Continuous Learning and Development

A Guide for L&D

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ModernWorkplaceLearning.com

Contents

This book contains four elements

Introduction to Modern Workplace Learning

The Diversity of Workplace Learning

What is workplace learning?

Let's start by asking the question: **what is learning?** The dictionary definition is …

> *"the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught"*

For many people, however it is the "being taught" aspect that they focus on – for that is how they have been conditioned to think they learn – having spent many years of their life in a classroom with a teacher. So it is inevitable that organizations focus on training as the main way to enable people's learning in the workplace, since this approach has evolved from the education system. And that, too, is how many managers believe their people learn at work – by undertaking training. Hence, they see the Training Department as having total responsibility for workplace learning. In other words, if they have a perceived learning problem, they generally go straight to the Training Department to ask them to create, deliver and manage the training process for them.

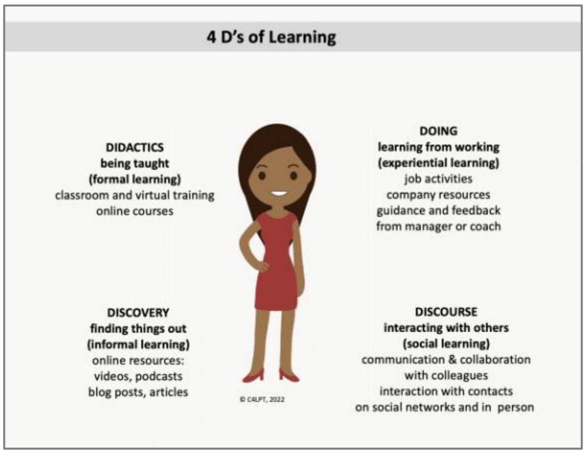
Training is (mostly) a highly directed approach to learning; it involves telling people what, how and when to learn – and making sure they do it by tracking their activity to monitor learning outcomes. Although we have seen an evolution in the way that training is delivered in the workplace (primarily through the use of technology), it is still, essentially, about managing that same training process. Training Departments started by providing classroom training, where people were taken away from their day job in order to train them in scheduled events – in a separate training room. And, although this approach still continues in many organizations today, others have automated the process through online courses (aka e-learning) so that individuals no longer need to travel to training but can take online courses at their desktops.

But workplace learning is much more than just participating in a series of training events (in the classroom or online) or self-study, but continuously learning in a number of diverse – yet interconnected – ways. What are they?

4 D's of Learning

For the last 14 years I have been carrying out a top tools for learning survey, and this has revealed not just the most popular tools for learning, but also some interesting features about how and why people learn today, in particular it is clear that people learn in 4 main ways that I call the **4 D's of Learning**.

