PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEYS

The definitive guide to creating personal learning journeys and why they're the future of L&D

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Introduction

"One size fits all sucks!"
Sean McPheat

If you want to **transform your L&D department into a business improvement powerhouse**, you will need to understand, create, enable, facilitate and implement **personal learning journeys** for each and every one of your people.

There, I've said it. There's no need to read on. Just get on with it! ☺

The technology is already here to enable this and it's going to get more and more sophisticated over the years to come so you need to get on board with this.

Does it mean that you can't run an L&D department without doing so?

Probably not, but times are changing. It's all about effectiveness and delivering results.

Why settle for average when surely what you want is that all of your employees reach their potential and perform at the highest level.
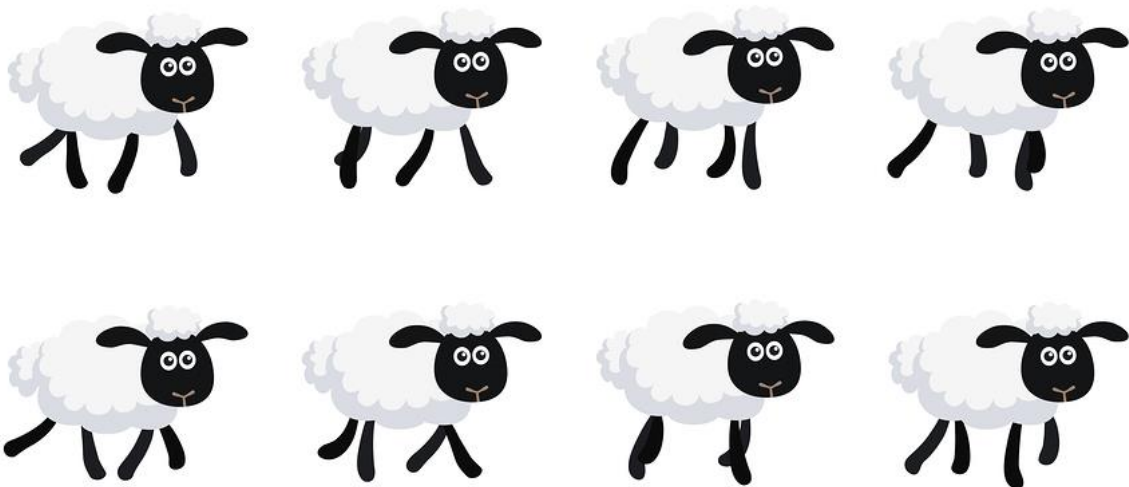
Yes, the sheep-dipping approach was once "in".

You'd decide on training needs, group your employees together and then run some kind of course or programme and **ALL** of the participants would receive exactly the same training. 100% the same.

100% the same?

What? With no difference at all? Yes!

For years, people have been sent on courses to improve their skills.

A workshop, seminar or course was seen as **THE** answer.

"Oh, you need to improve your communication skills? Have a look for courses on it…"

"You need to brush up on your Excel skills? When's the next course date?"

"You need to improve your interpersonal skills? You need training."

So a course would be booked and as 60% of the content looked applicable it was "good enough" (yes, that means 40% of the course was not relevant, too basic or too advanced).

There would indeed be a spike in performance when the members of staff returned to the workplace, so it looked from the outset that the expenditure was justified.

You would immediately know who had been on a course from the moment they hopped, skipped and jumped back into the office. You still do.

Jump two months down the line and those same members of staff would slip back into their old habits.

Here's the thing…

Now, don't misunderstand me. ***There's nothing wrong with attending workshops.***

What I'm talking about here is that there needs to be a more holistic approach to gaining new skills and behavioural improvement.

A better and more effective way.

It all needs to be joined up, and as a learner **I want to learn when I want, how I want, using a delivery medium what works for me. I also need help and support when embedding the learning too**.

For example, I learn best through listening to audios and by watching videos.

Give me an audio book on business or the latest and greatest on machine learning and I'll happily consume (and, more importantly, remember) the content.

However, today, even that's not enough for me!

I now adjust the speed on the audios to **x 1.5** so I can get through **50% more volume** in the same time.

Yes, I even get bored listening to audios at normal speed!

I bet you're thinking to yourself that I must have been a nightmare delegate in workshop scenarios? Yes, you're right!

Put me in a room where people learn slower or quicker than I do and I will struggle either way – I will not be 100% effective. You and your people are experiencing this right now.

Give me a book to read and I will be sunk. Give me the same book to consume via audiobook and I will complete it 50% quicker than most and I bet that I will retain more information than anyone else too.

I want content to be **tailored**. I want it to be **accessible** and I want it **on a plate**.

I want to be assessed in the right way. If you give me a memory test, I will ace it irrespective of whether I have understood the content or not. So testing me in this way is good as a tick-box exercise but it does not measure the effectiveness of my performance or the value I will add to the company.

It's a false economy.

I also want mechanisms, personalised mechanisms for me, that tell me how to embed the learning back in the workplace. Not what works for you, or the most cost-effective or collective way for the masses, but what works for me!

I will not be fully effective if I attend a course and am then provided with 20 pages of post-workshop hints and tips to make the learning a reality and in preparation for the next session. It's just not my thing! It's not going to happen.

I even want to be informed of what I need to work on and want this to be updated in real time based on what development I have taken in the past and the impact it is having on my performance. Hint – machine learning ;-)

I also want help and to learn **in the flow of my work in my moment of need**.

That's right, I want learning and development whilst performing my job in real time – both in the field and in the office.

I'm not asking for a lot, am I?

I know I'm making light of this, but there's a serious message behind it all.

If you truly want to improve your organisation, then you need to **tap into the personal preferences** of your people when it comes to their development.

Is this an easy thing to do?

Absolutely not.

Can you work towards it?

Sure you can.

This white paper is all about the future of learning.

The future of learning is all about the **personalisation of learning and development**.

It's not about fitting learning and development around all of the latest buzzwords or tech that is here or that is coming in the future. They are enablers and tools to use.

Instead, it's all about creating personalised learning journeys through a blended approach to development, and no matter how "sophisticated" or not your company/L&D may be, I'll be providing you with strategies and techniques that you can implement no matter where you are on your own journey!

I'm going to take what works and what doesn't work and have a good look at both.

I'm going to apply the latest technology of today and the technology of tomorrow and I'm going to present it in a way that is easy for you to understand and, more importantly, implement.

Yes, training, or I should say, development, just got personal.

So let's get personal right now and make a start…

Sean

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The Evolution Of The Modern-Day Learner

Unfortunately, today's employees are required to do more, with less, more quickly!

Each and every day I hear of more and more burnout at work.

Never before have well-being, mental health and resilience in the workplace been so frequently mentioned.

Today, we're busier and under more pressure than at any time in history, and this **impacts the time we have available to learn in, the way that we want to learn** and the exact timing of that support or learning intervention.

Most generations would like to learn a new skill but don't feel they have time

Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
58%	63%	50%	37%
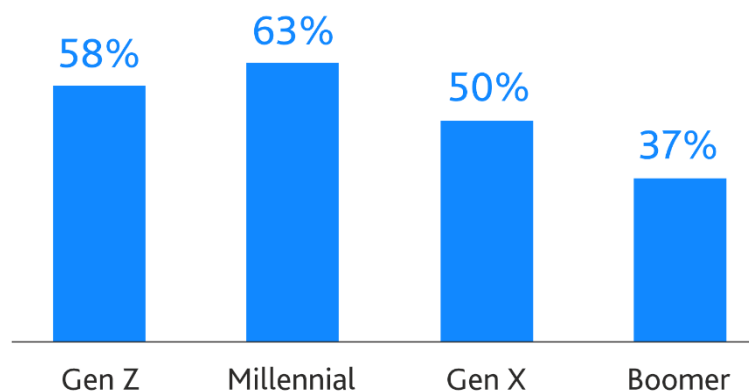
Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. 2,100 staff surveyed.

YouGov data from more than **4,000 employees** was used to form the basis of Business in the Community's *Mental Health at Work 2019 Report – Time to Take Ownership*", and some of the research from the report was startling.

Here are some relevant statistics:

52%   …of those who experience mental health problems related to work say this is due to pressure such as **too many priorities** or targets.

36%   …mentioned **workload as causing poor mental health** symptoms to the point of working overtime and not taking annual leave.

35%   …felt that because they were **not supported in the role** this led to mental health symptoms.

Sadly, what this means is that for the majority, **long gone are the days** of being able to attend a 5-day residential training programme without having to check emails or workload or both whilst away or without having to come back to an inbox so full that you feel like declaring email bankruptcy, deleting the whole lot and starting again.

This model no longer works for the employee or employer.

Are workshops dead?

Of course not.

But there is a reason why **1-day courses are very popular**.

There is a reason why that 5-day programme is now broken down into 5 x 1-day workshops staggered across 5 months and why there has been a **proliferation of bite-sized courses, espresso sessions** and **lunch and learns**.

The reason is that we are all time poor and have too many priorities to deal with – both on and off the pitch.

There are too many things vying for our attention, and I haven't even mentioned social media sites yet! (I'm not even going to go there!)

Back to workshops…

So an L&D strategy and learning curriculum that is based solely on classroom-based or event-based delivery will not meet the needs of the modern-day learner or the organisation.

Simply put, there's too much going on.
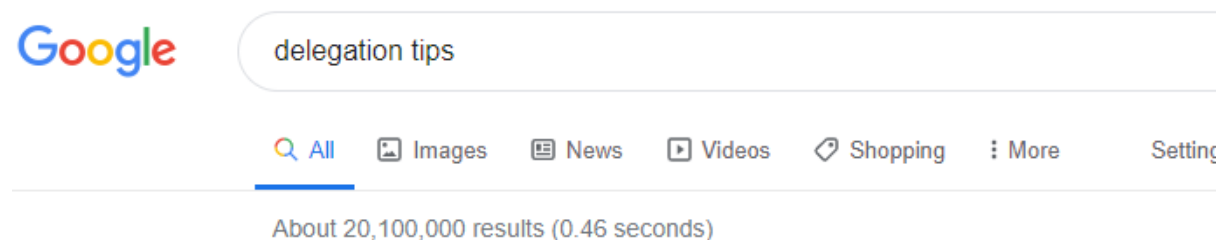
There Is No Not Knowing Any Longer

I don't want to sound like my parents, but "in my day" finding out information about a certain topic was difficult.

Before the internet existed, if I wanted to learn leadership techniques then I would basically have 3 options – attend a course, read a book or ask someone.

I might have only wanted to learn how to delegate part of my workload, for example, so a course might not have been the most cost-effective solution. More often than not I would pop down to the local library and check out a book or purchase one from a book store.

Other than that, it was a case of learning someone else's hand-me-down knowledge on the subject and assuming they were right!

As I write this, I have just **typed "delegation tips" into Google**.

I've now got over 20 million – yes, 20 million – resources on that topic.

Oh, you guys are so lucky to live in this era of information immediacy!

So today, there is no not knowing. **It's easy to find out information on any topic** known to man!

No longer is there a need for someone to wait for a course to improve their skills. If they discover a training need or have a gap in their knowledge, they will turn to the internet and **they will turn to the internet NOW**.

It's Martini learning! Any time, any place, anywhere.

There, I'm showing my age again. Google "Martini any time, any place, anywhere" if you haven't the foggiest what I'm talking about. Psst! It was a TV commercial.

Google at its best again for gaps in knowledge!

Back on point…

This form of self-directed learning causes a dilemma for L&D.

Are you happy for someone to "own their development" but at the same time have no input into the place where they are sourcing their information and training knowledge?

If so, this creates a challenge, because learning cannot be tracked, sources cannot be verified, consistency in approach and content cannot be attained and there are no measurements or assessments in place.

Therefore, if you're not providing your people with training, knowledge and help at their **point of need** then they will find it elsewhere.

The form of content that's needed is interesting too.

If I want to learn something, I'll watch a video – usually on my iPad and out of work time.

My wife will want to read about it either in a physical book (preferred option) or online.

My teenage daughter will want to search for it and consume it using her mobile device. She'll watch a video first, then back that up with any relevant images to visualise it further and will then read about it.

How different we all are!

Yes, personalised learning is now where it's at. Your learning needs to be addressed at the point of need and offered in a way that will maximise your retention of that learning so you can use it and benefit from it.

P.S. If you hadn't guessed by now, please don't buy me a book for Christmas ;-)

Technology Enables Learning In A Different Way

We're all addicted to our mobile devices.

Some of you pretend that you're not, but you are!

Your learners are addicted to their mobile devices too.

So it makes sense that if that's where the attention is at, then we, as L&D professionals, also need to focus our attention there.

Here are some interesting mobile phone usage statistics:

- The average smartphone user uses their phone for more than 4 hours a day. **Themanifest**
- 71% of teenagers watch an average of over 3 hours of videos online daily. **Thinkwithgoogle**
- 52% of all teens now use at least one messaging app. **Thinkwithgoogle**
- 1 in 5 adults uses a mobile voice search at least once every month. **Global Web Index**
- 48% of buyers use smartphones as the first point of contact from which to start their search. **Thinkwithgoogle**
- Global: 62% of users in 2018 accessed the internet using their mobile phones. **Statista**
- Global: in November 2018, Statista found that mobile devices accounted for 48.2% of website traffic worldwide (excluding tablets). **Statista**

Do you think these numbers are going to go down?

No.

As voice search becomes more sophisticated and accurate, more and more people are going to use this. **Yes, even typing is becoming a chore**!

People are using messaging apps. They are used to interacting with their phones.

So how are you using this delivery mechanism with your learners to help either in the search for content or in the delivery of it?

For those of us who can remember, it was never as sophisticated as it is today.

As computing became more and more popular in the 1980s, learning organisations started to see the opportunity in front of them.

Computers were being used more often and were being given more and more attention.

TV was at the height of popularity so that was always a popular delivery mechanism (I'm sure you had to sit through a John Cleese video on leadership at some point!).

Organisations started to look beyond just classroom-based training and dipped their toe into the computer-based learning space.

I remember back in the 1980s working through a very basic CBT course (computer-based training) that was downloaded from a floppy disk.

*For those of you who are too young to remember, here's what a **floppy disk** looked like.*

They were like the memory sticks of today.

Don't be fooled by the size of the image.

*These beauties were **3.5 inches** in size!*

Floppy disks were then upgraded to CD-ROMs.

I've still got hundreds of CD-ROM CBT and video courses that are filed safely away (that's "code" for stored away in the garage).

We tried but couldn't even sell them at a car boot sale for a few pennies!

We literally couldn't give them away.

*Organisations could put bigger and more complex courses and resources on a **CD-ROM**.*

*They were still bulky but were a **massive improvement** on what could be produced and delivered on a floppy disk!*

Nothing was scalable, and because everything was run on a single PC, nothing could be tracked, verified or properly assessed.

You could not deploy anything in bulk or en masse either.

Rather than purchase 20 CD-ROMs for your team (which were very expensive at the time), you'd pass the one copy that you had purchased around the office.

It was just a pity that "Jim from sales" kept forgetting where he had put it so it normally took ages for everyone to work through the content!

The Early Seedlings Of SCORM

As PC networks started to be created and became more popular, programmers and developers identified an opportunity to measure and track learner usage.

The **Aviation Industry Computer-Based Training Committee (AICC)** was an international association of technology-based training professionals that existed from 1988 to 2014.

The AICC was formed in 1988 by aircraft manufacturers (Boeing, Airbus and McDonnell Douglas) to address airlines' concerns about non-standard computing (cost) issues arising from the proliferation of new multimedia training materials emerging at that time.

In 1993 the AICC created a computer-based training standard that enabled them and organisations to track learner progress on a LAN (local area network). In 1998 this was updated to a web-based interface called HACP (HTTP-based AICC/CMI Protocol).

This interface and programme later evolved into the SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model) specification and most recently xAPI (Tin Can), which enables us to track scores, usage, locations and learner information.

The Birth Of The LMS

Now that companies had all of these metrics, they really needed to create a database to store it all in.

Enter The Training Management System (TMS)

A training management system was **a TMS-managed back-office process** for corporate instructor-led training administration and typically handled session registration, course administration, tracking and reporting.

A lot of vendors jumped at the opportunity to develop the scope of these systems further to also handle learner metrics for computer-based learning.

When we moved from local area networks to web browsers in the '90s, online learning was created. It was referred to as e-learning in the early days. It still is by many, but it has evolved so much!

Organisations were now looking for a solution to be able to deploy this new e-learning at scale with their learners and at the same time hold all of the data that the traditional TMS had successfully gathered.

