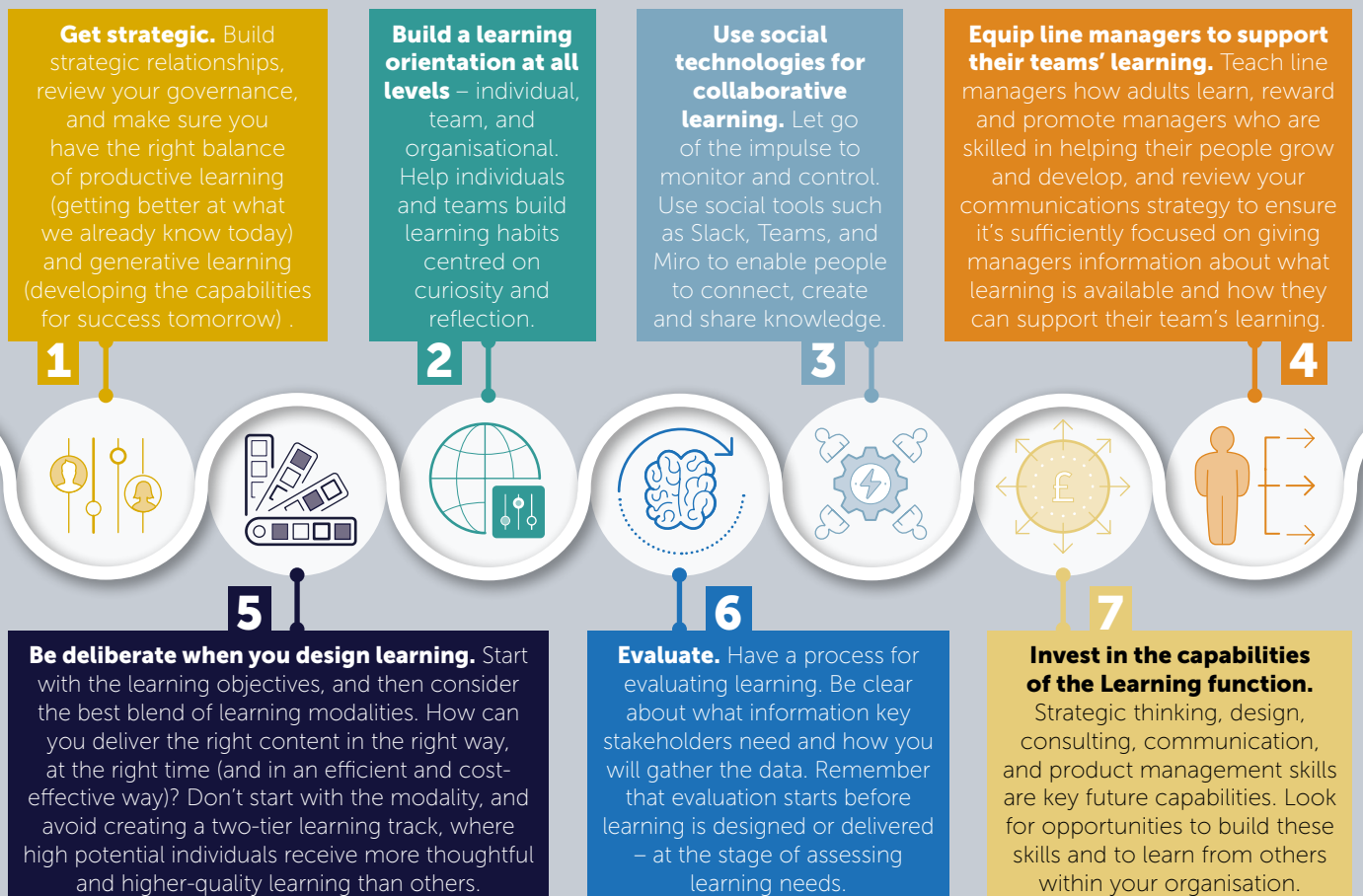
- What it means to have a more strategic learning strategy, and how leading organisations are linking learning and business strategy in practice
- How developing an organisational learning mindset, engaging line managers and deploying new (and old) technologies such as social and micro-learning

techniques can support the new imperative of connected, constant learning

- How to use evidence to help close the gap between where organisational learning is today and where it would benefit to be
- The risk that the future of learning poses an existential threat for learning functions. What new capabilities are required if we are to evolve successfully?