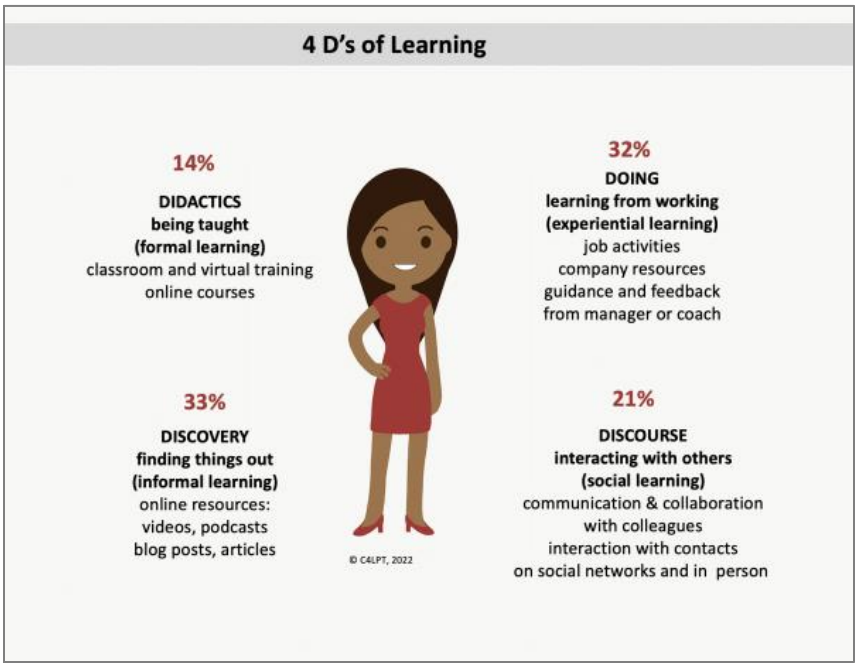
- They learn through **DISCOVERY** – that is by finding things out themselves (mostly on the Web) through searching or serendipitous browsing. We might also refer to this as **Informal (or Personal) learning**
- They learn through **DISCOURSE** – that is by interacting with others (whether it be in their professional social networks (like Twitter or LinkedIn) or with their work colleagues. We can refer to that as **Social learning.**
- They learn from **DOING the day job** and from their everyday work experiences. We might refer to that as **Experiential learning.**
- They learn through **DIDACTICS** – being taught or trained – what we usually refer to as **Formal Learning.**



This graphic (to the right) shows how the 4 D's of Learning applies to how individuals learn at work – and some of the activities associated with each of them.

So, does an individual learn in equal measure from each of the 4 D's of Learning, and if not where does most learning take place?

The graphic below shows the results of our survey of how much (in terms of average percentages) people learn (at work) from each of the 4 D's of Learning.



The table below provides a breakdown by age.

		% of respondents	7%	27%	29%	29%	9%
		age	<30	30-39	40-49	50-59	>60
DISCOVERY (finding things out for oneself)	33%		29%	30%	33%	36%	**40%**
DOING (the day job) (daily work experiences)	32%		**34%**	33%	32%	30%	23%
DISCOURSE (interacting with others)	21%		20%	22%	21%	20%	18%
DIDACTICS (being trained or taught)	14%		**17%**	15%	14%	14%	**19%**

There are a few points to be made here:

ONE – Clearly, everyone learns in different ways at different times, but overall there does seem to be a pattern emerging that shows that learning at work ***mostly*** takes place through **DISCOVERY** and **DOING (the day job).** However, we can see a few interesting differences

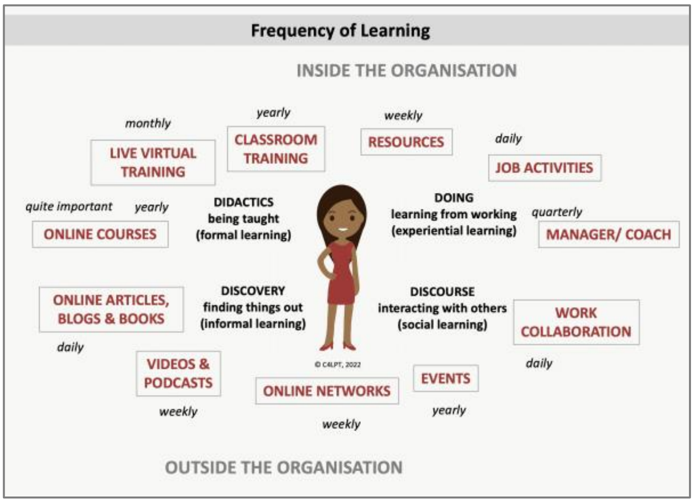
- the **youngest** employees consider they learn slightly more (than the average) from **DOING the day job** than **DISCOVERY** whilst this pattern gradually reverses as employees **get older**
- the **youngest** and the **oldest** employees consider they learn slightly more than the average from **DIDACTICS**

TWO – Essentially **86%** of what people learn comes from non-training activities – and yet it is the **14%** where L&D's focus lies.