Enter The Learning Management System (LMS)

I'm not going to go into the evolution of the LMS, but most early LMSs were quite clunky and not very user-friendly. They housed content that was very similar to a death by PowerPoint presentation.

"Click next to continue" was very popular! (I can tell by the look on your face that you've come across those sessions! Maybe some even recently!)

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Look Familiar?

Organisations uploaded content and created learner libraries and course catalogues.

Over the years, software was developed to create more engaging online learning courses and then a couple of major advancements showed up on the scene and changed the face of everything.

Smartphones & YouTube Change The Game

Convenience, instant gratification and content. That's what the smartphone and YouTube gave us when they both burst onto the scene in the early noughties.
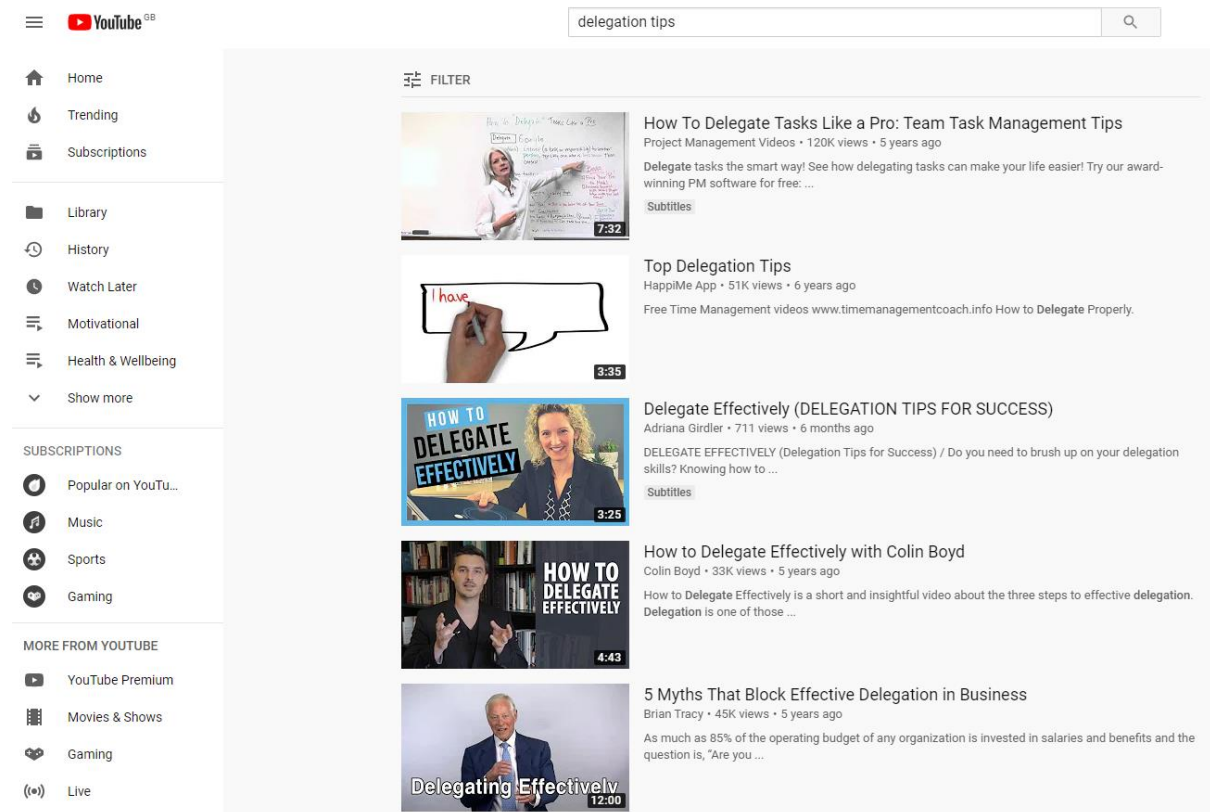
They were both key enablers for consuming content (mostly short-form content) when we needed it.

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Don't know how to tie a Windsor knot?

Pop on over to YouTube and watch someone as they tie theirs and instruct you at the same time.

Back to our delegation tips…

Go to YouTube and type in "delegation tips" today and you get this:

You receive millions of options.

Video Killed The e-Learning Star

As more and more people started to use YouTube and the web for their learning, they started to compare these short, sharp videos to the long, drawn out, "click next" e-learning courses that they were completing at work.

Indeed, the term e-learning started to get a bad rap.

But surely a simple video couldn't replace an online course?

Well, yes and no.

Yes, because all of a sudden hundreds of video-learning sites started to sprout up. Videos were also getting easier to shoot and mobile devices started to have better cameras and video recording.

Some jumped ship and went all in on "microlearning".

Videos didn't replace online courses because they became part of these courses. A new, blended approach included "traditional e-learning" coupled with voiceover and video.

Online learning was becoming a truly multimedia experience that included the written word, interactivity, tests, videos and audios, and today it also includes gamification and social elements.

Perfect For Informal Learning & 70-20-10

These short sessions, in addition to including video as a learning resource and as part of online courses, were also ideal for other forms of learning, like 70-20-10 and informal methods of learning.

They were ideal as tools **to help embed the learning back in the workplace** and for knowledge at the moment of need.

Hello Microlearning

Small was becoming popular. For the time-poor employee with immediate needs, these sessions were ideal, and hence the term "microlearning" started to crop up all over the place.

Some L&D professionals were against these 1-to-3-minute sessions and made their opinions known. How could they provide value? How could you learn something in depth?

They kind of missed the point.

Microlearning was not meant to and still is not meant to replace other methods.

Others welcomed microlearning with open arms as a viable, practical solution to providing development at scale and at the moment of need.

Online courses of 18 minutes were now being broken down into 6 x 3-minute microlearning sessions delivered over 6 weeks with actions and assessments required each week so that employees actually did something with what they had learned.

If the employee wanted something more in depth, they could research other resources, but these sessions were providing staff with the essential knowledge that they needed, when they needed it without impacting their current workload.

After all, they do have a day job!

In my opinion, the term **microlearning is not just limited to video**.

Microlearning can be in the form of short podcasts, one-page infographics, a blog post, a SlideShare, acronyms and/or images.

Anything that condenses learning down.

All of this media (micro and other forms of digital learning) started to be categorised into playlists, topics and channels on a company LMS. The on-demand Netflix or Amazon Video model of consuming film and TV programmes is often referred to in order to describe how modern-day content is presented on a learning management system.

Indeed, the term "LMS" is being moved away from in some quarters.

The term "management system" points to schedules, organising and processing.

Learning experience platforms (LXPs) are now in vogue.

They are more in keeping with what the software aims to provide – **a learning experience rather than a static online library**.

Vendors are now making the interfaces of these platforms very sexy to encourage adoption and usage. Using artificial intelligence, they can recommend courses and digital learning assets based on roles, assessments, competencies and previous courses consumed, so the modern-day LXP is a million miles away from those early, clunky LMSs.

I'm forever watching programmes on Netflix that have been recommended for me and about 95% of the time they are spot on!

So what do I do?

I trust it.

I know that when I want to watch something there will be something there for me.

Netflix then learns more about me and my behaviour and more accurately recommends what I will enjoy based on its machine learning algorithms, and we both benefit.

Developing trust in whatever software you use is critical. Not only does it have to be very easy to use but your people should be able to quickly find some help at their moment of need and the software needs to recommend resources for their continued learning.

Remember, your people are time poor. They don't have all day to find what they need.

Learning At The Moment Of Need

I've mentioned throughout this chapter that the modern-day learner needs tools, tips, advice and help at their moment of need.

The bottom line is that learning at the moment of need enables them to perform their job more effectively with the minimum amount of time taken away from their day job.

Of course, there will be times when more formal development opportunities are required, but in the main, **learning in the flow of work will become more and more popular over time**.

Below are two important pieces of research from **LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report**.
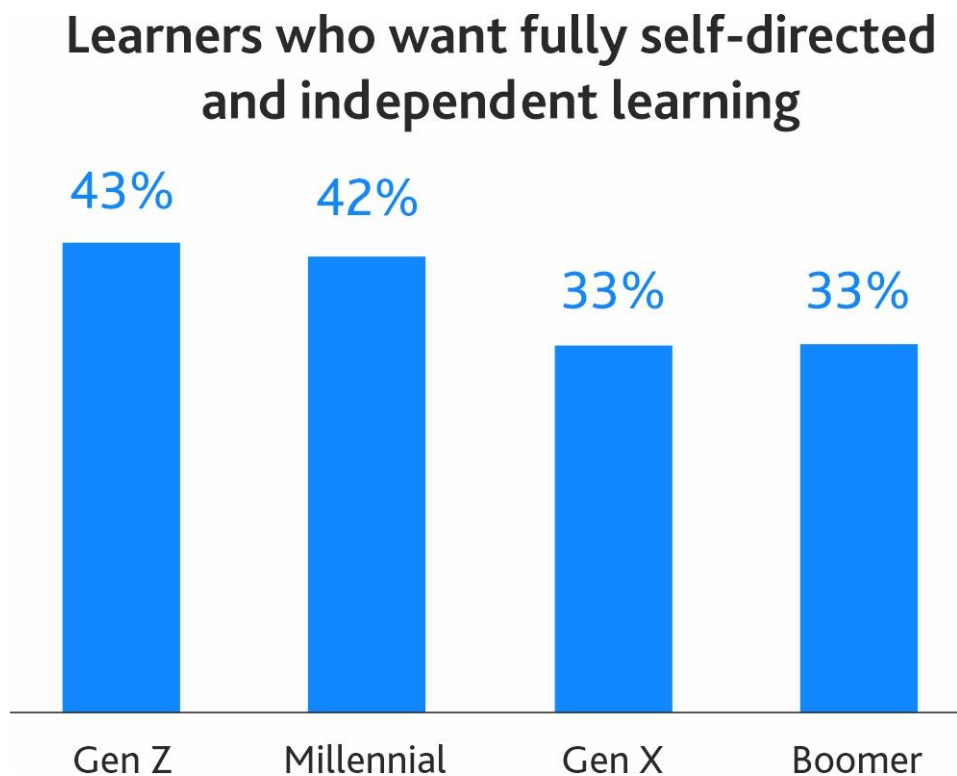
The figures above show that newer generations want to be more in **control of their own learning** than previous generations. If this trend continues, think what this will mean in 5 to 10 years.

Whatever solutions you start to deploy, they need to future-proof your organisation with these trends in mind.

The learner wants to be in control!

74%
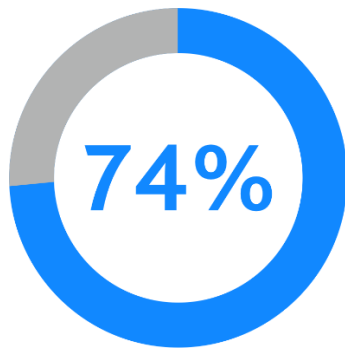
74% of employees want to learn during spare time at work

As shown in the above image, the report also revealed that employees wanted to learn in any spare time that they have at work, so providing the resources needed for this to happen is essential.

Embedding Content Or Stand-Alone Help

There are two specific ways in which providing learning at the moment of need will happen in the future (there are some instances where this is happening now).

Either LXPs will be able to integrate and embed their learning into company systems and software or employees will be able to access a stand-alone LXP that they will interact with on their desktop/mobile via a chatbot in the first instance.

Employees will not need to log in to other systems. The chatbot will always be there as you conduct your work (a bit like a chat works today on websites).

You'll search for what you need. You'll interact with the bot (which will know your preferences for learning, by the way) and you will then get served up some resources to help.

Let's take a closer look into this…

Embedded Learning Tools

Let's assume you have a CRM (customer relationship management) system for your sales people.

Imagine that it integrated with hundreds or thousands of sales tips, hints and techniques from a vendor's LXP.

Your sales person has just amended a stage in their pipeline for a particular client.

It's now "**proposal completed**" instead of "**proposal in progress**".

Adjacent to that field is an icon called "NXT", which is an abbreviation for "next", i.e. what action to take next.

If you're new to the role and learning the ropes, this will really come in handy, because when you click NXT, 3 options appear.
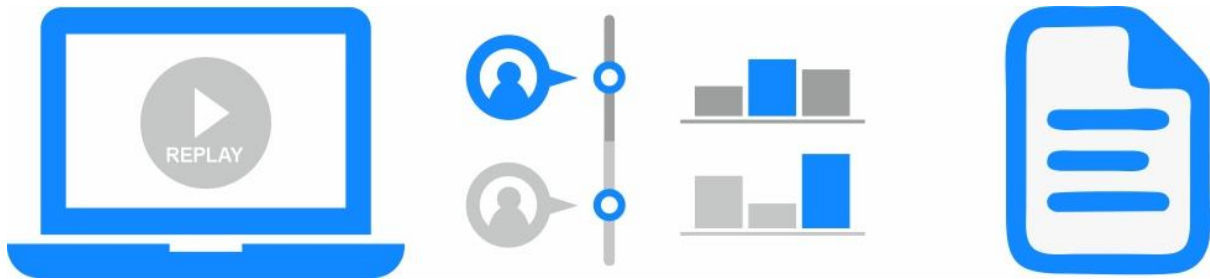
- A **video** with instructions on how to send the proposal along with a **best practice follow-up script** for when you check that the client has received it

- A **one-page infographic** with the same information in it

- An **article** that describes everything in **more detail in a written format**

By the way, if you'd been using the LXP for some time it would have logged all of your previous behaviour so it might not serve up 3 options if you choose video every time, for example.

Instead, it might suggest just a couple of videos to help. It's machine learning at its best.

Think of all of the systems/software that your company uses.

You might have thought of the following:

- Customer relationship management system
- HR system
- Stock control system
- Finance/accountancy system
- File storage & document sharing
- Resource management
- Project & task management
- IT system
- Facilities management system
- Collaboration system

Imagine having **embedded content** in each system **which is available at the moment of need**. You could pull best practice content from a vendor's LXP, create your own specific content to upload and have user-generated content that has been created by your learners.

This is referred to as social learning, and I'll cover that in a little more detail after we discuss…

Stand-Alone LXP

Imagine that you have systems that are, let's say, not user-friendly with others!

You could always use an LXP and have access to it at all times on your desktop or mobile via a chatbot.

You won't need to have it open in a separate window either. Chatbot "Henry" or "Holly" will do the initial heavy lifting for you.

Imagine having **instant access to content** based around product knowledge, company procedures and soft skills – all in one LXP.

It would be a combination of your own curated content, learner-generated content and content from your LXP vendor.

There you are, working away, and someone in your office upsets you because of the way they spoke to you about some work that you produced. The comments were personal and not directed at the work. You're angry that you just took it and did not respond in a calm way.

In fact you didn't respond at all. Internally you were fuming but you said nothing.

You're now kicking yourself and it's going to impact the rest of your day if you don't do something about it… NOW!

"They always speak to people in that way and they get away with it every time", you think to yourself.

There's definitely a moment of need here! You've got "Henry" on tap so you see what's available.

Here's how the conversation went…

Henry

Sean
Help with standing up for myself and being assertive

Hi Sean, I've found 6 videos, 5 infographics, 1 podcast and 8 blogs around this subject. Click on the links for more.

Here are videos around this topic. You normally select videos that are less than 2 minutes so they have been ordered this way

Shaping an assertive conversation (1 min 22 secs)

How to control your anger when others upset you (2 min 33 secs)

How to stick up for yourself when confronted (2 min 40 secs)

6 assertiveness techniques you can implement immediately (3 min 34 secs)

Handling conflict in the right way (3 min 44 secs)

Holding difficult conversations (4 min 05 secs)

Social Learning Via Learner-Generated Content

I'd strongly recommend that you look into **providing social learning opportunities** for your people.

This would mirror how we all engage with social media channels in our everyday lives and it's something that Gen Z is very used to.

It's just going to build over time as they progress with their careers and also as new generations start their working lives.

Don't think that learning can only be created formally by a third party or by your L&D team.

User-generated content created by your learners will have a **MASSIVE role** to play in the future.

They will have so many **valuable tips, techniques and knowledge to pass on** that it is very important that you enable this to happen.

Right now, there is so much **untapped knowledge and experience** within your organisation that's all going to waste.

Lack of knowledge sharing is a common sin that I see throughout modern-day organisations. They either do not know how to achieve it or do not have the key enablers to make it a reality.

If you class yourself as a "learning organisation", you've got to ask yourself how you are sharing this wealth of experience and knowledge that has been built up over the years **throughout your entire company at scale**.

Not just for a team or a department, but company-wide knowledge sharing.

Imagine that all of your learners have a Facebook-like page where they can upload any content that they feel is useful to others…

If "Louise in Sales" is the top sales person in the company and she posts a short 4-minute video on what she does at the year end to increase sales by 12%, then chances are that most of the sales team will be interested.