These Post Meeting Notes summarise the discussions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 **Get strategic.** Build strategic relationships, review your governance, and make sure you have the right balance of productive learning (getting better at what we already know today) and generative learning (developing the capabilities for success tomorrow) .

2 **Build a learning orientation at all levels** – individual, team, and organisational. Help individuals and teams build learning habits centred on curiosity and reflection.

3 **Use social technologies for collaborative learning.** Let go of the impulse to monitor and control. Use social tools such as Slack, Teams, and Miro to enable people to connect, create and share knowledge.

4 **Equip line managers to support their teams' learning.** Teach line managers how adults learn, reward and promote managers who are skilled in helping their people grow and develop, and review your communications strategy to ensure it's sufficiently focused on giving managers information about what learning is available and how they can support their team's learning.

5 **Be deliberate when you design learning.** Start with the learning objectives, and then consider the best blend of learning modalities. How can you deliver the right content in the right way, at the right time (and in an efficient and cost-effective way)? Don't start with the modality, and avoid creating a two-tier learning track, where high potential individuals receive more thoughtful and higher-quality learning than others.

6 **Evaluate.** Have a process for evaluating learning. Be clear about what information key stakeholders need and how you will gather the data. Remember that evaluation starts before learning is designed or delivered – at the stage of assessing learning needs.

7 **Invest in the capabilities of the Learning function.** Strategic thinking, design, consulting, communication, and product management skills are key future capabilities. Look for opportunities to build these skills and to learn from others within your organisation.

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

RESEARCH OVERVIEW
WITH CARMEN VON ROHR

CARMEN VON ROHR is a sociologist with extensive research and learning design experience. She began her career as a digital learning designer in higher education at Cengage Learning before joining CRF in 2018 to contribute to research and learning content.

Carmen von Rohr started the day with an overview of key themes from the research report, which explored the challenges that the learning function is facing and what the future of learning will look like.

▶ WHY LEARNING?

- Huge demands on organisations
- A challenging external context
- A shortened lifespan of knowledge
- An ongoing need to rapidly build and evolve complex knowledge

Technological innovation, increasing complexity, uncertainty and competitiveness in the business landscape, demographic shifts, and climate change are powerful forces that have been reshaping organisations, their workforces, and what is required of them for some time – and these forces have shortened the lifespan of knowledge, placing a premium on upskilling and reskilling.

In fact, 87% of executives report skills gaps in their organisation, and addressing that gap could result in a $6.5 trillion uplift of global GDP by 2030.

At the same time, learning and development is a key tool for attraction and retention in a fiercely competitive talent marketplace. A 2019 study from LinkedIn found that 94% of employees said they would stay with their current employer if it invested in their development.

In short, high performance in today's business context requires that companies attract and retain skilled employees and exceptional leaders, capable of constantly building and evolving complex knowledge to meet large and shifting demands, such as supporting digital transformation, innovation, the business transformation to sustainability, multigenerational working, adaptability to change, leading in a hybrid workplace, and much more. No small ask!

Learning is a key strategic lever organisations can pull to meet these demands.

▶ WATCH THE RESEARCH OVERVIEW: FUTURE OF LEARNING

▶ WHAT CHALLENGES?

- Too much focus on formal training
- Tenuous connection to business strategy
- Declining budgets and headcount
- Time, time, time

Is corporate learning fit for purpose? We find that organisations are facing a number of challenges.

First, there is the orientation of L&D functions. At many organisations, the learning that L&D delivers traditionally caters to only a small portion of learning: one-off, formal learning in the shape of training courses that may or may not be tied to business priorities.

Learning strategy is too often disconnected from business strategy and organisations frequently lack formal mechanisms, such as a learning board or council, that would allow the learning strategy to keep pace as business strategy evolves.

These challenges are exacerbated by a business context in which learning budgets and headcounts are declining, time for learning is scarce, and people are burned out.

▶ THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT?