THREE – Learning in the modern workplace is no longer about learning solely from internal activities and events, people learn both from **inside** the organisation and **outside** the organisation.

Frequency and value of learning

When it comes to the **frequency of learning**, our survey results suggest that the activities that fall into the **DISCOVERY, DOING** and **DISCOURSE** categories take place much more frequently (ie daily or weekly) whilst **DIDACTICAL** activities take place far less frequently.



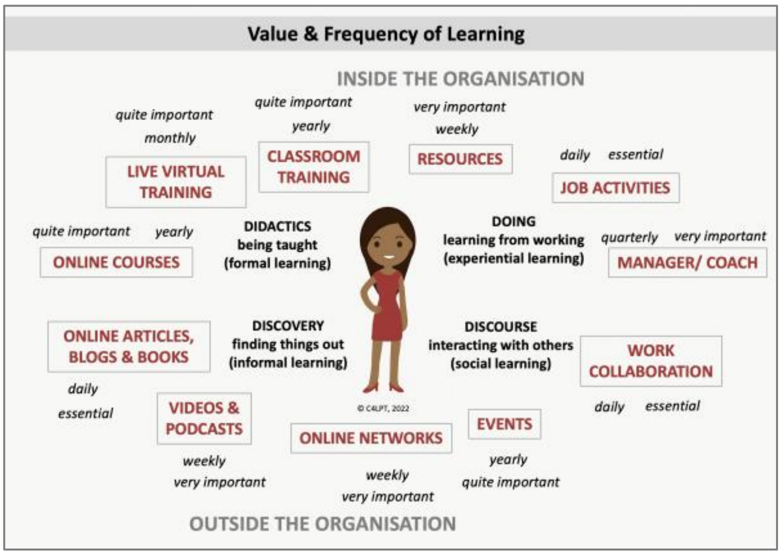
A number of features have emerged from the survey:

- **Reading** is the most frequent daily learning activity for those over 40 years of age, whilst for those under 40 it is **watching videos and listening to podcasts.**
- Those in their 30s are most likely to have a **mentor** and work with them on a quarterly basis
- The most popular frequency for **online courses** is a quarterly for those in their 30s and 40s, whilst it drops to half-yearly/yearly for those in their 50s and to less often than yearly for those in their 60s.

When it comes to the value of learning activities, our survey results show that for modern workers:

- **the most valued ways** to learn for work are the experiences and activities that happen as part of daily work (**DOING**), through interaction with people (**DISCOURSE**) as well as the use of informal web content (**DISCOVERY**).
- whilst the **least valued ways** to learn at and for work are the traditional learning activities – classroom training and online courses (aka e-learning) (**DIDACTICS**)

The graphic below shows how the **frequency** of learning has a high correlation with the **value** placed on it.



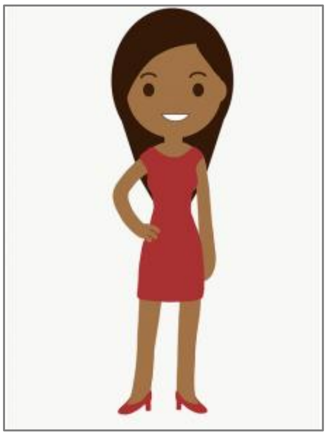
DIDACTICS is therefore the least frequent **and** the least valued way of learning – and yet the role of the L&D function mostly focuses entirely on this approach to learning.

It is therefore very clear that there is a need for a new approach to workplace learning. It is not enough just to digitise the training experience, it requires a new organisational learning culture or mindset about workplace learning. I call this Modern Workplace Learning (MWL)

MWL – a new approach to workplace learning

ONE: Learning is a VERB not a NOUN!

“Learning” is not a product or commodity – which means you **CAN’T** design, deliver or manage learning. You **CAN**, of course, design and deliver training and manage access to training or use of some content, like a course – but training and the use of content/course is only one aspect of the way we learn.