Learners can follow other learners.

They can interact with the curator of that content and others who have joined the conversation.

Imagine that a learner is struggling with how to overcome price objections at their moment of need.

Sean McPheat – Skillshub

They search the LXP and 4 formal pieces of learning content come up, plus 2 pieces from the sales team, and the titles of these suggest that they've had great results.

They are going to check that content out!

On LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Facebook, we're all following the people who entertain us or inform us or who we're interested in.

Social learning involves the same concepts. **It needs to be policed well** but can be very powerful for your organisation.

In order to make social learning work, I recommend that you **incentivise knowledge sharing**.

That doesn't mean sharing content for content's sake. Instead, it means linking knowledge sharing to objectives and personal development plans, and it will be the quality of the knowledge sharing through engagement, likes and the impact it has that will ultimately determine its value, not the fact that someone has shared 7 blogs full of rubbish!

Social learning can also **support development programmes and workshops**.

One of the key factors that determines whether a training event is a success or not is the impacts that it has had on the business.

Participants normally complete action plans at the end of a workshop, indicating their intended actions and the plans they have to embed the learning back in the workplace.

I've seen it work very well when participants have been asked to shoot a short video on their phone and to upload it to a group that has been created for a leadership development programme, for example.

The videos cover what each person intends to implement and the successes and learning experiences that they have had.

The other participants in the group can then view, comment on and discuss each other's videos and content between modules.

The same can done before and after coursework.

Social learning can be a great catalyst for generating discussion, knowledge sharing and networking and can be an effective way to create momentum during an ongoing programme which is being run over a number of months.

Don't worry if some of your people are a little camera shy.

Firstly, in my experience, once someone has shot a video then usually there's no stopping them!

Also, it's a **great confidence building tool** to take them out of their comfort zone and hence it has many by-product benefits too.

If video is going to be used, **I recommend using question prompts** for shooting them.

For example, left to their own devices, your people might "freeze" in front of the camera and not know what to say.

Therefore, if you choose to go down this route, I recommend that the **course leader provides 3 or 4 specific questions** that each participant needs to answer. The video will come across much more naturally and be a lot easier to record.

Here's an example. Let's assume that the learner has just attended a leadership workshop which is part of a 6-module management development programme.

The workshop covered the differences between leadership and management and the objective of this video is for the learner to discuss the key takeaways and what they have implemented over the last 4 weeks in readiness for module 2.


There's always the back-up of audio and blogs if video is not the preferred method.

Spending Trends

With the introduction of playlists, channels, chatbots, AI (artificial intelligence), machine learning, microlearning, gamification, VR and AR, to name but a few resources, we now have at our fingertips the ability to deliver a memorable and, more importantly, an **effective learning experience** for all of our learners.

The image below shows spending trends between 2017 and 2019. You can see clearly **that less money is being spent on instructor-led training** and at the same time **more is being spent on online learning**.

This will evolve into something very exciting over the years to come and it's something you need to start to plan for right now.

Spending Trends 2017–2019
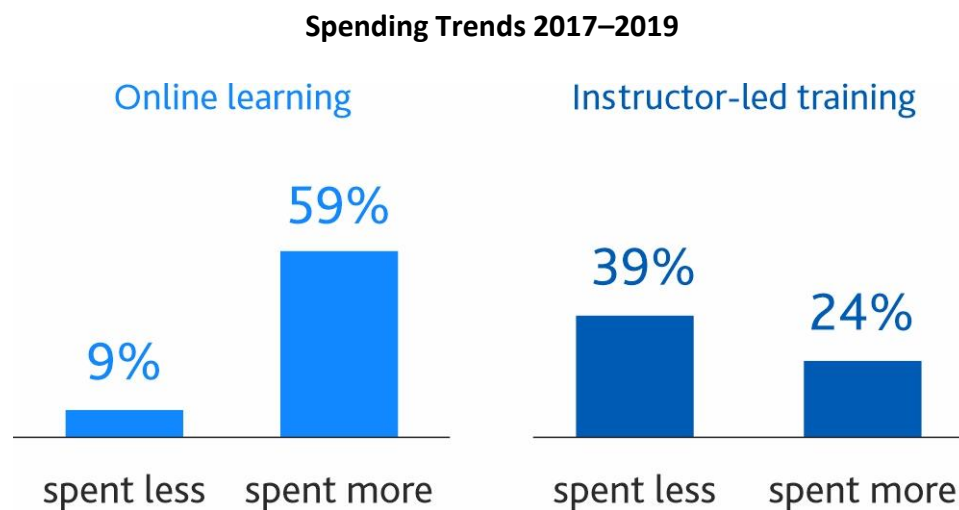
Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report

Another interesting observation was that 74% of talent developers said that they plan to make changes to their L&D curriculum to accommodate Gen Z workers. So plans are afoot to cater for the new modern-day learner now and way into the future, and I can only see this developing further.

Talent developers are making changes for Gen Z
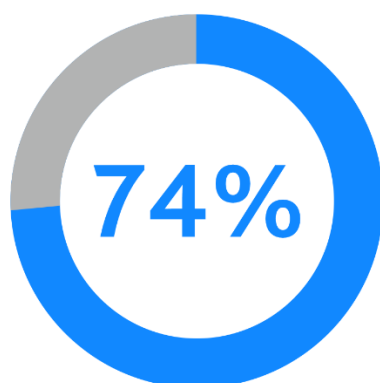
74% of talent developers say they plan to make changes to their L&D plan to accommodate Gen Z workers

Make It Personal

Why The Future Is All About Personalisation

When marketing sneezes, learning normally catches a cold.

What I mean by this is that there are a lot of technological and process trends that **first spring up in the marketing and sales industry** only to be adopted later by learning and development. Think of customer relationship management systems and how L&D introduced the training management system (TMS), even down to the bare basics of L&D professionals having to see themselves as great marketers in terms of getting their messages about L&D and its value out there to the rest of the business.

When I speak to some L&D managers, they say that they never thought they would have to "sell their courses" internally to get bums on seats and to get buy-in to L&D, which is all about business improvement. But they do.

Within this chapter I'd like to cover some examples of excellent marketing and sales strategies which are already being filtered down to the L&D world.

They contain examples of personalisation.

Personalisation Lessons From Marketing

Source: WebEngage

Do you remember **receiving letters in the post** or emails with a "Dear Sir or Madam" greeting?

Marketers used to **send mass mailings out to non-segmented groups** of people hoping that some of their proverbial mud would stick to the wall!

This is how direct mail got stigmatised.

You'd receive tons and tons of useless mail.

Moving forward, as marketers got a little more sophisticated, they **started to segment their prospective customers into groups**. This was based on age, income, location and the like.

They could even call us by our first name! (Thanks to mail merge and email autoresponders.)

But all of that is old hat now.

Personalisation was once your name, job title, the company you worked for and the transaction you had made.

If you were lucky, the company kept tabs on your lifetime spend to determine whether you were a "good customer" or a "top customer".

Today, the top organisations understand that **hyper-personalisation is where it's at**.

This is all about using what you do and how you do it, i.e. your behaviour, and coupling that with data to create a personalised experience for you.

They **tap into your interests, habits and needs** to create lookalike audiences with similar characteristics so they can serve up an experience that will be unique to you.

Personalisation Example

If you shop at Amazon, you are subjected to a personalised marketing experience.

Amazon has the system, the data and the products to serve up an experience that is personalised for you and at the same time gives Amazon the best chance of closing the sale with a potential upsell as well.

Let's take a closer look.

As I write this, I'm currently on a low-carb diet and I've purchased Atkins' Crispbreads before, so I go to Amazon (I'm logged in, by the way) and I type in my search words:
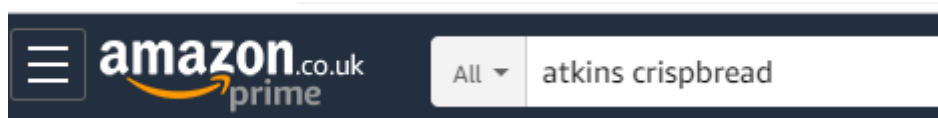
Amazon's AI and machine learning then takes over…

The first thing to note is that the **sponsored ads system has identified that I've purchased this product before**. I last purchased the Crispbread in October 2019 and also bought some Chocolate Chip Crisps in March 2019.

I select the crispbread on the left because that's what I'd like.

I scroll down a little and receive this:

Note that it offers a bundle. All of the **3 items are preselected**. However, Amazon makes it easy for me to "opt out" of any of these by deselecting any of them.

You didn't get me there, Amazon!

I scroll down further…

Sponsored products related to this item

Atkins Endulge Crispy Milk Chocolate Low Carb and Sugar Snack Bar, 30 g, Pack of 15
⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ 187
£20.08 (£10.04/100 g) ✓prime

Ketone Bar (60g) | Keto Bar with All Natural Ingredients | Truly Ketogenic | Paleo …
⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ 27
£3.25 (£5.42/100 g) ✓prime

Atkins Chocolate Fudge Caramel, Low Carb, High Protein Snack Bar, 60 g, Pack of 16
⭐⭐⭐⭐½ 142
£30.33 (£31.59/kg) ✓prime

Ketone Bar (12 X 60g) | Keto Bar with All Natural Ingredients | Truly Ketogenic | P…
⭐⭐⭐⭐½ 50
£33.75 ✓prime

Customers who viewed this item also viewed

Cheesies Crunchy Popped Cheese Snack, Cheddar. No Carb, High Protein, Gluten Free, Vegetarian, Keto….
⭐⭐⭐⭐½ 87
£11.99 ✓prime

Atkins Endulge Crispy Milk Chocolate Low Carb and Sugar Snack Bar, 30 g, Pack of 15
⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ 187
£20.08 ✓prime

Atkins Chocolate Chip Crisp, Low Carb, High Protein Snack Bar, 15 x 30g
⭐⭐⭐⭐½ 71
£19.50 ✓prime

No Carb, High Protein Bread Baking Mix 3x200g with 20% Protein | No Carbohydrates | Grain…
⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ 45
1 offer from £13.99

Amazon's AI engine knows that I'm **most likely looking for other low carb or no carb foods** so it is doing its very best to get me interested in these other products too.

All are relevant, though, and I HAVE purchased some of them before from these recommendations.

Let's look at some other sections.

I select a combo of products, including some Atkins Chocolate Chip Bars and "**add to basket**".

I scroll down the page and get these related items…

Sponsored products related to *Atkins Chocolate Chip Crisp, Low Carb, High...* (What's this?)

I resist! Then it's…

Buy It Again in Health and Personal Care

The ReNu is contact lens solution that I'd bought when my daughter was obsessed with making slime (it was an ingredient!) and the other items were other Atkins low-carb products that I'd purchased in the past. **I resist temptation** and scroll down the page some more…

Customers who shopped for *Atkins Chocolate Chip Crisp, Low Carb, High...* also shopped for:

Buy it again

Sean McPheat – Skillshub
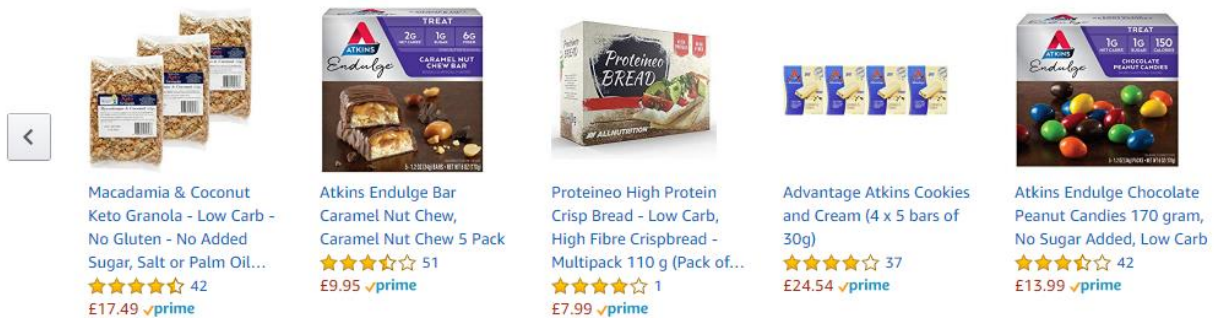
Once again, there are reminders of **products that like-minded customers look at** and also products that I have purchased in the past that might remind me that I should purchase them again!

At the very bottom of the page are some suggestions based on my browsing history.

There's my **actual browsing history** and then AI kicks in to recommend products that are **inspired by my browsing history**.

Very clever.

35%+

of Amazon's conversions are powered by its AI recommendation engine.
Source: McKinsey

It's an incredible statistic.

Even my Amazon homepage is personalised…
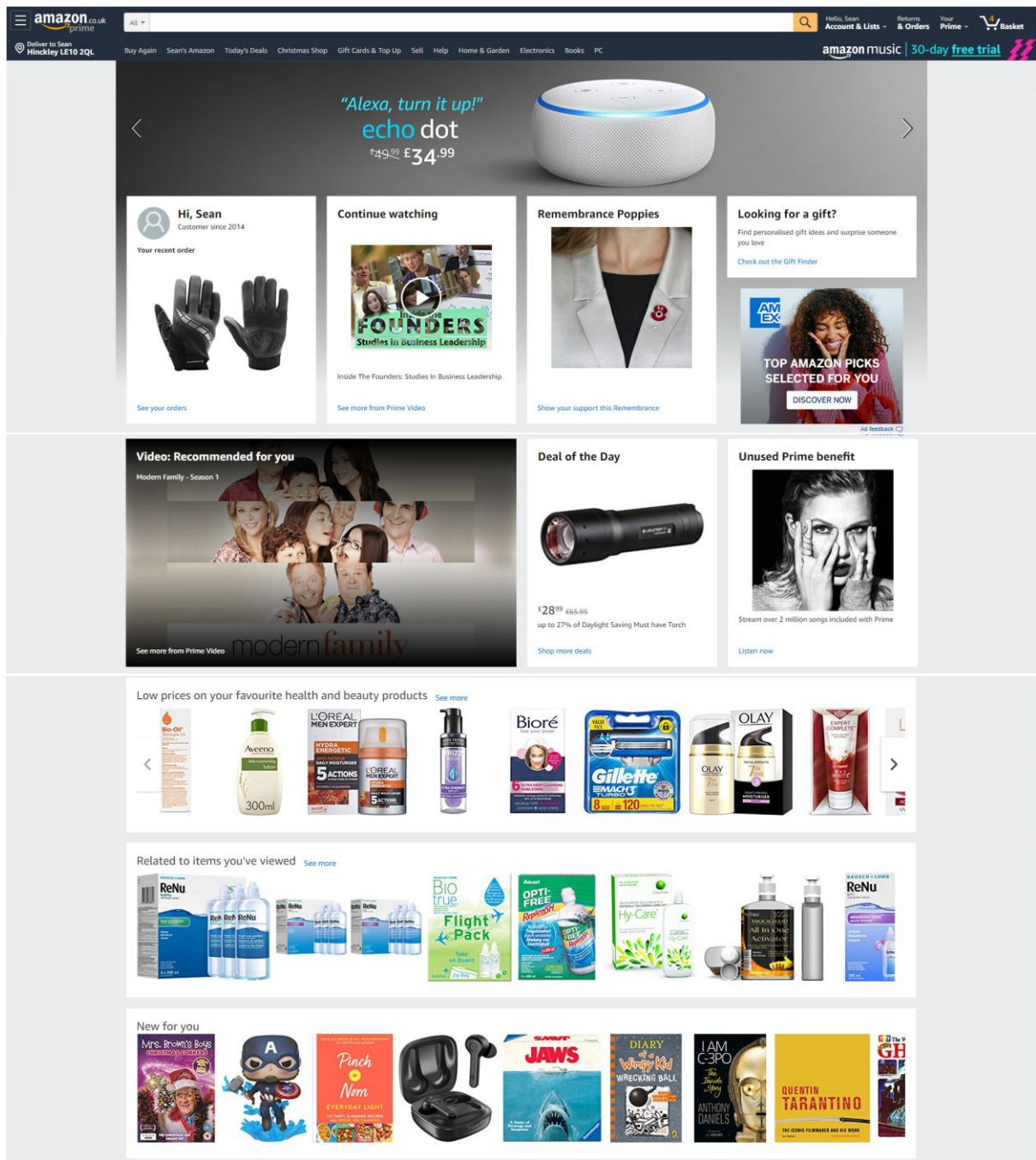
There are so many lessons that we can learn from this in terms of the systems that we offer our learners.

Personalisation drives performance.