- Provides an opportunity to rethink
- But a risk that a two-tier learning track may emerge

The pandemic has accelerated the opportunity to rethink how people learn, and to expand the scope of corporate learning. We are already seeing organisations rethink learning post-pandemic, with a focus on experimentation, broadening and improving learning modalities, improving the link between learning and business strategy, and building learning cultures.

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For example, with regard to experimentation, Bicycle Therapeutics has created a dedicated Teams channel for managers. L&D communicates and shares knowledge there, runs polls, and has a question section. The channel has really taken off and managers have taken the lead in using it to learn together. It's not a traditional development tool, but Bicycle has stepped back, let go of the need to control when, where, and how managers' learning happens, and instead has let the Teams channel become an experimental space for informal and collaborative learning. So far, it's working really well for them.

On the other hand, the mass move to virtual learning during the pandemic has created some new challenges. While virtual learning is efficient, democratising, and can be done well, it is also often cluttered or not as thoughtfully designed as in-person or blended learning. Many of the interviewees for our research reported that they are under pressure from their Finance teams to 'stay all virtual', and we are concerned that a two-tier learning track may be developing at some organisations, where senior and high potential employees receive more thoughtful, higher-quality blended or in-person learning than other members of the workforce.

▶ THE FUTURE OF LEARNING IS... STRATEGIC

- Align learning strategy to business strategy
- Use the learning process strategically

Learning leaders should focus on aligning learning strategy to business strategy, identifying and enabling the capabilities the business needs to succeed tomorrow and beyond. For many organisations, this is likely to translate to significant upskilling and reskilling. And in some cases, strategic business priorities may lack specificity and nuance. As one Learning leader told us, 'digital first' is a strategic pillar at their business. "*But we haven't yet articulated what we mean by 'digital'. Do we mean digital in terms of tech skills? In terms of data analysis? In terms of how we support the organisation? We need to get more granular about what we mean in order to build the right strategic skill.*"

Complicating things further, at many organisations there is a lack of strategic governance around learning. Business strategy moves fast these days, requiring organisations to be agile, pivoting and adapting processes and practices at speed. L&D functions must likewise be prepared to rapidly shift learning strategy and initiatives. This is more likely to happen when the L&D function works in close partnership with business leaders.

One mechanism for enhancing partnership is governance. A governance structure, such as a learning board or council, in which L&D and business leaders meet frequently to define, review, design, and fund learning strategy is essential to keeping learning and business strategies aligned. Yet, only 23% of respondents to our survey report that their organisation has a governance structure for learning.

When we say that the future of learning is strategic, we also mean that the Learning function should be strategically using the learning process, to innovate, to develop strategy, and so on.

For example, at infrastructure company Balfour Beatty, the business strategy is centred around modern methods of construction. So, a key focus of the learning strategy is to support influential leaders in the organisation – commercial directors, design engineers, and project managers – to develop a 'modern methods mindset', so that they are cognisant of everything new and available, in terms of modern methods, from the beginning of a bid or project, and can make that part of the conversation with clients and partners.

- The company has been experimental and innovative in its design of the learning. Since all the knowledge about modern methods of construction is in the business for now, they've had to leverage their own enthusiastic early adopters and forward thinkers as teachers. They created a social, collaborative design for the learning, which they ran and tested as a pilot. The blended learning sessions were about understanding that modern methods exist and discussing them in terms of – 'how will it be better if we use this? What can go wrong if we don't use this?'.

- After the initial sessions, the cohort was put into project groups that worked on different, but real, challenges the business has. There were five projects, spanning logistics, the supply chain, and more. For example, one group looked at 'how do we, at scale, develop people on modern methods of construction?' – is it digital learning and what tools are needed? Is it more experiential and how do we facilitate peer-to-peer learning?' The groups then came back together at the end of the programme to present their ideas on how to move forward through the business.

Thus, the learning is not only aligned to the business strategy, but the very process of the learning – the working groups – is strategically utilised to solve real business challenges.

▶ THE FUTURE OF LEARNING IS... COLLABORATIVE AND CONTINUOUS

- Social and 'always on'
- Enabled by learning orientation, technology, and line managers

By collaborative, we mean that it will feature more pairs or groups solving problems, completing tasks or learning new concepts with and from each other, and thus capitalising on everyone's skills, knowledge, and resources. By continuous, we mean that individuals, teams, and organisations will be 'always on'; banking, applying, and refining what they have learned.