This is not just a case of semantics or being pedantic; euphemisms really don’t help.

In fact the mis-use of the word “learning” doesn’t just cause confusion, it also perpetuates the idea that “learning” is ***only*** something that can be put into someone’s head (in some sort of formal, designed, “packaged” way), when we have seen that ***most*** “learning” happens in **informal** and **non-designed ways**, as people use the Web or carry out their daily work. This latter type of “learning” is just as important, in fact, as has been shown is considered much more valuable than the former.

A modern culture of organisational learning needs to recognise that

- learning can be **intentional or planned** (ie we set out out with the intention of learning something) and happen **accidentally, serendipitously or in other unplanned** ways as a by-product of another activity (like doing some work activity, interacting with colleagues or just browsing the Web)
- learning can take place both **in** and **out of the workflow** – in other words whilst doing your job as well as in a separate place or time from the day job.

In other words, whereas traditionally we think of “learning” as an intentional/planned learning activity that takes place outside the flow of work (e.g. in a training room or classroom), in the modern workplace we need to have a much broader definition and understanding of how and where we learn.

TWO: Shouldn’t we talk about the “modern worker” rather than the “modern learner”?

In a similar way, we need to be careful of the use of the word “learner” as this also reinforces traditional thinking about learning as a planned, intentional activity. Marc Rosenberg[1] explains what’s wrong with calling them learners?

> *“Because that’s not who they really are! CEOs don’t refer to their employees as learners. Customers don’t call their sales reps learners (and sales reps don’t call their customers learners). Front-line supervisors don’t gather their people together and begin meetings with “I want to thank all you learners for coming.”*

The primary role of an employee is a “worker” – they go to work to work – unlike a student who goes to school or college to learn and therefore their primary role is a “learner”. Hence in the context of the today’s workplace it is more appropriate should refer to them as **modern workers** or even just individuals.

THREE: Learning is more than training; so L&D’s role is more than designing and delivering training

Learning in the modern workplace is much more than training! So, Modern Workplace Learning is much more than Modern Training!