Some More Personalisation Examples…
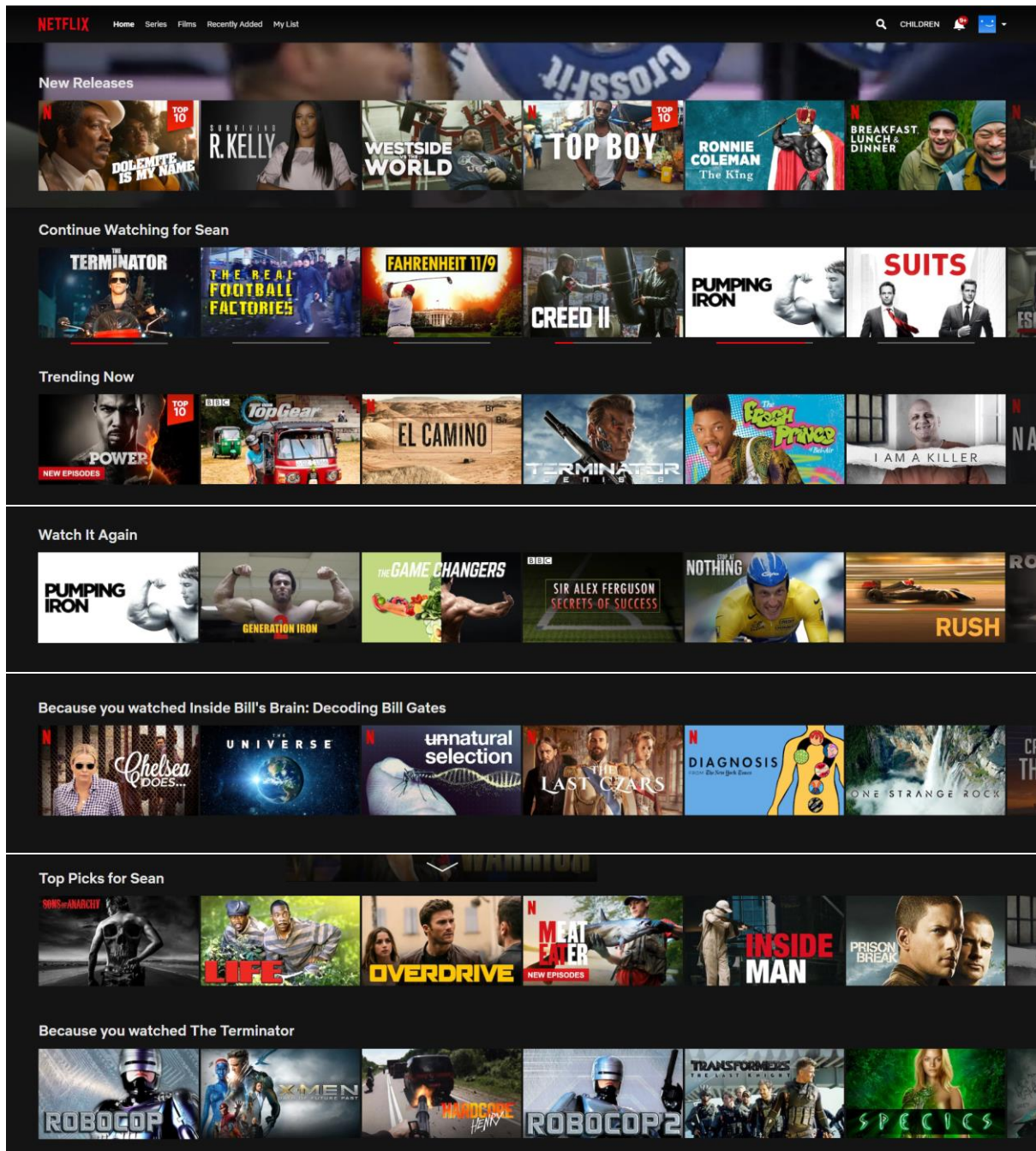
Take a look at all of this personalisation for me! "Because you watched", "Top picks…" "Watch it again…", "Continue watching…". Netflix **combines behavioural data** with **predictive learning** to present **personalised content recommendations**. More than 75% of website activity is driven by its personalisation engine.

One of my team took these screenshots of her Spotify account. All of the recommendations are based around what she listens to. I did question her on the "50 Shades of Love" album!

Sean McPheat – Skillshub

What Can You Take From This As An L&D Professional?

It's no secret that Amazon, Netflix and Spotify are great at what they do.

They each spend millions of dollars every year and a great deal of time and effort on **understanding their customers and their behaviour to create an easy shopping experience**. Everything they do is personalised to give themselves the best chance of success and to create an easy and memorable experience for their customers.

As L&D professionals we can learn a lot from this…

If we're to maximise the performance of our people then we need to understand their needs. Training-needs analysis is a given here. I'm talking about creating specific learning and development opportunities for learners that tap into their needs and preferred ways of learning.

Any system that you use needs to encourage adoption and deliver personalised learning within the context of learners' needs, i.e. such as who and where they are, recent events, learner history and their performance. **This is true adaptive learning**.

It's got to be easy! You need to simplify the whole learner experience.

As a bare minimum, any system that you use needs to:

- Offer **different formats of learning** in various levels of detail (i.e. a varied product range like Amazon!)
- Be able to **highlight content that you started** but did not finish (acts as a reminder)
- Be available at their **moment of need** (formal or informal learning)
- Have an **easy-to-use interface** that is consistent on any device. (If it's easy to use they will use it. If it's clunky they won't.)
- Gather data on **previously viewed content** and **what format that content was in**. Was it a video? Blog? Article? (The system can serve up recommended content in a format that is right for the user.)
- If there's a **social element** to the system, what sessions do learners "like" or comment on? (This shows interest and popularity.)
- **What content is being saved on playlists?** (These are the "most popular" courses and content.)
- What content are learners with **similar profiles and behaviour** searching for? (If they like something then your learners might too.)
- **What terms are your learners searching for** in your system? (What are your people looking for? Are there trends that you can use and plug any gaps?)

Gathering data like this enables you to serve up personal learning and development opportunities that are fit for purpose and in a format that is right for the learner at the right time.

Personal Learning Journeys Uncovered

Before we set off on this chapter, I want to make sure from the outset that we're on the same page.

Just what is a personalised learning journey?

> **Personalised learning journeys are much more than just content.**
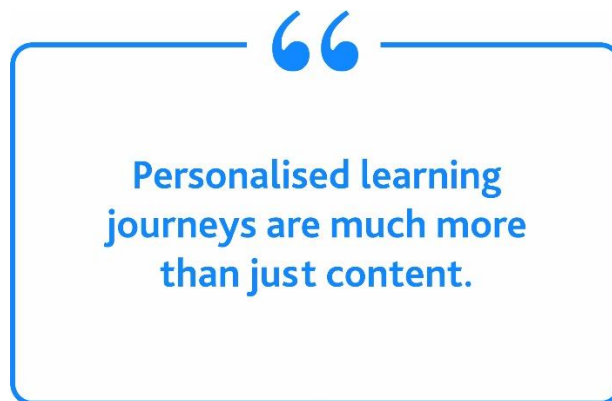
There are many definitions out there and I'm sure you've got some thoughts of your own, so before reading on, just have a think for a moment or so about what your definition is.

Please note that it's much more than just personalised and relevant content.

They create "personalised" content for their people yet still wonder why the information is not being retained or used in practice.

No, personalised learning journeys are much more than just content.

They're all about the what, when, where, how and who of learning, and all of this is customised to meet the requirements, skills, behaviours, interests and the immediate and future needs of your people.

Whilst personalised content is the heavyweight champion of the world when it comes to a learning journey, the **effectiveness of the learning will diminish** if the learning is not available at the right time and in the right place and is not delivered in the right way.

Also, please don't think that personalised learning journeys are just saved or relevant for online learning.

This isn't a "replace face to face or coaching" development initiative.

I've seen too many companies go to the extreme and purchase a learning management system (LMS) and load it up with a trillion online training sessions, declaring that they are now into personalised learning journeys through self-directed learning.

The result? Nothing.

I really mean it. Nothing. **Hardly any engagement, no effectiveness and certainly no return on investment**, only for the powers that be to blame either the technology or the people for why adoption levels were not met.

In reality it was neither the tech nor the people that were to blame. **It just was not deployed in the right way**.

We'll leave the idea about "building it and they will come" to Kevin Costner and *Field of Dreams*.

It just does not work in terms of personalised learning journeys.

Also, please remember that this does not signal the end of workshops.

Instead it's all about the **evolution of the learning experience**.

The Different Types Of Journey

To make this easy for you, I have categorised personal learning journeys into **4 main types**.

You should think about each type of journey when designing them for your people.

These can be split out into **formal** and **informal** journeys.