The key mechanisms for achieving this style of learning are: having a learning orientation, technology, and line managers.

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By 'learning orientation', we mean that individuals, teams, and organisations need to be primed for learning – alert to learning opportunities, ready to apply learning, and prepared to try again – in other words, a learning orientation is about intentional, continuous learning.

What are the qualities associated with being primed for learning? For individuals and teams, three qualities were repeatedly emphasised in our research: curiosity, a belief in the possibility of change, and reflectiveness.

Organisations that are primed for learning:
- are psychologically safe
- set the tone for learning at the top
- create autonomous spaces for learning
- surface, share and encourage good practices

We identify learning habits as a key behavioural mechanism through which individuals, teams, and organisations can build a learning orientation. For example, journalling for reflection; dedicating the first 15 minutes of every day to learning; and keeping a constantly updated 'To Learn' list, were a few individual learning habits that people told us about. At team level, using weekly team meetings, not for updates, but to solve a problem together is an example of a learning habit.

With respect to technology, we find that there is a great deal of consolidation in the learning technology market at present. A key development we see is the use of social technologies to foster collaborative learning. Employees are increasingly forging their own learning spaces, using social technologies such as Teams, Slack, and Miro to connect, share, and create knowledge. Organisations should let go of the impulse to monitor and control; instead, go with the energy around how people collaborate and get work done. This means integrating learning where it's already happening, rather than creating separate dedicated 'spaces' for learning that people won't use.

With respect to line managers, we find that they have a key role to play in setting the tone for learning, facilitating access to learning, and helping their teams and individual reports embed and evolve learning. Organisations therefore need to select, develop, and support managers to play this role. Actions organisations can take include teaching line managers how adults learn; rewarding and promoting managers who are skilled at helping their people grow and develop; and reviewing the communications strategy to ensure it's sufficiently focused on giving managers information about what learning is available and how they can support their team's learning.

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING IS... EVIDENCE-BASED

- Use evidence to assess needs, to design interventions, and to evaluate outcomes
- An area of improvement for many organisations

Our third key takeaway is that the future of learning should be evidence-based.

In this era of Big Data and advanced analytics tools, there are new opportunities to assess learners' strengths and weaknesses, and to examine and predict trends. In other words, Big Data can help define gaps and pinpoint what is needed, when, and where. Then too, collecting evidence about the motivations and challenges of learners can vastly improve the design of interventions. Finally, evaluation should tell you whether an intervention is working as intended, and what business impact it's having.

However, there is a sizeable gap between where many organisations are and where it would benefit them to be. We find that gut feelings are still driving the assessment of learning needs at many organisations, and evaluation of learning (when it happens at all) is usually focused on the immediate evaluation of learner satisfaction. Lack of time, skills, and resources are some of the barriers to taking a more evidence-based approach to learning.

THE LEARNING FUNCTION MUST EVOLVE – OR RISK EXTINCTION

- Stuck in old ways?
- From admin and facilitation to consulting, designing, communicating, analysing, and product managing

Our final key takeaway is that the Learning function must evolve, or risk extinction.

The pressing business need for learning at speed and scale should mean an elevated L&D function, integrated with business strategy and core talent processes. But many learning professionals and their functions aren't currently equipped to play this role. There is still too much focus on learning programmes and how to deliver them; on controlling rather than enabling learning.

Learning professionals and functions need to broaden and deepen their skills and capabilities. Key future skills and capabilities, according to our interviewees are: performance consulting; design, marketing and communication skills; data literacy; and product management.

Performance consulting: maintaining ongoing discussions with business leaders to determine the real learning needs, and a willingness to push back when necessary, rather than just giving leaders what they ask for. Requires commerciality, curiosity, and confidence.

LEARNING STRATEGY
IN CONVERSATION WITH SIMON GIBSON

SIMON GIBSON is a modern internationally experienced and commercially focused Learning & Organisational Development Leader. He brings a fresh and challenging outlook on the world of work. He has a keen interest in collaboration, innovation and using digital in the workplace whilst also being passionate about people development and the right organisational fit. Simon has a wide variety of experiences across different sectors and has worked with NBCUniversal, Fujitsu and Direct Line Group, to name a few. He loves to focus on real business change and transformation that makes an impact for all. Currently Simon is the new Group Head of Learning & Development for Marks & Spencer.