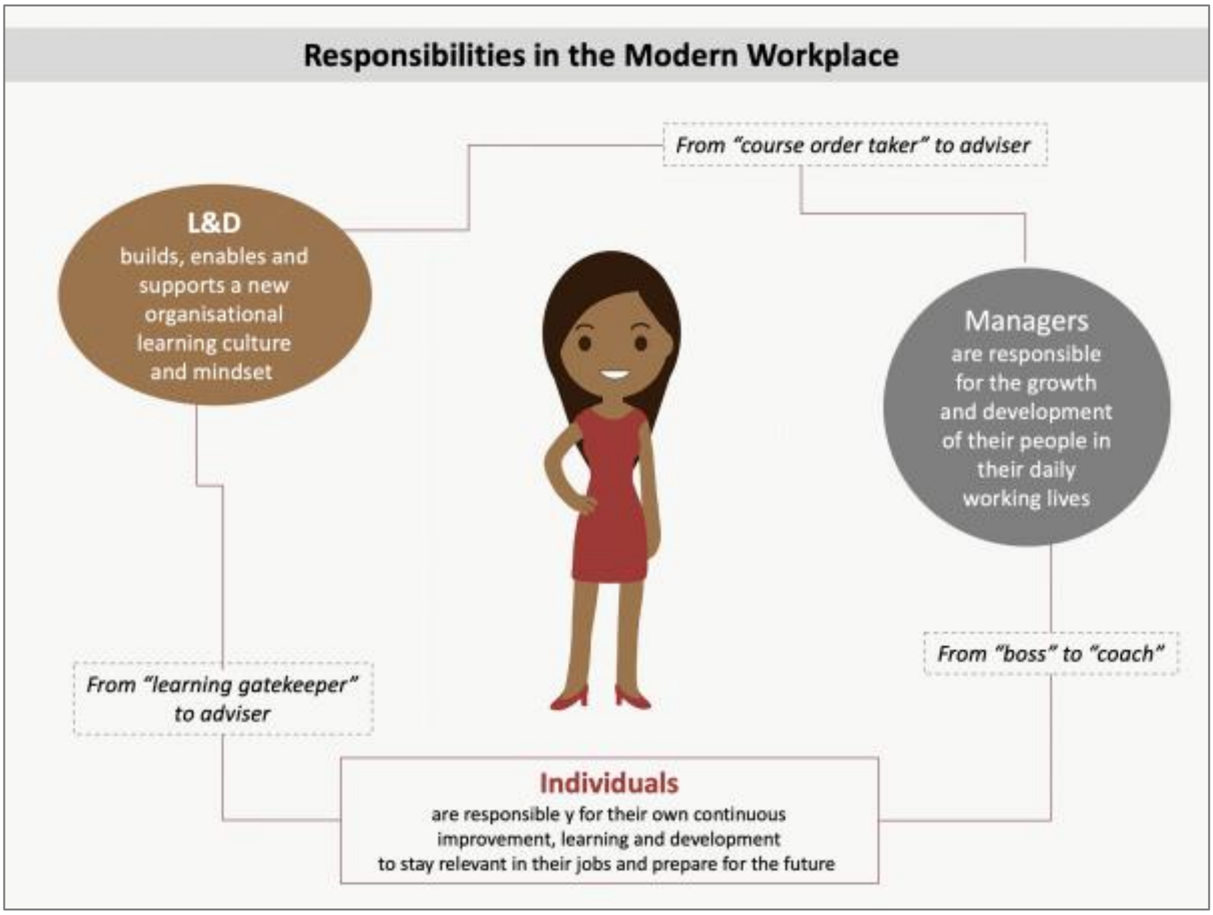
In the past the traditional role of an organisational L&D team was the creation of training or courses. Although some L&D teams have broadened their work into creating (short) resources and others have moved into curation – essentially the role is still mainly about creation and curation. However, most leave it up to managers to support the development of their team members, and are also not very much concerned with the other (learning) experiences that individuls have, if they have not directed them.

MWL, however, is centered around each individual and his/her learning and development needs in order to support and enhance their job performance now and in the future.

[1] *Marc my words: Don’t call them learners*: http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/1763/marc-my-words-dont-call-them-learners

MWL – new roles and responsibilities

Learning in the modern workplace is everyone's responsibility – not just L&D's - but the manager's and the individuals' themselves. However, the roles and responsibilities will overlap as illustrated on this diagram below – and explained below.



INDIVIDUALS will need to become more self-sufficient and self-reliant. This includes trying to solve their own performance problems – rather than waiting to be spoon-fed everything they need to do their daily job. They will need to take (more) responsibility for their own continuous self-improvement, learning and development to stay relevant in their jobs.

They will also need to recognise that they learn every day through problem solving, experimentation, working with others, by asking questions, talking to experts, learning from one's mistakes, and so on. Every day is a learning experience. In summary, it is individuals who lie at the centre of organisational learning and development

MANAGERS will need to take (much more) responsibility for the growth and development of their people in their daily working lives – and not just pass this off to their L&D department. It means valuing non-training ways of learning, adopting modern learning practices themselves, and encouraging the sharing of knowledge and experiences in their teams.

L&D's role will no longer be just designing, delivering and managing training but enabling and supporting learning in all these ways. After all they can no longer provide and manage everything everyone needs to learn to do their job and prepare them and the organisation for the future. Their work will need to be more about enabling and supporting a continuous learning culture and mindset in the organisation.

In the modern workplace L&D will no longer have sole responsibility for learning at work. Consequently they will need to form a new relationship with the business.