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Personalised  │
                    │     Learning    │
                    │     Journey     │
                    └────────┬────────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
              ▼                              ▼
    ┌─────────────────┐            ┌─────────────────┐
    │     Formal      │            │    Informal     │
    │ (Pre-Generated) │            │ (User-Generated)│
    └────────┬────────┘            └────────┬────────┘
        ┌────┴────┐                     ┌────┴────┐
        ▼         ▼                     ▼         ▼
  ┌─────────┐ ┌─────────┐        ┌─────────┐ ┌─────────┐
  │ "Push"  │ │ Blended │        │ In The  │ │  Self-  │
  │Knowledge│ │Develop- │        │  Flow   │ │Directed │
  │         │ │ ment    │        │ Of Work │ │"On      │
  │         │ │         │        │         │ │Demand"  │
  └─────────┘ └─────────┘        └─────────┘ └─────────┘
```
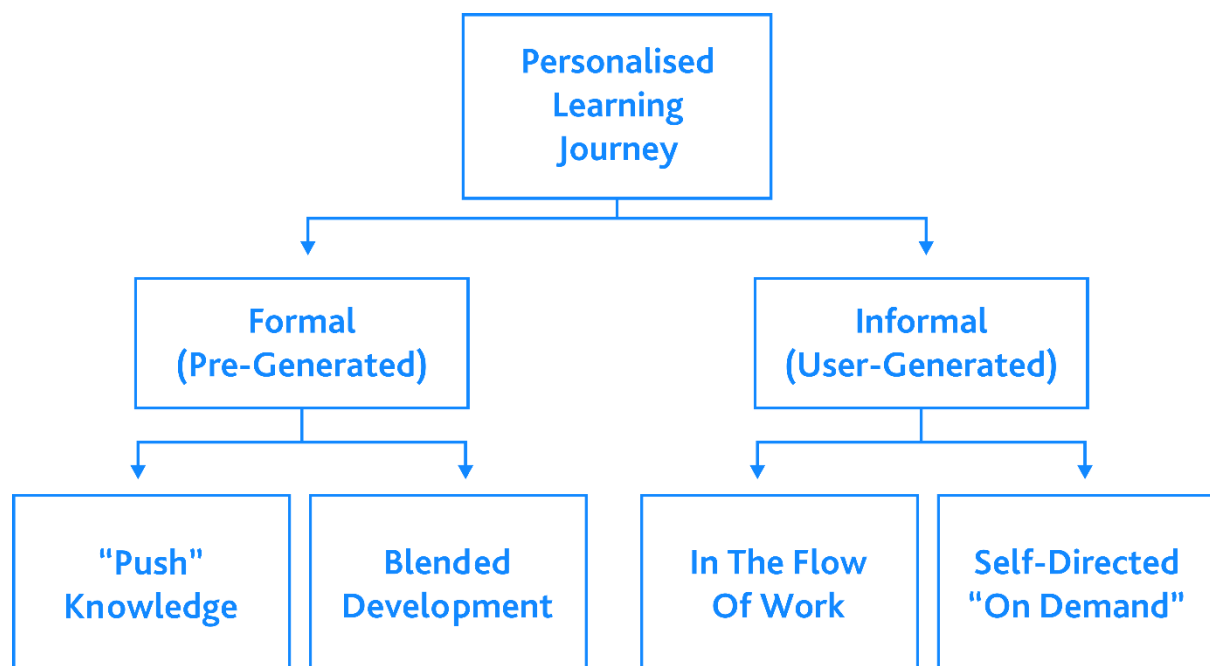
Formal & Informal Journeys

When it comes to **formal personal learning journeys**, you can view these as interventions and delivery mechanisms that **your company offers** to improve your employee's skills or knowledge.

They are "company directed" in terms of sharing some knowledge or information that they must learn ("push" knowledge) or are **pre-generated** one-off or ongoing development opportunities based on employee roles, required skills and competencies (blended development).

The journeys, especially those with pre-generated paths, can be changed dynamically depending on the level of knowledge retained, the progress of the staff member, their effectiveness or any other criteria you want to use.

Informal personal learning journeys are more "self-directed", i.e. they are **user generated** and they mainly occur in two instances.

Firstly, **a learning opportunity can appear in the flow of work**, i.e. as the member of staff completes their job they may want to learn something new or brush up on their skills in a particular area – therefore they go hunting for learning and development. The latter are more "on-demand" needs where the employee is in charge.

As an organisation, you need to be in a position to offer all 4 learning opportunities in some way, shape or form. How sophisticated your offering is depends on many factors that we will look into.

What Can Be Personalised?

If a journey is more than just content, what else can be personalised?

The content is the what. Everything else is the how.

Like with all messages, the how is normally the most important part.

Below are some variables that need to be taken into consideration when creating an engaging personalised learning journey… that is effective!

Content	Pace	Duration	Progress
TNA/Diagnostic	Delivery Process	Interaction	Support
Assessment	Evaluation	Reinforcement	Systems
Push Resources	Pull Resources	Certification	Gamified

Personal Learning Journeys… For Dummies

Let's strip this back to the bare bones with an easy-to-understand example using this white paper as the content.

Now, as you are either reading this in physical format (i.e. you've printed it off) or are reading it on some kind of e-book reader/desktop/mobile/tablet, I'm hoping that one of your preferences for learning is through reading.

I can't tell you how challenging it has been for me to write this white paper.

Making myself sit down and write has been difficult. My team have had to chain me to my desk or have literally sent me home and told all and sundry to stop all calls getting to me.

Apart from 300–1,000-word blogs and articles, I don't do a lot of typing, never mind reading.

Instead, as I've mentioned before, I prefer to learn via audio and video and I prefer meetings and discussions for communication instead of being an "email warrior".

If I'm given something like this white paper to read, it will gather dust for a long time or I will get part way through it and then give up.

Not very effective!

Indeed, this white paper is a big contradiction! I hope the message has sunk in.
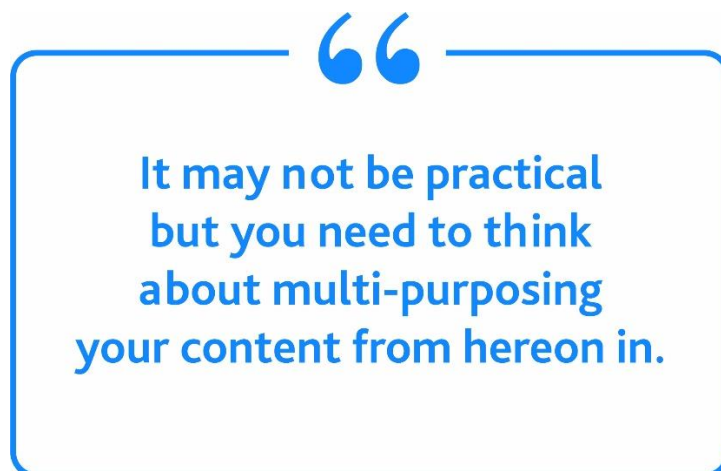
> **It may not be practical but you need to think about multi-purposing your content from hereon in.**

It may not be practical but you need to think about **multipurposing your content** from hereon in to cater for the preferences of your learners.

Have you been treating all of your learners the same?

If you need to send some information out to them, like details about a change in process or procedure, some pre-workshop reading or knowledge, do you just send out a document?

Let's take a look at multipurposing using this white paper as a really easy example.

Here are some ideas about what you could do.

You could:

- Offer it as a **PDF** or in a format that can be consumed on an e-book reader (as a whole and in mini sections)

- Record it and put it into **audio format** (as a whole and in mini sections)

- Film it and put it into **video format** (as a whole and in mini sections)

- Offer the content as a **face-to-face workshop** or **webinar series**

- Upload the content onto a system and enable your teams to consume the information "**on-demand**" (Netflix style)

- Upload the content onto a system and **"push" the content** to your teams over a number of months

- Split the content into micro sessions and **create short, searchable articles, audios or videos**

- **Fix a date for completion** and allow your teams to learn the content as they wish and when they like

- Offer **certification options** (note that I said options – not compulsory) which come with some kind of assessment at the end of them

- Offer **assessment options** (a test, coursework or interview) – could each staff member choose which one they do according to their preferences?

- Offer a **diagnostic questionnaire** to work out if the member of staff needs to consume this content or only part of it, depending on what the results were

- Offer **email, telephone or face-to-face support** to learners so that if they have any questions they can get them answered

- Offer **tailored evaluation mechanisms** such as feedback forms – written, typed or happy faces on a mobile device. There are lots of personalised options with this. How far do you go?
- Offer **drip-feed tips** and **refresher content** to reinforce the content after it has been consumed through an automated email sequence – written, audio or video. The tips could include a simple test. If the answers are incorrect, learners receive additional

content in their preferred style about that topic (this is where AI will come into play in the future – more on that later!)

- Split up the relevant sections of the content and house them on the systems that your employees use to consume information "**in the flow of work**". For example, you could make this bullet-point list into a content piece to house on your learning management system. When you come to create a personalised learning journey, you click on a help icon and up pops this list to remind you of what you can create. No time is wasted searching for content. This is learning in the flow!

- Make the content into a **game**. This would appeal to those competitive members of staff who love this type of thing. It doesn't need to be complicated. Sometimes all it takes is a badge and a leader board to motivate someone to complete content!

I hope that this list has given you some ideas about what personalised learning is about.

It's a simplified list that I've just used as an example. It's not exhaustive but hopefully it's given you food for thought.

The Promised Land?

The whole objective of personal learning journeys is to **match learning experiences** to your employees' needs, requirements, learning styles, level of attention and the time they have available to learn.

With that said, are personalised learning journeys the answer to effective learning?

Well, they are one answer! They are probably not THE answer.

They need a lot of planning, and the role of L&D will change from creating a one-size-fits-all piece of content to an **omni-channel delivery experience**, so what you decide to focus your energy on had better be relevant! (That's why diagnostics and assessments are very important for gathering information about immediate and future training needs.)

The term "experience" is very important here. It's the experience of your learners that will ultimately determine the effectiveness of the development.

Like with everything, there are pros and cons of personal learning journeys.

PROS

- Learning is **self-paced**. Each learner goes at a speed that is right for them.
- More **information is retained** because they are learning how they want to learn.
- They have a roadmap from which to work and gain a **sense of achievement**.
- Learners **do not cover material** that they already know.
- The journeys encourage **higher engagement levels** and motivate learners to complete them.
- There is **no reliance** on just face-to-face training.
- The journeys **reduce days spent out of the office** at training events.
- L&D resources are built up over time, creating an **enviable "go to" repository**.
- There is **better ownership** of learning.
- Learners have **more choice**.
- They **learn via doing** and in the **flow of work** rather than entirely through formal learning opportunities.
- They receive development opportunities **when they are needed at the time they are needed**.

CONS

- The level of self-directed learning can be low if the **employee is not motivated** or if mechanisms are **not in place to reward adoption**.
- The focus is more on digital learning rather than classroom based – **lack of structure and immediate feedback** from the facilitator.
- Employees who are **not "tech savvy" can struggle**.

- It **can be resource intensive** for the L&D department to create personalised learning opportunities and resources.
- It **might all seem too much for an organisation** to employ this approach and to get buy-in.
- **Learners have to think for themselves** and take ownership of their development rather than have training delivered to them on a plate – this can result in procrastination.

Areas To Think About…

Here are some questions to get you thinking about personal learning journeys.

- How personalised are the learning and development opportunities that you **currently offer** your staff?

| High Degree | Somewhat | Hardly | Not At All |

- What **blend of learning activities and digital assets** do you currently offer (workshops, online learning, etc.)?

- Do you know the **learning style preferences** of your people? If not, you need to find out!

- Would you **need to get buy-in** from the "powers that be" to implement personal learning journeys?

- Are there any **quick wins that you can implement** at a low cost to get the ball rolling without having to get buy-in from anyone?

- How **tech savvy** is your company?

- **Is your company ready** for personal learning journeys?

- **What technology do you currently have** that could support these journeys?

In the next section we're going to take a look at some examples of personal learning journeys to give you an idea of what can be done.

Personal Learning Journey Examples

There are **so many options available to you** when it comes to offering personal learning journeys.

Don't think that they ALL have to be a sophisticated blend of online and offline resources.

Fulfilling a need could be as simple as reading a book and offering a couple of coaching sessions with your line manager to help embed the learning.

Here are some of the content resources to think about when creating a journey:

- Textbooks (print and digital)
- Workbooks
- Worksheets
- Flashcards
- E-books
- Face-to-face workshops
- Posters
- Educational games
- Apps
- Websites
- Software
- Online courses
- Activity books
- Reference books
- DVDs
- CDs
- Magazines & periodicals
- Study guides
- Models
- Movies
- Televisions shows
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Books
- Microlearning
- E-learning
- Infographics
- Blogs
- YouTube
- Simulations

- On-the-job training
- Coaching
- Games
- Mentoring
- Conferences
- Role play
- Action learning sets
- Case studies
- Job rotation
- Secondments
- Gamification

Forgive me if I have missed any out, but you get the picture!

Any learner could potentially have access to a mix of these resources to help them.

Examples – Formal Learning Journeys

Before we look at some examples, in my opinion, we need to move away from "event-based" training.

With this type of training, someone has a need, they attend a course or read a book and that's it.

It's one event and once it's completed then it's over and done with.

> **The objective of learning
> is not learning.
> The objective of learning
> is performance improvement.**

Remember, the objective of learning is not learning. The objective of learning is performance improvement.

Attending a course is about learning new skills and behaviours.

You can do something with those skills or nothing at all.

Learning new skills does not improve performance.

Putting the learning into practice and actually doing something with the skills that are backed up and embedded in other resources will give you the best bang for your L&D buck!

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It's a change in mindset – a philosophy, if you like.

If you view a training requirement as a journey for each of your learners, you will approach it in a completely different way.

Example: "I need help with my confidence!"

John needs some help with his confidence skills. The training-needs analysis (TNA) and his self-assessment reveal that he needs to stand up for himself a lot more and he needs to be more assertive.

Due to the nature of his needs, it's been recommended that attending a course would be a great idea as he can practise and build up his confidence within a safe environment; face-to-face development is his preference, and video is his next preferred option.

So, armed with all of this, let's construct a personal learning journey for John.

His journey could look something like this:

Month 1: **Confidence-Building Course**

Embed The Learning & Practice

Month 2: **1-2-1 Coaching With Line Manager**
➔ Success & Areas Of Development
➔ Action Planning

Embed The Learning & Practice

Month 3: **3-Min Video: Assertiveness**
5-Min Video: Saying No

Embed The Learning & Practice

Month 4: **1-2-1 Coaching With Line Manager**
➔ Successes & Areas Of Development
➔ Action Planning

Embed The Learning & Practice

Month 5: **360-Degree Feedback**
Around Confidence Skills
& Feedback Of Results

John's journey starts with a course.

With the example above, if a number of people had exactly the **same needs** and **learning preferences** then you could offer a 1-day in-house course run by your own trainers or John could attend an open course run by an external supplier.

After the course, his journey continues where he is tasked to **implement the action plan** that he created on the course.

A one-month period follows of John trying out his new skills and making notes of what went well and what could have been improved.

In month two, he has a 1-2-1 coaching session with his line manager. It's part of his normal monthly 1-2-1 sit down with her but they are putting aside 30 minutes to go over his action plan from his course, what he has tried, how it has all gone and to discuss any additional help he needs.

Note that if additional needs are requested, then resources could be identified and added to this journey. It's got to be fluid.

The session ends with action planning so that John has something to aim for during the next month.

In between John practising and implementing the learning, he is **asked to watch 2 specific videos** that are on the company's LMS. These have been identified based on specific requirements he has and key areas where he needs help. He then creates some action plans based on the learning.

Month four arrives and there is an additional **1-2-1 coaching session** where everything is reviewed once more.

In month five, a simple **360-degree feedback survey** is set up consisting of 20 questions to ask work colleagues and other selected people to feed back on his confidence levels. The output is then fed back to John, who can then take that on board and make other changes.

Can you see how much more effective this is?

You've got **ongoing support**, a **blended approach** and **measurements** as well.

Now, you might be thinking that this will be resource intensive.

If you think it through before your employees embark on personal learning journeys then it doesn't have to be.

In terms of **push knowledge**, digital assets aside, if you based all of your journeys on one "major" type of development and coupled that with 1-2-1 coaching then you would be a long way down the road.

That one major type of development could be the cornerstone of the journey based on learner preferences.

I'm talking a workshop, webinar, conference, online course or book.

You'd train upfront all of your line managers in coaching and feedback skills. They would run bi-monthly 1-2-1 sessions with their learners to help them embed the learning and to provide ongoing support.

Therefore you have a programme rather than an event.

Example: A Leadership Development Programme

Another example of "push knowledge" journeys are ongoing development programmes.

You have to be very careful with these because **they can turn into sheep-dipping programmes**, which goes against what we are trying to achieve!

However, with some thought you can really **personalise the learner experience at various points throughout the programme**.

For example, before the leadership programme you could run a 360-degree feedback exercise for each of your managers and then feed the results back to each manager individually.

From this feedback specific needs would be identified for each person.

So you could match a suite of resources to each person before the programme kicks off.

Note that I said resources. If you don't have access to digital resources then you'll need to find other resources, like blogs, articles, books, etc. that can help.

Remember, we need to think about learning styles here.

If you had **3 x 1-day CORE workshops**, you could have one every 2 months.

Everyone would need to attend these and others at the right level for them.

From the 360-degree feedback, **6 specific topics** might have been identified:

- Managing change
- Having difficult conversations
- Managing upwards
- Remote management
- Dealing with ambiguity
- Building resilience

You're going to create and run **6 webinars**, and learners attend the ones that were identified as suitable for them.

There will be 1 webinar every month.

"Simon" might be attending all of them. "Jenny" might be attending 1 of them. "Suzanna" might not be attending any.

In between sessions, the learners consume the resources that were identified for them.

For some, this might consist of **4 videos** on YouTube. For others it could be **8 blog posts** or a couple of **podcasts**.

Halfway through the programme, there is a **personal coaching session** for the line manager and the learner.

Out of the 12 managers earmarked for the programme, 3 were identified as needing to be more creative and innovative. An **action learning set** was created for the 3 of them to work on a specific business improvement project throughout the programme. No-one else, just them.

There's always the opportunity to "make it personal"…

Hopefully you can see that even when your company has a "push" style of programme, you can personalise a great deal of it. With the blended leadership programme just mentioned, there are only 3 CORE workshops that everyone attends – **the rest of the programme is completely fluid**.

I've mentioned just 5 different types of resources, and the amount of these that learners will consume will depend on your needs.

CORE

Workshop 1 – Leadership Styles

Workshop 2 – Coaching Skills

Workshop 3 – Managing Performance

PERSONALISED OPTIONS

360-Degree Feedback
- Personalised report and output
- 1-2-1 coaching to discuss results
- Personal action planning

6 Webinars
1. Managing change
2. Having difficult conversations
3. Managing upwards
4. Remote management
5. Dealing with ambiguity
6. Building resilience

Personalised Learning Resources
- Online learning
- Videos
- Blogs
- Articles
- Podcasts

Personal Coaching Session

Action Learning Set

Example: A New HR Procedure

Imagine that you need to **cascade some important information and training** to all of your 70 managers worldwide about a change in your discipline and grievance (D&G) procedures when they meet with a member of staff to conduct a D&G investigation.

There's not enough content for a 1-day course. There's not even enough content for a bite-sized 90-minute session, but the message needs to get across to everyone and it needs to be understood.

Countless times in my career I have received an email with a PDF or PPT attached giving details of the change in procedure. It didn't turn me on!

So how can we get the message out and at the same time cater for different learning styles to make the experience a personal one?

It's all about *cross-purposing content*.

As L&D professionals, we need to think in a different way. I've mentioned that we need to **step away from the "one size fits all" approach**.

Yes, it's easier to just email out the new procedures but it won't be as effective.

Every piece of content that you curate now needs to consider different learning styles and what you can do to make it a personal journey rather than a prescribed journey – even if it's "pushed" from you to your learners.

Here's what you could do with this example. You run a **LIVE 60-minute webinar** at a certain date and time. This will form your **pillar content**.

As the webinar is **LIVE** it will appeal to those who like live interaction. There will be a chance to ask questions via chat and also, hopefully, you will build some interactivity into the webinar.

After that, you can offer a **REPLAY** of the webinar. I recommend that during the webinar you also offer some facility where your people can ask questions. Set up a "virtual coach" online form where questions and comments can be asked, for example.

Because the webinar is recorded you also have the **AUDIO**, so strip out the webinar and leave the AUDIO only to cater for those who prefer to listen but not watch.

You may already have created a **DOCUMENT** about the changes, so you can offer this too. If you haven't done so already, you can pay for a transcription service like GO Transcript, which will charge something like £45 for a 50-minute recording.

As you'd have created slides for the webinar, you can offer these for all options as **VISUALS**, and if you want to take this one step further, get creative and produce a 1-page infographic about the changes.

An example of an infographic is on the next page, but yours doesn't need to be as detailed or as sophisticated as this.

MTD ONBOARDING PROCESS
LINE MANAGER ESSENTIALS FOR A NEW STARTER

1. DAY 0 — OFFER & SET UP

Ensure that the offer is accepted and the contract is returned signed

Check any holiday days the new starter has booked

Inform HR so they can set up the employee on our HR system

Ensure workspace and equipment is ready

Inform IT for email set up and relevant software

Ensure the employee knows who to report to on Day 1 and what time

2. DAY 1 — ORIENTATION

Give an initial tour of the office

Make introductions to people in immediate area

Clarify role and objectives
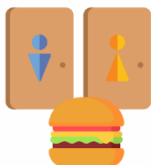
Inform about breaks, lunches, toilet areas etc

Met Jim in Accounts 10am

Set up some meet and greets

Familiarisation with email and workstation

mtd
training group

Sean McPheat – Skillshub

Examples – Informal Learning Journeys

An informal learning journey is where the learner is in complete control.

For the purposes of these journeys, I have split them into "self-directed" and "in the flow of work" learning journeys.

Self-Directed Personal Learning Journeys

These are, in the main, user-generated, on-demand journeys where the employee is completely in control.