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The Future of Learning

10 November 2022

LEARNING STRATEGY:
IN CONVERSATION WITH SIMON GIBSON

Simon pointed out that business strategies will continue to rapidly evolve, which has implications for skills: how they are identified, built, and deployed. *"It's no new revelation that your role in the learning function should be strategically aligned to your business."*

Moreover, there are some urgent questions that need to be asked about how this is done: *"what are we actually doing to build capability for data analysis, storytelling? Absolutely nothing!"*

When discussing this new approach to skills, and the impact this is having on how the Learning function supports its organisation, Simon discussed a case study from his time at Direct Line.

CASE STUDY

Direct Line are a UK based insurer which was initially hugely innovative for its call centres where customers could call insurers directly for quotes. *"Then the world moved online, and you don't need a call centre when people can go to price comparison websites."*

However, he explains, *"we had a mountain of data leftover from the call centres; we had to work out a way for the business to make use of this so it can continue to succeed in the modern business world."* The loyal and tenured workforce didn't have the skills needed to make such a significant shift, so Learning had an opportunity to step in and support staff to upskill. *"Do you have the time or people in the market to buy that in? Or do we have an opportunity to grow it internally?"*

He started out with a question: *"we asked the data function – what core skills and capabilities do we need to share across the organisation? Then asked ourselves 'how do we disseminate those skills from a few hundred staff to several thousand?'"*

They created a very basic survey of just 20 questions, which was sent to a cross-section of the organisation, to learn more about people's data confidence. *"We broke down to a basic assessment of people's understanding of what data is, how you tell stories with it, and some of the central issues around governance and ethics."* This was then plotted onto a 5x5 framework: a 1 indicated that that person knew little about data; a 5 meant they were already a fully-fledged data scientist.

What they needed to understand was, how do people think they use data on a day-to-day basis? *"How could we make it better value for them?"*

They then developed several simple scenarios to understand what 'data' meant to people in different areas of the organisation. It also helped them realise another important question: when people say they are using data, are they actually? Are they computing it and turning out useful insights, or just reading it?

The common finding was that people only wanted to learn more if they thought it was directly related to their day jobs.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

"Don't underestimate how far companies have to come. There's no magic answer to aligning a 3/6/12 month business strategy with a long-term learning strategy and it's actually quite a difficult sell. People will see you as a training or admin department, not as a learning enabler, so you have show them otherwise."

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DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR L&D PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE TRYING TO BETTER ALIGN THEIR LEARNING STRATEGY WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY?

- *"Be brave – we have to move away from our training-esque, admin function. Put down the stuff that is of no value. It's like asking turkeys about Christmas – be prepared to sacrifice old ways of doing learning."*

- *"If you're marking your own homework, you won't find out where it's going wrong. You need to ask your leaders to find out what's working and what's not."*

- *"Get really, really curious. If you're poking at something in the value chain, is the thing you're doing making a difference to that?"*

- *"You will make mistakes – but that's okay."*

COLLABORATIVE AND CONTINUOUS
IN CONVERSATION WITH BRIAN MURPHY

BRIAN MURPHY joined Microsoft in March 2022 where he leads global internal efforts to re-imagine career development through the power of skills and a pervasive learning culture. Career and skills development will be critical in helping Microsoft deliver on its mission to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more. Previously, Brian was the Global Head of Learning & Enterprise Capabilities at AstraZeneca, where he led a CEO-sponsored Learning Transformation programme, built a new Enterprise Learning team, and led the implementation of a new approach to Performance Development. This coincided with a key moment in the company's history as it sought to provide a global vaccine for COVID-19.

in LINKEDIN

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COLLABORATIVE AND CONTINUOUS

Technology, a learning orientation at all levels, and line managers are key levers organisations can pull to support collaborative, continuous learning. Brian explained that *"skills and skills data"* are one of the key elements of this: *"there is huge consolidation in the learning technology industry, but if skills is the main currency for growth, then this will be disruptive too. This will help to think about learning beyond content, instead through collaboration and connections."*

The other factor is that, realistically, *"learning tech may not play as big a role as we think. We learn through collaboration, so those tools will be the true places where people work and learn. We think that in the future we will see an ecosystem where people work and collaborate, which will be where they learn and grow."*

CASE STUDY

Before Microsoft, Brian was at AstraZeneca. During his time there, he was part of some experimental work designed to build lifelong learning skills, referred to in the report as a 'learning orientation'.