(1) A new relationship with managers

L&D needs to move away from being a "course order taker" – simply taking instructions for training or courses from managers. This situation has arisen since managers tend to see solutions to work problems as courses, but courses are often not the best solution, as Ron Carucci points out in *When companies should invest in training their employees — and when they shouldn't*.

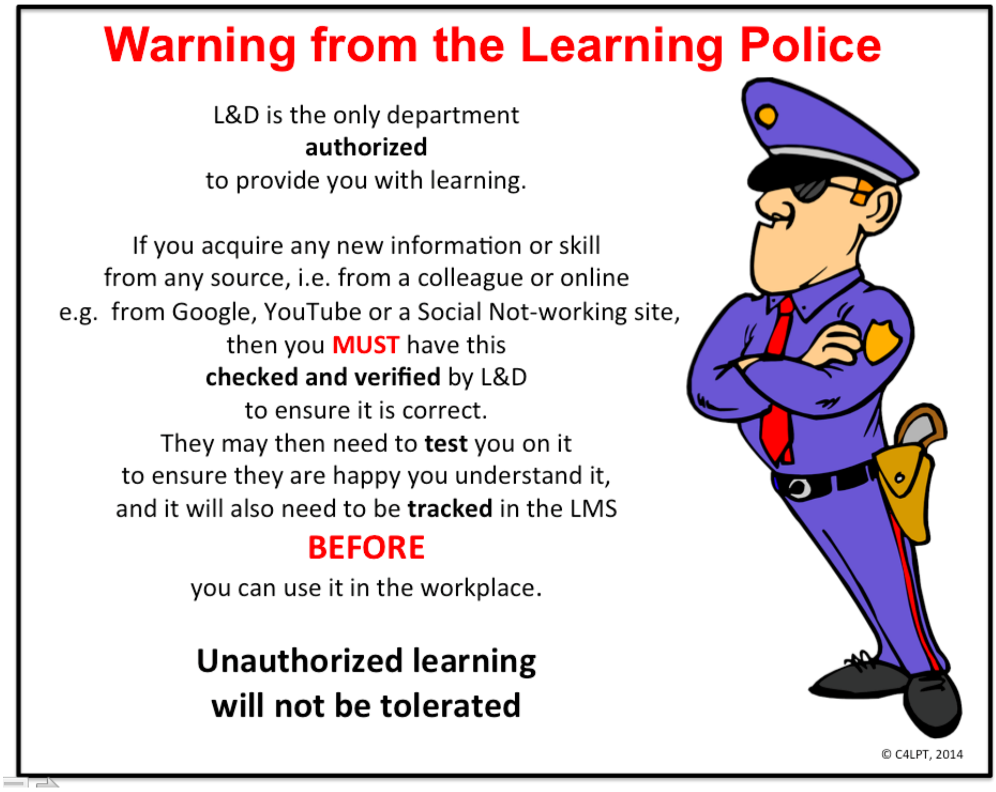
> *"Training is useful at times but often fails, especially when it is used to address problems that it can't actually solve … Many well-intended leaders view training as a panacea to obvious learning opportunities or behavioral problems."*

Training has to be a valid and appropriate response to a need. So if L&D continues to act as "course order takers", nothing will change. L&D therefore need to work with managers as a **consultant, partner** or **advisor.**

The key to continuous learning lies with managers, so this will involve helping managers adopt a new management style that is not focused on simply directing people to do their job and making sure they do it, but growing and developing their team.

(2) A new relationship with individuals

L&D needs to move away from being the **"learning gatekeeper"** where they control access to all learning in the workplace, and from the **"learning police"** where they enforce the process, as this tongue-in-cheek graphic highlights!



Rather, L&D professionals need to foster self-sufficient modern workers who are not reliant on being spoon-fed everything they need to do their job, but enabling and supporting their learning in all its ways – at, for or through work.