```
                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │   Personalised   │
                    │     Learning     │
                    │     Journey      │
                    └──────────────────┘
              ┌───────────┴────────────┐
     ┌────────────────┐         ┌────────────────┐
     │     Formal      │         │    Informal     │
     │ (Pre-Generated) │         │ (User-Generated)│
     └────────────────┘         └────────────────┘
      ┌──────┴──────┐             ┌──────┴──────┐
 ┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
 │  "Push"   │ │  Blended   │ │ In The Flow │ │ Self-Directed │
 │ Knowledge │ │Development │ │  Of Work    │ │  "On Demand"  │
 └──────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └──────────────┘
```
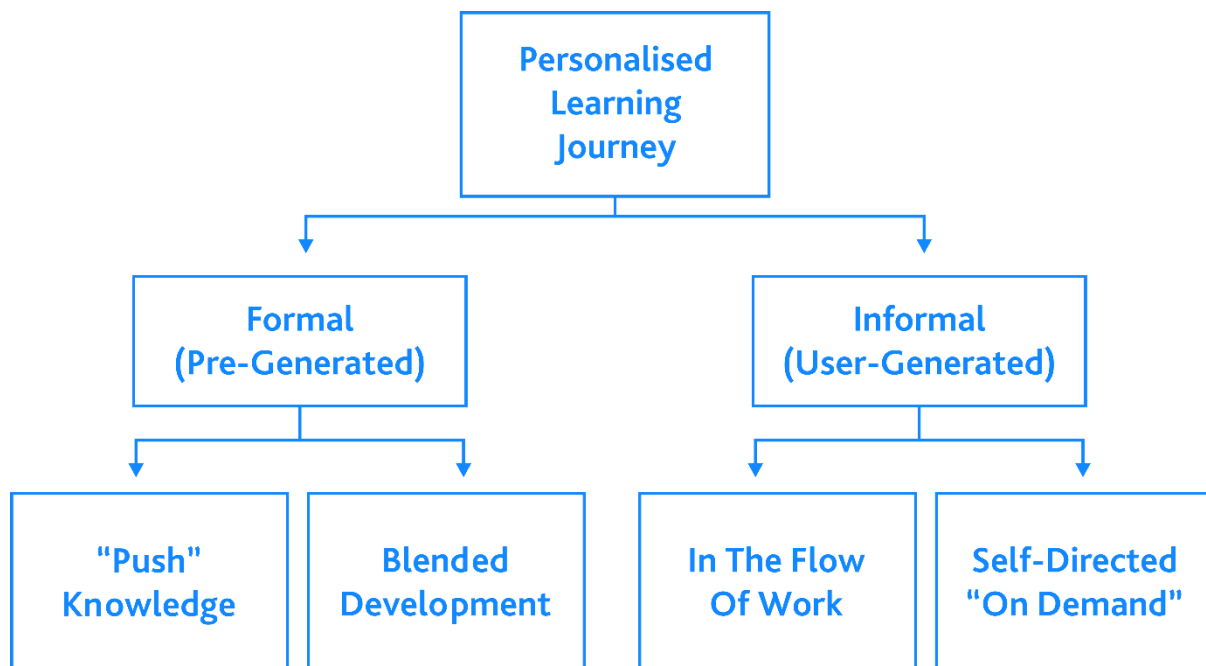
With this approach, your learners are masters of their own destiny, which on one hand is good, but on the other hand, it can be very bad!

This type of journey is normally associated with a company purchasing an **online learning library** full of digital assets such as:

- Online training sessions
- Microlearning
- Digital resources
- Gamified learning opportunities
- Articles
- Audios
- E-books
- Transcripts

At the outset it looks like the answer to all of your prayers, until you look at the usage statistics, and then you ask yourself why you bothered.

A "build it and they will come" system will never work unless you create some parameters for your learners so that they can make the most out of it.

Here are some ideas…

Allow your learners to schedule time in to learn

You're **not going to tell them what to learn** but you will allow them to take time away from their day job to schedule some time to learn.

You need to be true to your word here. Unless there is a mission-critical crisis you can't cancel their development time because you will be sending the wrong message.

Support your learners and help them to embed the learning

Learning is the easy part. Applying the learning is more challenging!

Make it a requirement for your learners to discuss what they have covered and implemented with their line manager or through social learning channels. Provide your line managers with the tools they need to effectively coach and support your learners.

Drive the engagement of your platform and content

As an L&D department, you need to continually be running campaigns and reminders to drive engagement.

This can be through a **regular "L&D Digest"** update email where you can include:

- What content is most popular
- What's new
- Users' success stories
- Hints and tips on how to find/use the system better

The objective of this is to **get your learners engaged** with your content.

You must **sell the value of your resources** consistently.

Even the likes of Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Video do this on a regular basis, and so should you.

I've also seen some companies publish **engagement league tables** of their learners when sending out their weekly update.

Be very careful with this.

I've seen this work well in some cultures and in others it's had the complete opposite effect.

It can cause cultural issues, and surely what you want are results rather than just learning for learning's sake?

The last thing you want is for your people to learn just because they don't want to be named and shamed on a league table.

Instead, as L&D professionals we want to pull rather than push people towards our resources.

By selling the value, this will help.

Include user-generated content

Learners like to share experiences with one another.

You've got a problem with an Excel formula? You might ask your colleague next to you who is a "whizz" at Excel for some help.

The same can be said for digital assets in your organisation.

Imagine that the best sales person in your company uploads their tips and recommendations.

You're going to look at them, aren't you?

A procurement manager just experienced a dirty trick from a supplier. They upload what happened and how they overcame it.

If you're in the procurement team or need to negotiate with suppliers, then you are going to be interested.

Remember, all of this "**learning" does not have to involve formally curated content pieces** from L&D and external suppliers.

It can be hints and tips from your people or videos shot from their mobile.

These "experiences" will drive the engagement of the content and the system.

Creating a self-directed journey

If you want to maximise your chances of success with regard to self-directed learning, then the "little and often" mantra springs to mind.

Scheduling just 30 minutes every other week soon mounts up over a year.

It equates to 12 hours of learning in total, and a lot can be covered in that time, especially if you think that digital assets are normally relatively short.

What you're looking to create are learning habits.

The more someone does something on a regular basis, the more they build up this habit. They invariably want more, so 12 hours would be the minimum.

Others, who get a real taste for it, will do many more.

So what might a journey look like?

It really depends on whether your LMS/LXP is fit for purpose and truly supports what you need.

Example…

Let's assume that during your development review, it was highlighted that you could do with **improving your negotiation skills**.

You're going to **schedule 30 minutes every other week** into the diary, starting 1st October.

You're using an LXP that enables you to select learning assets and with the press of a button it will create a programme for you and will schedule the content for you as well – yes, there are systems out there what will do this. *Some closer than you know! ;-)*

The LXP has a very easy search function that serves up all of the negotiation skills learning assets that it has, and because it uses AI it understands your learning preferences, so video was #1, followed by short blogs and images.

So for the next couple of sessions that's what you're focusing on during your development time on negotiation skills, and the schedule could look something like this:

Session	Title	Type
1st Oct	• 5 stages of a successful negotiation • Stage 1: Planning & preparation • Action planning	Microlearning
12th Oct	• Stage 2: Managing the discussion • Stage 3: Proposing solutions • Action planning	Microlearning
28th Oct	• Stage 4: Bargaining for outcomes • Stage 5: Summarising & reaching agreement • Action planning	Microlearning
11th Nov	• Results & impact assessment	

You'll be focused when you go into each session and will know what you want to cover.

The LXP will have the course ready for you.

You won't start your 30-minute development time by just browsing, like you do on Google or YouTube, and seeing where you'll end up.

No, it's planned and it's scheduled.

If your current system does not allow you to do this, I recommend that you create a playlist or a channel with those sessions in it.

Better still, if your system has a training-needs tool within it, use that to create these programmes for you. Some will adapt to how you work through the content, constantly changing what and how it serves up the next piece of content.

Measuring Results

As I mentioned before, it's very important to continually **sell the value of your learning resources**. One sure-fire way of doing this is to **capture the results of the learning and the impact that it has had** on learners' performance and any real, tangible outcomes.

I strongly recommend that the system is set up to capture this, or if not, that processes are put in place in order to gather this information.

The results are vital!

I once discovered **how a 2-minute, 23-second negotiation skills video** helped to **save a company £34,000**!

It was all down to a simple technique that the learner picked up about going into a negotiation knowing walkaway points and understanding what they had to "trade with" instead of giving discounts. This was related back to the session that they had taken.

That one video alone gave an instant ROI on all of the content that the company leased from an external provider.

In terms of measurements, I recommend asking questions around the 4 levels of the Kirkpatrick model or the extended Phillips variation.

This will cover:

- **Reaction to the learning** – how did they feel about the development?
- **Learning** – to what extent did they improve their skills and knowledge?
- **Behaviour change** – how did they change their behaviour in the workplace?
- **Performance and results** – what benefits resulted from the development?

For further information about the Kirkpatrick model I recommend that you visit their website: https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-Kirkpatrick-Model

Linking Results Back To Content To Encourage Usage

Imagine that you are browsing through your company's content and in a session on time management there is a message like this:

135 learners have taken this course with average time savings of 16%
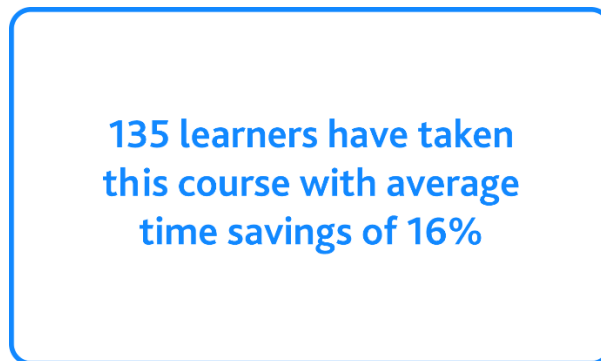
The system has **linked the measurements and impacts** gathered from your learners and **matched them to the content** that they have consumed.

This will encourage your learners to think about taking this session as there is a clear benefit to them and answers the WIIFM question (What's in it for me?).

Personal Learning Journeys – In The Flow Of Work

I've mentioned learning "in the flow" of work in previous chapters.

In my opinion, **learning will be moving closer towards this in the future**, and LXPs especially will add real value.

The reason for this is that there are so many "moments of need" nowadays that every day is a learning day!

Learning is part of everyday work.

The premise of learning in the flow of work is that for it to really happen, it must **fit around and align itself to our working day**.

The moment of need, or the opportunity, if you like, comes to us. It's not learning that is sought.

When you need to know how to do something or have an information gap, what do you currently do?

Do you go to Google or to your own resources or LMS/LXP?

Chances are that you think about asking someone in the office, texting someone, WhatsApping your colleagues, using a collaboration tool or Googling it.

Google will probably be the go-to for you because it's immediate and you don't want to disrupt your flow or to interrupt others in their own flow.

You want quick results and you **desire instant gratification**.
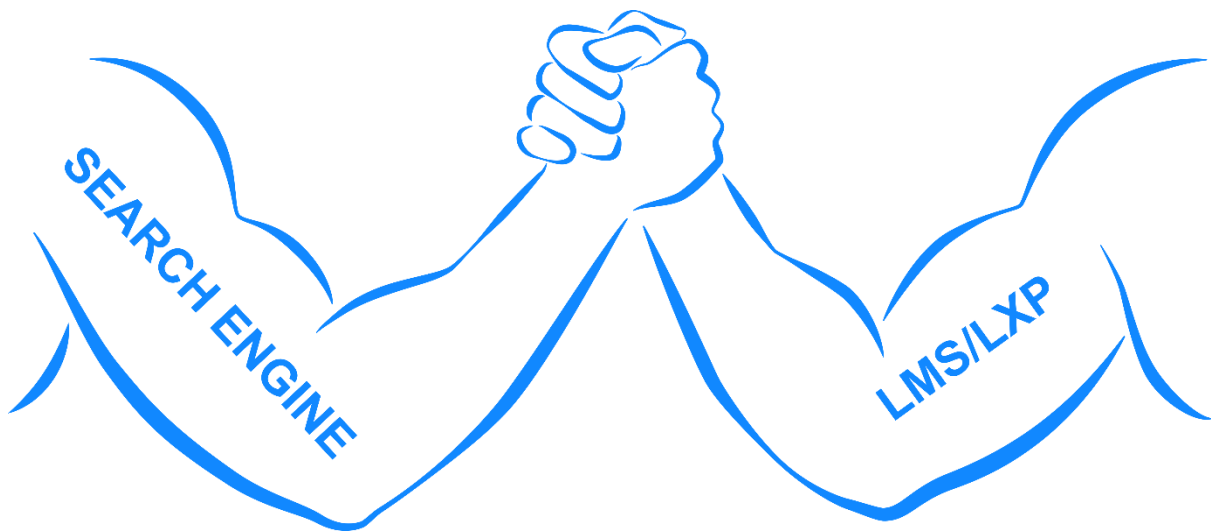
Who will win the arm wrestle when it comes to searching for help at the moment of need?

In terms of L&D, are you happy for "John" from accounts to search Google for how to overcome conflict situations or would you rather have him use the resources that have been specifically chosen, quality assured and are ready in your system?

To support your learners' own journeys in the flow of their work, you need to create digital assets and resources.

These are **"go to" pieces of content that help in the moment**.

They are not going to be e-learning courses that last 10–15 minutes.

Instead, these are going to be:

- Videos (formal and user curated)
- Blogs
- Process flows
- Quick tips
- Blogs
- E-books
- Sound bites
- Infographics
- 1-pagers
- User-generated advice

The bottom line is that in terms of content, quality and user experience, **they need to "trump" Google**.

They need to act like "Sam in Marketing" who knows everything about getting started in Photoshop. They need to act like "Louise in Sales" who knows that killer question to start a new prospect conversation.

These resources will become your digital assistant (that's why so many LXPs will have a chatbot in the future).

These chatbots will be who you "**digitally tap on the shoulder**".

Remember, the digital assets that you create shouldn't be too long or complicated. They should be "just enough" to get the job done without disrupting the flow of work and they must be accessible on demand wherever your learners are.

In-The-Flow Content, Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration

As you might expect, personal learning journeys "in the flow" of work will mainly boil down to learners' **preferences for learning**.

You therefore need to make sure that you offer your learners quality-assured content in different formats.

Repurpose content for different learning styles so they can access it in the right format, at the right time, when they need it the most.

Content doesn't just have to be formally curated by you, your team or an external party.

Set up your LMS/LXP or whatever system you use to **encourage knowledge sharing and transfer between your people**.

Enable your people to **create tips and articles and to shoot videos** on their phones.

These will be experiences from the real world, so they'll be popular.

Enable your learners **to talk to one another**, to **create discussions** and to **ask questions** of one another.

That's true learning as it happens and in the flow of work.

Artificial Intelligence

Welcome to the "Oz"
Of Personalised Learning
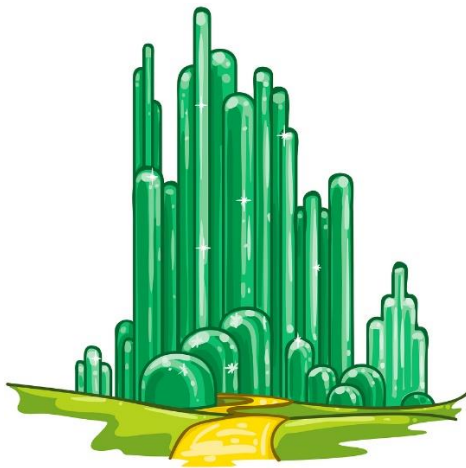
> ❝
>
> **"I am Oz, the Great and Terrible,"**
>
> spoke the Beast, in a voice that was one great roar.
>
> **"Who are you, and why do you seek me?"**
>
> L. Frank Baum, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Everyone wanted to visit the Wizard without truly knowing what or who the Wizard was.

Indeed, he was seen as the "great" and the "terrible" in the same breath.

The same can be said about artificial intelligence.

AI is promising great rewards for society and at the same time is being labelled as a replacement for staff.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are hot topics.

You might know what they mean or you might not!

You might be hearing that they are going to revolutionise the learning and development world and are excited about it all or you may be a little apprehensive about what it all means.

I hear from some L&D professionals that their organisation can just about cope with basic systems, never mind AI, so it's scaring the "you know what" out of them.

I come across others who understand each term but need some help contextualising what it all means for L&D.

Then I come across some who knows it all! ;-)

No matter what camp you are in, let's take a closer look at a definition of each. I'll also provide you with some ideas about how it will change the way our people learn along the way and some examples of applications of it.

Artificial Intelligence

> **84%**
> of global business organisations
> believe that AI will give them
> a competitive advantage.
>
> (Source: Statista)

For decades us humans have been trying to think like a machine.

We've wanted to be more intelligent, more logical and get more done.

Today, we're trying to get machines to think like humans!

At its core that's what Artificial Intelligence (AI) is all about.

It's all about creating intelligent machines, programmes and software to think, work and react like a human would.

Some of the most popular activities where AI is used include:

- Speech recognition
- Planning and problem solving
- Learning
- Reasoning
- Moving objects
- Knowledge

Examples Of Artificial Intelligence

Alexa and Siri

These are 2 popular examples of AI and machine learning being used in voice-activated assistants.

We can even talk to our remote controls and our fridge so the number of voice-interactive devices will grow over time and they will become our own virtual assistant.

It won't be too long before I'll be able to speak into a device and request something like:

"Please check the availability for the pantomime, Puss in Boots at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry on 23rd December. 2 adults and 1 child sitting in the first 3 rows on the balcony"

65

AI and machine learning will do all of the heavy lifting.