"I joined AstraZeneca before the pandemic: the interesting thing was at that stage they were at the end of a 5 year transformation to refocus the R&D pipeline through discipline and centralised control."

However, when Brian started, *"they were moving to a new stage of organic growth through innovation, which required a very different culture."*

By happy coincidence, *"the business case for learning transformation was ready-made: we were a discovery organisation, moving into the next phase of change that needed to happen. This meant less leadership by expertise and much more creating the context for innovation to happen."*

To start making change, they first reviewed the existing arrangements. *"We did all the obvious things – we looked at our operating model, we looked at our funding model, at our governance structures, enterprise capabilities, content strategy, learning tech."*

What they found was that, across the board, there had been big investment in L&D but that it was distributed very sporadically across the organisation. Next, they took at a close look at the organisational culture that supported learning.

"There was a lot of talk about 'culture of lifelong learning' but no one really knew what that was. We did a culture audit: what was it and what did we want and how do you create a learning culture? We had to get very intentional about something quite fuzzy and break that down."

For Brian, *"the 'what' of the culture of learning was about the environment, which needed to be collaborative and psychologically safe. Some departments were saying that that wasn't the case for them, some were. The 'how' was people and purpose – purpose was so important – with a big change effort with a campaign for 'Learning for Life'. Seeking*

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to bring the 3 Es (education, experience, exposure to others) and using daily nudges to remind people to make space for regular learning and learning trials. We realised that, through behavioural science experiments, people were developing their learning habits and finding opportunities at work."

DID IT WORK?

"Our job isn't to do all the training, our job is to help enable that organisational change. What I'm proud about is that our 3 Es and common language about learning had made their way across the organisation, even into the work lives of people who hadn't spoken to L&D."

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR L&D PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE TRYING TO BUILD A TRUE LEARNING ORGANISATION?

"The opportunity we had was to look at this at a system level – linking it to business strategy but also looking at what we could do to enable change, as change agents. That view helps us to orient our position. We collaborated with Reward to rethink performance, to radically review both functions. What are the systemic changes that we need to make?"

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WITH DAVID JAMES

DAVID JAMES is Chief Learning Officer at 360Learning (formerly at Looop) and has been a People Development professional for more than 20 years, most notably as Director of Talent, Learning & OD for The Walt Disney Company across Europe, the Middle East & Africa. David is host of The Learning & Development Podcast, a prominent writer and a conference speaker on topics around modern and digital L&D.

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Some key points from David's talk?

- *Beware over-reliance on technology. "We were all told that interactive video was going to revolutionise L&D ten years ago, but it didn't live up to the hype. If we think that AR/VR/Metaverse are going to 'revolutionise' L&D, we'll be saying the same thing about them in 10 years if we don't connect it to the purpose of learning...After all, as this quote by Nick Holley from the research says, 'what does the future of learning look like? Hopefully not the past... The future of learning uses technology, but the starting point is 'what is the business problem'?'"*

- *Connect learning to the performance need. Reflect on this quote from the research: 'corporate learning and development only caters – and not very well – to a small portion of learning – the formal mode in the shape of training." (Brian Murphy)'. We can't rely on the excuse that learners aren't learning properly. Learner feedback is an indicator of what we should be applying our attention to – we need to listen, respond, and connect to individuals' experiences if we want people to become self-directed learners. People aren't promoted based on what they learned, they are promoted on how they perform, so we need to ask 'Can we have a conversation about improving your results?' We need to think like marketers, to meet our audience where they are, to educate them, to engender organisation loyalty, to influence them to do things that benefit the organisation.*

- *Demonstrate value by tackling real business problems. "We've separated the learning need from the performance need, and then people ask 'why am I here?' We need to not just do L&D better, but actually address performance need. We need to look for proof that the thing we've identified is real problem by seeking evidence from the people who will actually do the work. Sometimes we escape the analysis of needs by just buying tools or content en masse, but there's no guarantee that any of it is applicable to your people. Your learning platform may have 10 million bits of content, but it doesn't necessarily follow that there is something relevant to everyone!"*

- *Proving value will be essential in tough economic times. "In my 25 years of L&D experience, everyone asks 'how do we prove value in L&D? This will be even more important in the next year. If we're always looking over our shoulder thinking we'll be cut, something must be wrong."*

The future of the learning function:
- Performance consulting skills
- Product management skills
- Data literacy
- Design skills
- Marketing and communication skills

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SUMMARY OF Q&A

Q How do you sell learning internally and build those key relationships?