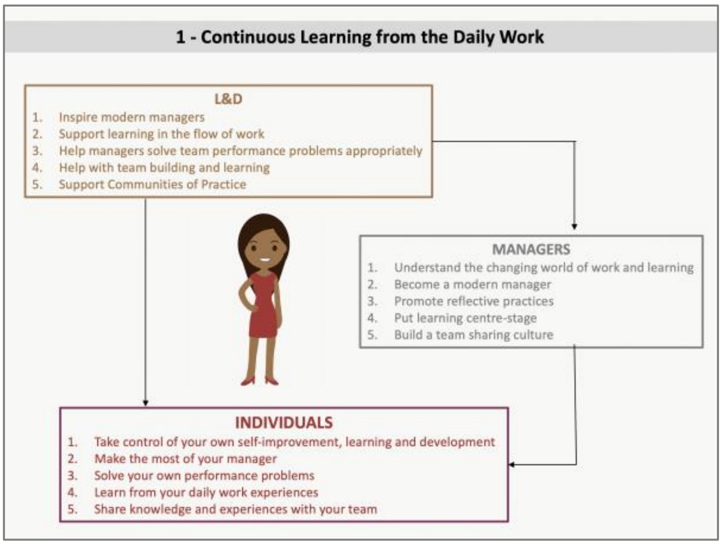
Continuous learning in the modern workplace

When it comes to continuous learning in the modern workplace, this essentially means two things:

1 Continuously learning from the daily work
2 Continuous self-development

Here is a brief summary of what this means for the individual, their manager and L&D

1 – Continuously Learning from the Daily Work



The workplace is a vibrant learning environment, but even when work takes place remotely this can still be the case. However, **INDIVIDUALS** will need to think differently about how they can extract the learning from daily work. In order to thrive in today's hybrid workplace, they will need to become more self-sufficient and self-reliant. This includes trying to solve their own performance problems, and managing their manager – also known as managing up!

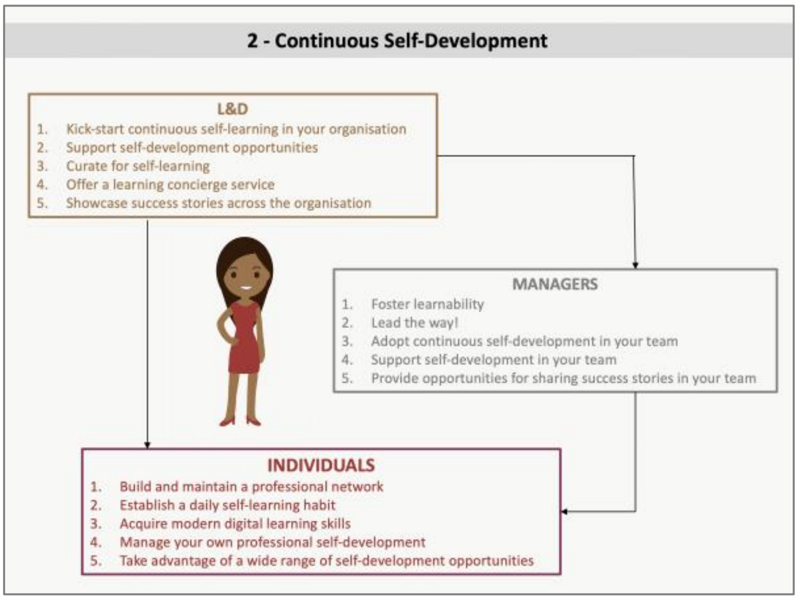
MANAGERS will also need to understand that in the modern workplace their role is more of a coach than a boss, and they are there to provide an environment conducive to continuous learning by fostering flexibility and freedom in the workplace as well as adopting a growth mindset. This will certainly be a new way of working for many managers who are used to simply direct their people, so a key aspect of the work of the **L&D** will be to inspire and support modern managers. This won't mean putting them on a management course but taking time to sit with them and consider a number of issues about what motivates today's workers and how they can help them to grow and develop and how they might support their new role

When it comes to learning from the daily work, this is something that is not always apparent to individuals. And yet, we know it happens in many different, subtle ways during the working day. However, as Dewey tells us "*We do not learn from experience … we learn from reflecting on experience."* So, in order to become more aware of their daily learning experiences, workers will need to take some time to reflect on what they have done each day. Of course, this needs to be encouraged and supported by **MANAGERS**.