In terms of Alexa and Siri they rely heavily on machine learning to enable them both to understand and work out accents, slang, dialect and intent.

Amazon

I demonstrated the power of Amazon's AI engine earlier on.

It makes recommendations and matches one product to another based on millions of transactions each day.

Amazon is using all of the activity as learning in order to present the best experience and of course, the most likely combination that will lead to a sale.

Uber

You open your Uber app to use the service…

How does Uber work out the price of the fare in advance?

How does it work out an estimated time of arrival?

How does it work out the route that the driver will take?

All of this is powered by AI and machine learning.

Imagine the machine learning at play here with all of the data of each and every ride and then the complex calculations that it makes in real time to serve these estimates up in a meaningful and accurate format.

It's incredible when you think about it.

Facebook

You've got over 2,000 friends on Facebook yet you only see the same people in your feed.

Why is this?

It's down to Facebook's AI and machine learning.

AI and machine learning drives Facebook's algorithm based on your behaviour with each of your friends.

If you like and interact with certain people then they are going to show. If you ignore others then you won't see anything of them!

Hint – this means that if you want to see someone's activity to show in your feed, then you'd better start to like their content!

Banks & Fraud

Have you ever received an alert or a call from your bank's fraud department? It can be quite unnerving as they request to check some transactions with you.

How did this alert come about?

Well, their AI and machine learning have detected some transactions that are not normally "your thing"

Think of all of the locations, the products, the times and the days when you make transactions through your bank or credit card.

They can be the items you purchase, payments, transfers and amounts.

All of this data is being analysed and anything out of the norm will be highlighted and flagged.

There are plenty of other areas where AI is being used. Here are some below:

- Spam filters
- Online search
- Credit decisions
- Plagiarism checkers
- Online customer support
- Voice-to-text
- Google Ads & Facebook Ads
- Image recognition
- Video surveillance
- Disease detection
- Disease prediction
- Controlling robots

In terms of bringing this back to personal learning journeys, AI and machine learning will be able to help L&D by:

- Recommending development **based on learner behaviour**
- Recommending development **based on skill gaps**
- **Scheduling content** and marking assessments and tests
- **Reducing the time taken** for training administration
- **Producing learner-behaviour reports** and analysing them
- **Creating learning pathways** in response to anticipated needs

Machine Learning

> ## In 2017, Netflix saved $1 billion by using machine learning.
>
> (Source: Forbes)

"Customers will give up on a search after 90 seconds, according to research conducted by Netflix, supported by other artificial intelligence statistics from 2017. With this in mind, Netflix implemented a working machine learning algorithm that now automatically recommends personalized movies and TV shows to subscribers." (Techjury)

I've mentioned machine learning a lot in this section.

Remember, it's a core part of AI.

The objective of machine learning is for the system to learn by itself.

That means with no help or intervention from humans at all.

Imagine that you had 3,000 learners and they were all using your learning platform on a daily basis. All of the usage, the time, the topics, the time of the day, the devices, assessment results, completion rates, the formats, the locations, the job roles, the demographics and everything that you can think of would be gathered, analysed and then patterns and behaviours would be identified.

The analogy that I like to use when it comes to machine learning is to imagine one of your L&D team **collating and sifting through every single piece of activity** that occurs involving your learners on your platform.

That could include the type of activity engaged in, its duration, the time it was started and ended, the format that was used, the day of the week it was done on, the future behaviour that was decided on during the course, answers given in assessments, the percentage of completed courses versus non-completed ones and what those were, and analysis regarding what activities other learners are doing, liking, completing, etc.

You get the picture!

The team then sit down and have to **make sense** of all this, **draw insights** from it and make recommendations for each person individually.

You're looking at a major headache!

By now I'm sure you can visualise **how AI can drive a personalised learning experience**.

It's all about providing learning and development that is tailored to the needs, goals, preferences and performance of each learner to help them achieve better outcomes.

Another area where AI can really help in this respect is by "nudging".

Nudging is about creating a prompt or an activity which will **positively influence behaviour**.

For example:

- A learner might not be consuming the content or learning journeys that everyone else with the same profile and characteristics (as assessed from their previous behaviour and tests) has consumed. If this happens, the system recommends a link to that information, noting that other learners who took that module/course are **scoring far higher on their assessments**.

- The system may recommend following some links and engaging in additional learning because the learner is struggling with a particular topic. This could be down to them s**tarting but then not completing the same module 4 times** or taking too long regarding certain aspects of their learning.

This is nudging and AI can do it all.

AI also contributes very heavily to **adaptive learning**.

This is personalised learning on steroids!

With this, content and assessments are modified and served based on how the learner interacts with them.

AI will also take into consideration how other learners are interacting with these.

Adaptive learning uses AI to create personal learning journeys using materials, assessments and practical exercises based on the specific needs of each learner.

Through detailed analysis, **knowledge and skills gaps** are identified and then a journey is recommended based on the learner's knowledge gaps and the system delivers it at a speed that is right for that learner.

Some learners absorb information a lot quicker than others, so this aspect needs to be personalised too, and adaptive learning helps with this.

Personalised learning is not just about content. It's about how we learn through assessments and tests as well.

We need to be able to personalise these too.

For example, one of your learners answers a question that aims to test their knowledge midway through an online session.

Their answer and behaviour inform the next piece of content or question that is delivered.

Remember that right from the outset I said learners want to learn when they want to learn, how they learn best.

Why stop at content? Assessments and practical exercises need to be included as well.

This also informs L&D as to what content and questions work best so you can alter your formats, duration, design and delivery of your content over time.

Chatbots

I covered an example of a chatbot during the "in the flow" of work section on pages 22 and 23.

AI drives these chatbots.

Learners are able to ask questions and receive answers immediately – wherever they are and whenever they need them.

The amount and quality of data captured by a chatbot can contribute significantly to machine learning algorithms that are then able to detect trends in learning and also detect individual learning styles.

For example, let's say that during your last 12 interactions with a chatbot, you looked at 11 videos from the suggestions that it served it up and then read a 1-page visual about it too.

Not only would the system now know that one of your preferences is video followed by a visual but also it could break those 12 requests down into categories and "nudge" you later to make your knowledge of them a little deeper.

Open-Text Questions & Answers

We've all been there…

You're creating an online course and want to test the learner's understanding.

What do you do?

Chances are that you create a multiple-choice assessment, one where the system can easily work out whether the answer is right or wrong.

This is very limited!

The flip side of this is that you ask open-ended questions and then someone has to mark them! This is very time consuming.

AI to the rescue!

AI marking is already being used for multiple-choice questions, but where it will add real value is **when it can interpret written responses to a high degree of accuracy**.

This will enable L&D to focus on adding value rather than on admin tasks.

It's not fully developed yet but it will be. Watch this space.

The Impact Of AI On The L&D Role

As with any change, when it comes to accepting what AI will do, there are rumours, hesitancy and a little misunderstanding.

L&D is not alone in this. AI is touching almost every industry and is generating some level of anxiety, but this, in the main, is largely down to a misunderstanding of what it is.

AI will not replace L&D.

Instead, it will enhance and **enable the L&D function to concentrate on those tasks that add value** and that impact the bottom line for the company.

Most L&D departments are always challenged to do more with a smaller budget, so when AI is mentioned, the immediate go-to thought is that it will replace jobs.
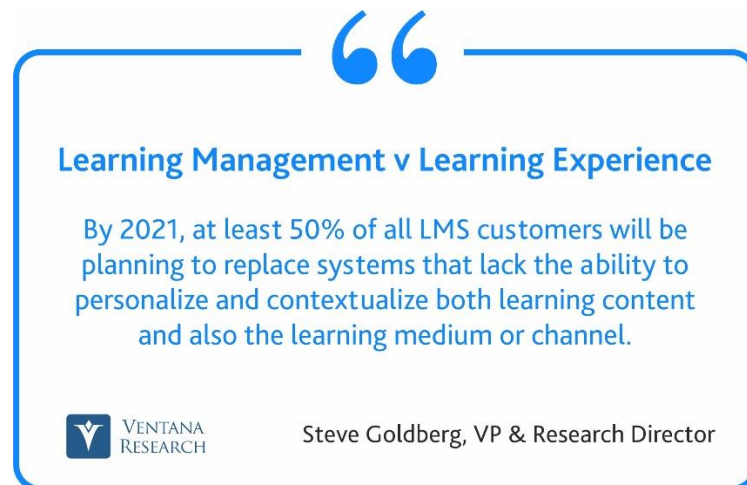
It will certainly replace tasks – those administration tasks that all L&D professionals cite as taking time away from what they should be doing.

AI will bring with it more exciting, personal learning journeys that have a better ROI than a sheep-dipping approach.

Your learners will be more engaged because the journeys are personalised.

LMS R.I.P

Why LXP & LEP Are The New Kids On The Block

> ### Learning Management v Learning Experience
>
> By 2021, at least 50% of all LMS customers will be planning to replace systems that lack the ability to personalize and contextualize both learning content and also the learning medium or channel.
>
> VENTANA RESEARCH
>
> Steve Goldberg, VP & Research Director

50%?

That's a bold prediction to make, but I can see it coming.

It's happening now as more and more existing LMS customers are moving over to Skillshub, saying that their current LMS is not fit for purpose.

The "build and they will come" model no longer works. There needs to be more to an LMS than just a content repository.

Don't get me wrong, LMSs were once fit for purpose. They did the job just nicely. But not today.

LMSs were great at the **management of learning**.

They were efficient in **scheduling and presenting** content for learners to use (or not!).

They helped admins to **create libraries of information** but were often clunky and were not user-friendly.

Moving away from the traditional LMS is all about a mindset.

It's a mindset which means you need to provide the modern-day learner with a memorable learning experience AND it needs to be effective.

It requires **style and substance**.

You will therefore see a shift away from the term LMS and instead you will hear the terms LXP or LEP used more often.

However you cut it, both stand for **learning experience platform** or **learner experience platform**.

I liken the shift as similar to the definition of management and leadership that Peter Drucker so famously coined: **"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."**

Doing the right things is all about behaviours and an experience. It's about how something is done.

The move away from a static LMS to a dynamic LXP is all based on the need for L&D professionals to be able to provide personalised learning for their people.

A piece of research by Brandon Hall, summarised below, shows that there is a **big appetite for it**.
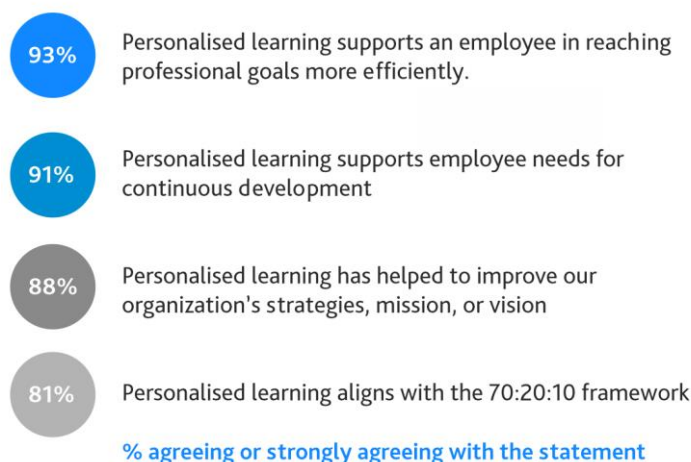
Brandon Hall, Personalised Learning Survey

On the one hand, you have a **company, which wants results**.

On the other hand, you have a **learner who wants to be supported at the moment of need and who would also like to learn when they want to** by engaging with an immersive learning experience that is interesting, fun and relevant to them.

The modern-day LXP will attempt to achieve both.
No matter whether you have no system, a current third-party LMS, your own company system or are moving towards an LXP, what capabilities should and could a learning platform contain?

73

I had a brainstorming session and have listed some of them below. This is not an exhaustive list!

I'm not saying that you need all of them, but I hope they give you an idea.

- **Certification** – creates e-certificates for each piece of learning or group of learning elements that learners complete

- **Blended Solutions** – mixes online and offline learning into programmes and courses

- **Pick 'n' Mix Course Creators** – for learners, their line managers or L&D to be able to create courses based on platform content. That content is then scheduled and drip fed to the learner over a number of weeks/months

- **Measurements** – ability to measure the ROI and impact of a learning event

- **All Formats** – not just SCORM-wrapped learning but any learning – videos, infographics, etc.

- **Recommendations** – contains a recommendation engine that provides personalised learning

- **Social Learning** – ability to learn from informal channels like user-generated content

- **Learner Authoring** – ability for learners to upload videos containing tips and content from their phone

- **Collaboration** – engages with others to ask questions, share ideas and discuss content

- **Adaptive Learning** – the system adapts to the learner's style and methods of learning and the learner's behaviour

- **Training-Needs Analysis** – includes a TNA engine to create initial recommendations and development plans

- **Virtual Reality** – the system supports VR if relevant to the learner's needs

- **Augmented Reality** – system supports AR for simple and complex applications

- **Branding** – the learner is able to customise their own learning environment

- **Marketplace** – the system is able to "house" the content of multiple suppliers so you are not reliant on one supplier

- **Management** – easy management of learners, enrolments, scheduling and administration

- **Webinars** – ability to run webinars and virtual training within the system

- **Learning Locker** – personal learner profile of development taken, including certificates awarded and impacts made

- **Statistics & Reporting** – usage and learner behaviour

- **Assessments** – ability to run tests and assessments whether part of a course or not

- **Booking System** – ability to book a learner into internal face-to-face workshops and online webinars

- **Notifications** – via email, text, WhatsApp or another preferred method regarding upcoming learning or any new learning assets created

- **Always On** – ability to learn whenever a learner likes, wherever they like and on whatever device they like

- **Gamification** – leader boards, badges and points. Creates a competitive environment if it's right for your company

- **Sexy Interface** – if the system looks awesome and is easy to use then it will be used more widely

- **Integration** – can it take all of the data from your current LMS and easily transfer it over?

- **Video Conferencing** – can the system integrate easily with other platforms to create virtual environments?

- **Multiple Languages** – does the system support all languages?