A *Use your curiosity to find out how the business works. Find detractors first, those people who will be difficult. Ask what works and what doesn't, and learn what you can do to make a difference to their profitability.*

Ask: 'Why are you spending money on that? Here's the evidence of what could work better.'

Q Assessments go out of date so quickly — how do we keep up meaningfully?

A *It's very difficult to forecast what roles will evolve into in the future, but you can extrapolate from information you have, such as your technology roadmap and market data. For example, if demand for machine learning or blockchain is increasing and Java is going down, what does that look like in terms of learning and responsibilities for current and future staff?*

Q Could you explain the learning nudge tactic in more detail?

A *During the pandemic, we developed behavioural nudges to help people develop learning habits. We worked with behaviour scientists to push very small content pieces to the participants in our trial every day, carefully crafted to link to the learning we wanted to prime. This content contained scientific elements that helped to trigger behaviour change during the day. The other group in the trial who didn't receive them didn't see the same type of behaviour change, so we knew it was working. In designing these interventions, it's important to consider potential ethical challenges, but this was not an issue provided you're transparent with people about what they're engaging in.*

Q What do you see as the role of AI in the learning strategy? What's the potential of combining it with behaviour science data?

A *The obvious place to see this is the skills strategy, enabling a better understanding of what skills people have and need and how to bridge that gap. There is already interesting work around skills inference, to predict what capabilities people could have based on the skills they already have. From an AI perspective, it's a complex and emerging space and there's an ethical dimension to navigate. It's a phenomenal opportunity, but the tech isn't there yet. The key is to experiment and measure as we go.*

Q How confident are you that the learning function must, and will, evolve?

A *We are in trouble! During lockdown, the learning function got switched off overnight – what impact did that have on businesses? Very little. There might be some fatigue now, but they aren't saying 'please don't close down learning because our business will go bust'.*

Q What is changing in learning?

A *There are fundamental changes in expectations coming from 'learners', i.e. employees, about what we provide. But, more recently, this is coming from leaders, to deliver something that really works. I've been having the same conversation about this with leaders for 25 years, but we still aren't able to reliably predict the outcome of a program. Part of the problem is that we are focused on delivery and implementation rather than outcomes and performance, without looking at the data which can uncover the value in learning and help to convince stakeholders that it is worthwhile. Learning needs to reflect people's everyday context to be most effective, helping them as close to the point of need as possible.*

Q What's stopping us as a function from delivering on the future of learning?

A *Whilst we need to leverage data to inform learning philosophy and culture, we also need to use it to provide information on outcomes and successes. That has always stopped us, but now we have data available to us that we didn't have before. It's how we corral that data and structure it in a way that gives us those insights. That's the biggest thing we can do to unlock the future of learning.*

Q If your team/culture don't appreciate the need for these skills in L&D, then what's a good starting point? Would shadowing people in other departments help?

A *If you're helping people with what they need, when they need it, then they'll get on board, but L&D are more resistant. It's more about what we achieve than what we do. Focus on the KPIs of the people who will be affected, and everything that is spent on it, and then the team will align.*

Q What do you think about the granularity of metrics? If the measures are too broad — focusing on profit, for example — you can't trace the impact of the intervention. If it's too granular, then it's difficult to work out what to do.