- **Feedback Systems** – capacity for learners to comment on and rate courses and digital content

- **Learning Pathways** – can the system create learning pathways and personal journeys?

Setting Out On Your Own Journey

What Do You Need To Pack?

What can I do to
make our learning
more personalised?

That's the single, **most important question** that you should ask yourself right now.

Personal learning is a mindset, and whether you have no system or a complete, fully integrated LXP with all of the bells and whistles, the same runs true.

You need to think about what you currently have at your disposal and then figure out some ways to create personal learning journeys from there.

Here's a reminder of **some of the elements that can be personalised** for the learner.

Content	Pace	Duration	Progress
TNA/Diagnostic	Delivery Process	Interaction	Support
Assessment	Evaluation	Reinforcement	Systems
Push Resources	Pull Resources	Certification	Gamified

Let's take a look at two extremes.

Firstly, let's take a look at how to create a personal learning journey on a shoestring budget and with what you currently have.

We'll then take a look at more sophisticated options.

A Personal Learning Journey Starting With Nothing

Let's assume that you do not have or use any learning system at the moment.

The first thing you should do is get your house in order.

> **List, categorise and audit every single piece of content that you currently have.**

For example, you should **list, categorise and audit every single piece of content** that you currently have.

You need to know what resources you are going to work with.

This should include online courses, offline courses, books, blogs, resources you subscribe to, videos, images, workbooks and the like.

Next, create and **run a simple TNA questionnaire** for each role and match resources to each skills or training need.

It may take time to "tag" the resources you have and to allocate skills and development needs to them. Excel might be your best buddy for this if you have no other support.

Work out what internal, face-to-face courses you can run, if any.

Some companies with little or no resources have run the KOLB learning styles assessment to work out how they learn best. It's not exactly AI but will help!

I'd also **ask your line managers to get involved** with this process by sitting down with each of their people to work out a resource schedule and development plan over a couple of weeks or months.

This will contain a mixture of resources. The **line manager will act as a coach** and will check in with them once per month to cover what has been learned and what they have been implementing.

This is a very crude way to create a personalised learning journey but it's a start if you are beginning from the very bottom.

You can also make the resources available on a shared drive that your people can access to help them at their moment of need, but it might be a bit messy and time-consuming for them to find what they need.

I'll let you be the judge of that.

You can adjust the style, the duration, the pace and the blend of resources for each person.

How will you assess their knowledge?

How will you measure the impact?

How will you determine what personal support they will receive?

Think about these elements too.

Personal Learning Journeys – If You're On The Road Already

There are 3 main components if you're going to make personal learning journeys a success.

You need:

- Engaging content
- A leading-edge LXP
- Buy-in from the business

Engaging Content

It goes without saying that if your content is not up to scratch then it will not be consumed.

As I've mentioned before, content is more than just videos and online courses, but I'd imagine that these areas will form the bulk of your content.

In terms of these 2 formats, make sure that you **include a variety of different types, including presenter led, animations with sound and without sound and the like**.

Remember, we're talking about personalised learning.

Don't just lease 1,000 animation sessions. It may turn on some and it may turn off others.

You need to include a mixture.

The same goes for durations of sessions. I'd look at including **varying lengths of sessions** too. They could range from **nanolearning** (yes, that's a term for a course lasting less than 60 seconds) and **microlearning** (60 seconds to 3 minutes) through to longer 5-to-15-minute sessions.

Mix it up.

Don't be a one-trick pony when it comes to content.

Depending on your journey and system limitations, you might want to empower your people to upload their own videos and tips in a true, social learning environment.

If so, I'd probably have a different area for these within the system but make them easy to search for.

There are also different options when it comes to **obtaining content from third parties**.

These normally consist of:

- Leasing content on your system
- Leasing content on their system
- Purchasing content for your system
- Marketplace – "pay as you play"

For leasing options, make sure that you receive any new content that the provider creates as part of your lease or you could have an expensive meter running if you want those sessions as well.

A Leading-Edge LXP

Don't let the term "leading edge" daunt you.

What I'm talking about here is **selecting a system that grows with you**.

You might not need all of the bells and whistles now. That's fine – the system you choose should have options for this.

If you have more sophisticated requirements, it should have modules for that as well.

Either way, the system should be able to grow with you as you expand and have different requirements and needs.

For example, if you choose an LMS that does not support virtual reality and later you have a real need for it, what are you going to do?

You'll most likely need to look at other options, again!

Does the system enable you to design and deliver personalised learning journeys or is it a glorified content library? Be careful with this.

Ask for the provider's upcoming releases and also for help and advice on integrating it within your company.

Remember, the **LXP needs to support in-the-moment-of-need learning as well as self-directed learning**.

Does the system integrate with other systems?

Maybe you'd like a bolt-on for the system to make it really personalised for you?

For example, one client who uses Skillshub wanted an additional bespoke coaching functionality added to it.

They were using a third-party system for this and were looking to replace it.

Instead, they asked our development team to create it exactly how they wanted it as part of Skillshub.

As the fees were one-off, their ROI came through in a matter of months.

Getting Buy-In For
Personal Learning Journeys

When I talk about buy-in, I mean getting buy-in for the system, the content and for creating personal learning journeys.

If you get the content and the system bought into then the third element will come naturally. The importance of **getting stakeholder buy-in cannot be underestimated**.

You not only have to convince your key stakeholders of the business benefits of the content and the system but potentially you're also getting buy-in to doing things differently, and that normally includes company-wide change.

So you need to have a watertight business case!

Here are **some of the areas to think about** when creating the benefits and the business case for your course of action.

Where possible, calculate the figures for your business.

Cost Reduction

- Reduction in the **design and delivery costs** of internal face-to-face programmes and externally run programmes vs new way of working
- **Travel costs** of trainers and employees to and from venues
- **Time spent away from the office** on formal classroom-based training and inefficiency costs when they return (i.e. email stack up)
- **Printing costs** for materials

Time Savings

- **Administration reduction** of training-needs analysis and scheduling
- **Time spent creating** content and training materials
- **Onboarding new staff members** more quickly

Health & Well-being

- **Reduction in sickness and turnover** due to better career development that is customised
- **Reduction in "extra hours"** needed to catch up after training events

In terms of the business case, I would also look to include some of the **latest trends** and **research analysis** that I have used in this white paper to help you.

I've listed the main ones below for you and you can also **download them** from our website at Skillshub Personal Learning Journey Statistics
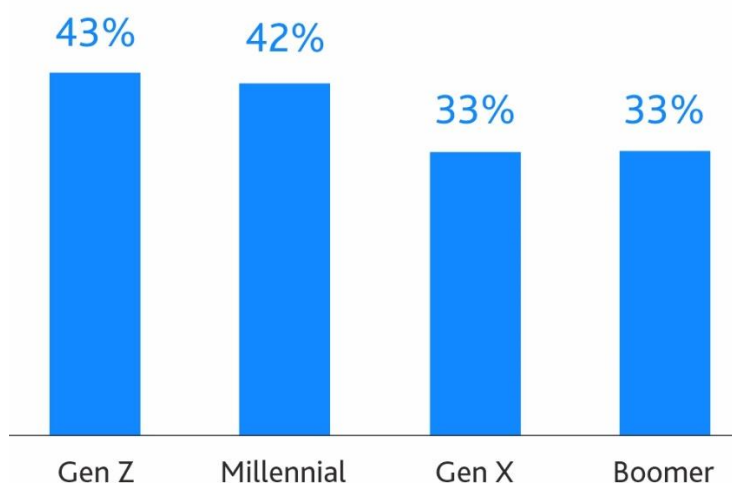
What Do Learners Want?

Most generations would like to learn a new skill but don't feel they have time

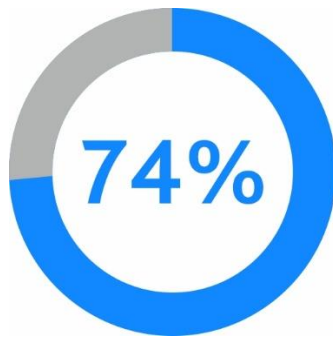| Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
58%	63%	50%	37%
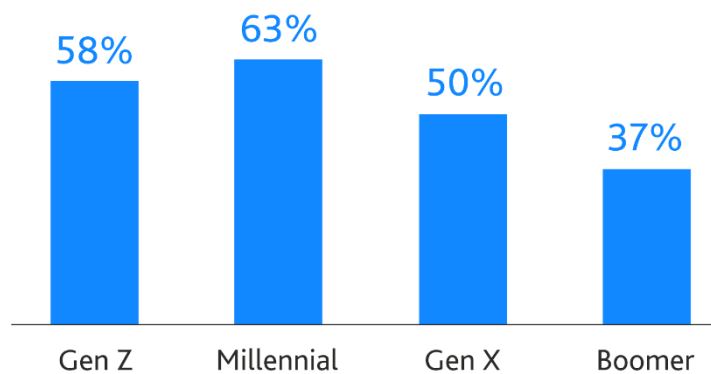
Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. 2,100 staff surveyed.

Learners who want fully self-directed and independent learning

Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
43%	42%	33%	33%

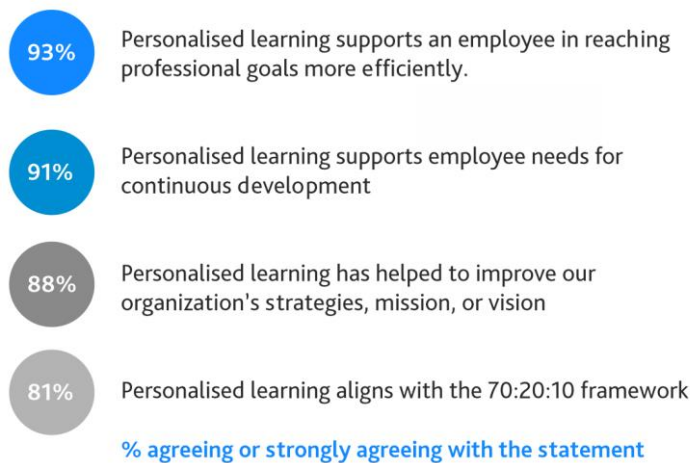*Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. 2,100 staff surveyed.*

74% of employees want to learn during spare time to work

Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. 2,100 staff surveyed.

Benefits Of Personalised Learning

Personalised Learning Survey

93% Personalised learning supports an employee in reaching professional goals more efficiently.

91% Personalised learning supports employee needs for continuous development

88% Personalised learning has helped to improve our organization's strategies, mission, or vision

81% Personalised learning aligns with the 70:20:10 framework
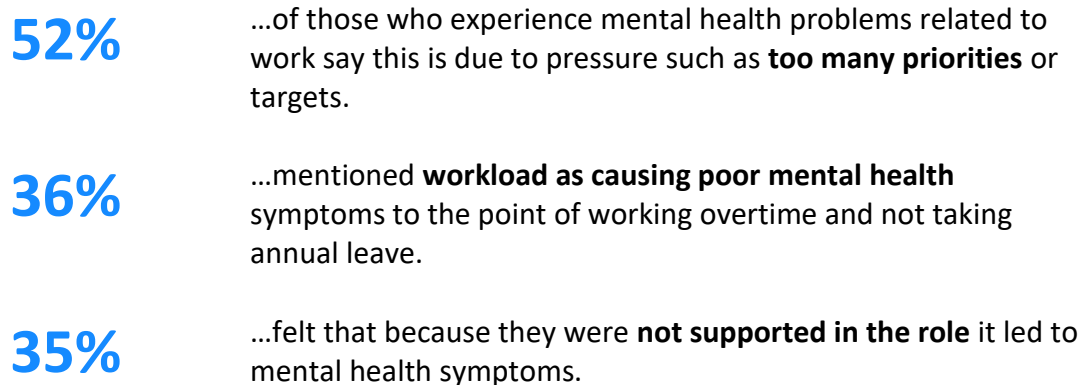
% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement

Brandon Hall, Personalised Learning Survey

Well-being – Less Time, More Pressure

YouGov data from more than **4,000 employees** was used to form the basis of Business in the Community's *"Mental Health at Work 2019 Report – Time to Take Ownership"*, and some of the research from the report was startling.

Here are some relevant statistics:

52% …of those who experience mental health problems related to work say this is due to pressure such as **too many priorities** or targets.

36% …mentioned **workload as causing poor mental health** symptoms to the point of working overtime and not taking annual leave.

**35%** …felt that because they were **not supported in the role** it led to mental health symptoms.

Technology Trends & Usage Patterns

- The average smartphone user uses their phone for more than 4 hours a day. **Themanifest**

- 71% of teenagers watch an average of over 3 hours of videos online daily. **Thinkwithgoogle**

- 52% of all teens now use at least one messaging app. **Thinkwithgoogle**

- 1 in 5 adults uses a mobile voice search at least once every month. **Global Web Index**

- 48% of buyers use smartphones as the first point of contact from which to start their search. **Thinkwithgoogle**

- Global: 62% of users accessed the internet using their mobile phones. **Statista**

- Global: in November 2018, Statista found that mobile devices accounted for 48.2% of website traffic worldwide (excluding tablets). **Statista**
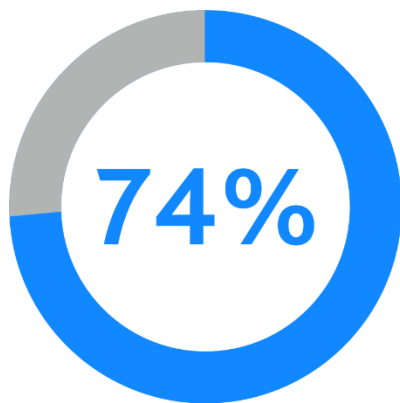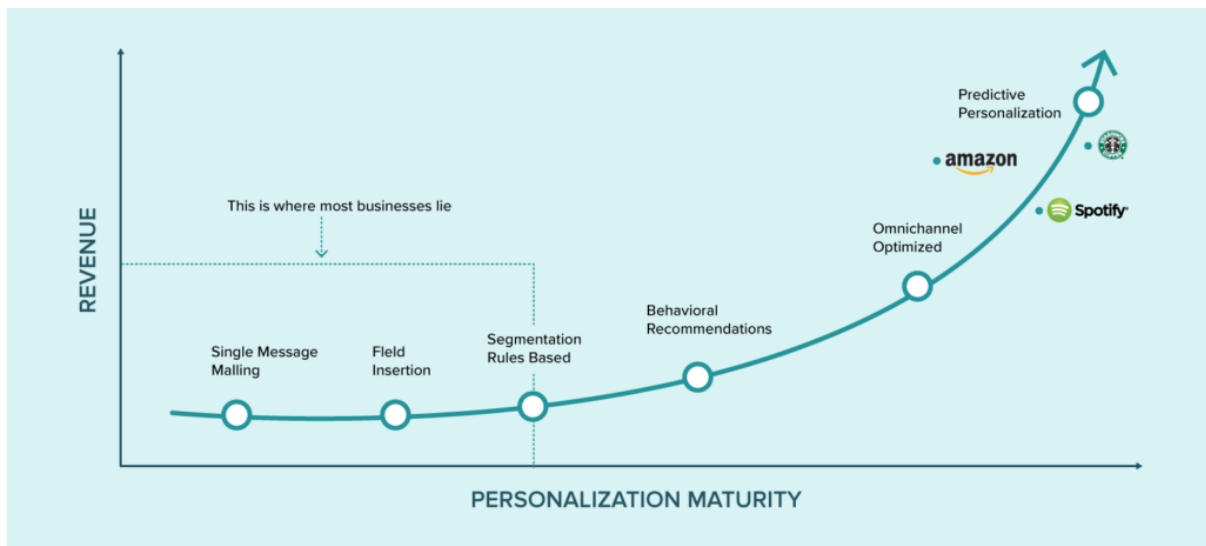
74% of employees want to learn during spare time at work

Spending Trends 2017–2019
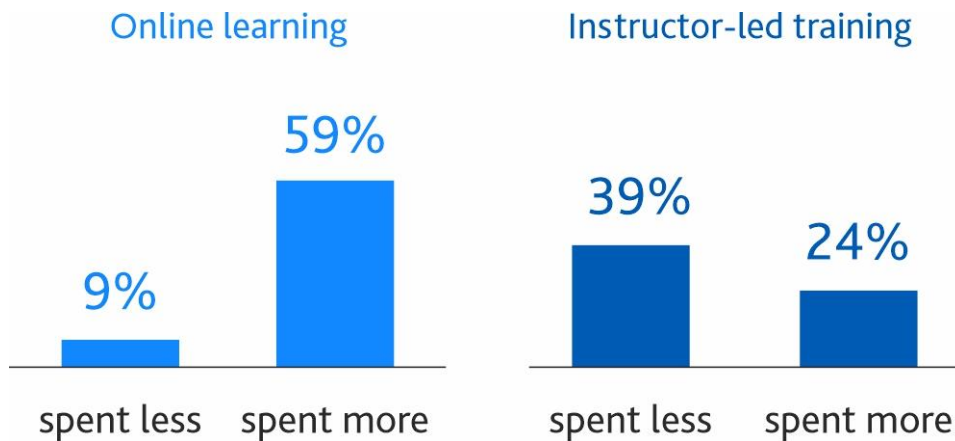
Source: LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report. 2,100 staff surveyed.

AI & Learning

Did You Know?

35%+

of Amazon's conversions are powered by its AI recommendation engine.
Source: McKinsey

Sean McPheat – Skillshub

84%
**of global business organisations
believe that AI will give them
a competitive advantage.**

(Source: Statista)

**In 2017, Netflix saved
$1 billion by using
machine learning.**

(Source: Forbes)

Learning Management v Learning Experience

By 2021, at least 50% of all LMS customers will be
planning to replace systems that lack the ability to
personalize and contextualize both learning content
and also the learning medium or channel.

**VENTANA
RESEARCH**   Steve Goldberg, VP & Research Director

You can **download** all of this research from our website at Skillshub Personal Learning Journey Statistics

It's Time To Make Your Move

No matter where you are starting off from on your journey, I hope this white paper has been useful to you.

You need to **anticipate the immediate and future needs of your learners** and couple with those the latest technology and their learning habits to create a memorable learning experience for them. It will not only pay dividends for them but also for your company, as they will become more effective in their role.

I'll leave you with an idea that I've already mentioned:

> "
> **The objective of learning is not learning.**
> **The objective of learning is performance improvement.**

I hope that sticks with you, because that's what personal learning journeys are all about.

They are about **supporting your people** at their moment of need and providing them with a personalised learning experience that will be unique to them. I wish you all the very best in your L&D endeavours, and you know where my team and I are if you need anything.

All the best,

Sean

Sean McPheat - CEO

Part of The MTD Training Group

If you're looking for a **learning experience platform and/or content**, we can help.

Skillshub is a **modern-day learning experience platform** that grows with you.

No matter where you are starting from, Skillshub will be able to support you and your learners.

Not only is our LXP one of the **easiest to use**, you'll also be able to **create personal learning journeys** at the drop of a hat, matching the needs of your people to the **thousands of learning and digital assets** that are loaded onto the platform.

If you're looking for **engaging content** for your current system, we can help you with that as well.

We can **support you** in any of the following ways…

Please **contact us today** for a **FREE trial** or **demo** or to **discuss your requirements** in more detail with one of our team.

Contact

Web: https://www.skillshub.com

Email: info@skillshub.com

Phone: 02476 998 101

Learning Just Got Personal!

It Also Got A Lot More Effective Too

As learning and development specialists **we're all looking for the magic bullet** where our people will embed what they have learned and for it to make an impact on performance.

That's easier said than done as most learning solutions are not tailored to the individual needs of our learners and what their preferences are.

The outcome of this is that the **learning doesn't stick** and it doesn't get implemented back in the workplace.

Creating personal learning journeys **removes the sheep dip approach** from the equation. It's an approach that is unique to each individual with a very high level of personalisation.

This book covers how to create these journeys and why they are so important to the world of learning and development.

WITH THE HELP OF THIS BOOK YOU WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Create personal learning journeys no matter where you are starting from
- Understand how to create blended journeys with online and offline methods
- Offer staff development "in the flow of work" and in their moment of need
- Understand how artificial intelligence is and will become a game changer in L&D
- Appreciate why you need to move away from learning management systems and instead start to use learning experience platforms
- Understand how curated content, social content and third party content can be used to help your people when they need it the most

About The Author – Sean McPheat

Sean is considered a thought leader on modern day learning and development. He has been featured on CNN, ITV, BBC and has over 300+ media credits to his name.