A *We need to focus on identifying the critical points of failure. One of my podcast guests said "you have to fall in love with the problem" to understand its causes and potential solutions. It's also worth reviewing your priority list by asking: what would be the cost if we did nothing?*

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ONLINE SESSION

TONY O'DRISCOLL is a professor, speaker, author, and advisor whose engaging message emphasises that the key digital-age differentiator is not technology, but people. Tony has spent the bulk of his professional and academic career at the nexus of Business, Innovation, Technology and Learning, creating and implementing strategies that enable organisations to realise the full potential of their most valuable asset: Human Beings. Dr. O'Driscoll's current appointments as Adjunct Professor at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and the Pratt School of Engineering coupled with his role as Research Fellow at Duke Corporate Education afford him the unique opportunity to apply cutting-edge academic research to address increasingly complex business challenges.

▶ **WATCH THE ONLINE SESSION HERE:**
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In our online session, Professor Tony O'Driscoll, Duke University and CRF Research Director Gillian Pillans, discussed the research findings. A key takeaway is to distinguish between productive learning, which helps people and organisations get better at what we already know how to do, and generative learning, which is about helping the organisation build for tomorrow by creating new solutions to unanticipated problems. Organisations need to be engaging in both types of learning, but too often learning professionals prioritise productive learning. Watch the session recording to explore how learning professionals can shift the emphasis towards generative learning and what capabilities we will need to build in order to do this.

FURTHER READING

Session slides available upon request.

CRF. 2022. **Applying Social Science to Behavioural Change.** Research Report. https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-applying-social-science-to-behavioural-change

CRF. 2022. **The Future of Learning.** Research Report. https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-the-future-of-learning/

CRF. 2017. **Learning – The Foundation for Agility and Sustainable Performance.** Research Report. https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/learning-foundation-agility-sustainable-performance

David James' Podcast, with episodes on **L&D's Pivot to Performance.** Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_jfQhbpyiptRsrrKchOUcw/videos

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Impact Through People Analytics

There are still a few places remaining on this three-day online programme: 1-2 December 2022 and 8 February 2023. HR is under increasing pressure to demonstrate business impact. It is critical to prioritise the things we can do to make a difference to business performance. Taking an analytical approach and using evidence, rather than relying on gut instinct alone, is a massive opportunity. Using HR data can help build the credibility of the function and improve the quality of decision-making, enable employees to be more engaged, and optimise the impact of business and people-based processes.

coursera

BUILDING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN A FAST-CHANGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

With the acceleration of digitalisation and the fluctuating global economic context, the need for skill development at scale has never been more urgent. Fortunately, it's also never been more achievable.

Takeaways from the session include:

- There are many significant trends driving the shifting skills businesses need today and in the future, like consolidation in learning technologies and the popularity of social platforms for learning.
- Skills-based learning can impact your organisation and drive ROI in a number of meaningful ways.
- Transformation learning is a strategic imperative for both the learning function and broader business, especially as we move into complex economic circumstances.
- Engage cross-functional leaders in your organisation's skills agenda.

We want to help you build your capacity for skills and competencies to meet urgent business needs. Please reach out to **George Anthony**, Regional Manager EMEA, at george@coursera.org for more information.

ORACLE

CREATING PERSONALISED AND RELEVANT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Oracle's dynamic skills offering enables organisations like yours to solve learning challenges. Learning should form a critical part of your business strategy, since we know it can help drive short-term performance and long-term capability.

Takeaways from the session include:

- Look to change from generic corporate learning approaches to individually focused work-based learning, where interventions concentrate on the skills specific to the employee's role and needs and align to the needs of your business.
- Use data analytics and tools like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to help extract information about employee skills and expertise. Use information from job descriptions, CVs, objectives, and performance reviews to help you.
- Once you understand what skills you have today and will need in the future, think about consumption patterns for each target group in your organisation –what and how are employees already consuming? (e.g., most used learning formats, duration, do they access on mobiles or laptops, remotely or in the office etc). This will help you provide more personalised, on-demand learning options that are delivered in ways that employees can and want to consume.
- Consider whether you need to implement micro-learning (where learning is broken into smaller bitesize segments and infused into an employee's day), so employees don't feel overwhelmed or frazzled.
- Continually communicate with employees about the need, relevance, and value of learning. If an employee sees the 'what's in it for me' they are more likely to engage and consume.

We're happy to share our insight and experiences on how we've tackled learning challenges. Please reach out to **Sarah Horne**, HR Transformation Director EMEA, at sarah.horne@oracle.com or **Adele Pickerill**, HCM Strategy Director, at adele.pickerill@oracle.com for more information.