And, when it comes to learning in the flow of work – that is when they need to solve performance problems or remind themselves how to undertake a task or activity, **INDIVIDUALS** will need to have access to range of performance support mechanisms (e.g. content, people and tools) – and this is where **L&D** can provide valuable support.

INDIVIDUALS should be encouraged to ask for help and advice from their work colleagues as well as share their own knowledge and experiences with their team. Building a knowledge sharing is a key aspect of work today and something that **MANAGERS** will need to understand, value and support. Although knowledge sharing doesn't require any social tools to take place, social technologies (like Microsoft Teams, Yammer and Slack) can make the process of sharing much easier. Although many teams are, undoubtedly, now making greater use of their online social platforms for remote work, managers need to recognise that these very same platforms can be used to share knowledge and experiences within the team. **L&D** can help with team building events and activities

2 – Continuous Self-Development



When it comes to an **INDIVIDUAL'S** own continuous self-development, he or she will need to understand the economic imperative for doing this, and then be confident enough to adopt a plan of action that fits best with their own way of working (although this may need to fit in with their manager's and teams approach to self-development).

One option might be to establish a daily learning habit whereby they spend say 20-30 minutes doing something for themselves – learning something new. This won't just mean taking endless courses – but making good use of informal learning opportunities.As we saw earlier reading is the most frequent learning activity and is therefore one of the easiest ways to learn on daily basis – as is watching videos and listening podcasts. Another option might be to spend longer periods of time over a longer period to achieve a professional goal using more traditional self-development approaches.

Of course this means **MANAGERS** need to recognise the value and benefits of continuous self-learning and ideally provide some time for self-learning. It will also be important for managers to foster learnability. Learnability (or learning agility) is the capacity to keep learning and developing new skills and expertise, even if they are not obviously linked to one's current job. Learnability (or learning agility) is one of the key skills of the employee economy.

But it will also be important for **MANAGERS** to lead the way. This will mean showing their people how they are continuously learning for themselves but, more importantly what they are achieving because of it. And the same goes for L&D too – they will need to be role models for this new way of learning – it's not about do as I say but do as I do.

L&D might support this in a number of ways, e.g. by curating a range of learning opportunities of relevance to their people or by exposing individuals to the myriad opportunities open to them on the Web that they might not otherwise have been aware of, as well as help them acquire digital skills so they get the most out of their use of their Web. They can also provide a valuable role coordinating opportunities to share professional achievements across the organisation – so that individuals feel their achievements are valued.

L&D's new role, therefore is about helping the organisation adopt a new mindset, culture and approach to workplace learning – and supporting managers and their team as they do so.

About the Guides

There are 3 Guides to help everyone understand their new roles: **A Guide for Individuals**, **A Guide for Managers** and **A Guide for L&D**. Each Guide consists of a number of readings and tasks. In the table overleaf you can see how the tasks map across the three Guides.

Note: You are recommended to work through the **Guide for Individuals** and **A Guide for Managers** before **A Guide for L&D** – as this will give you the necessary context for the L&D tasks.

	A Guide for Individuals (50 Tasks)	A Guide for Managers (25 Tasks)	A Guide for L&D (25 Tasks)
PART ONE: CONTINUOUS LEARNING FROM THE DAILY WORK	A Take control of your own self-improvement at work (1-3) B Make the most of your manager (4-5) C Solve your own performance problems (6-8) D Learn from your your daily work experiences (9-11) E Share knowledge and experiences with your team (12-15)	F Understand the changing world of work and learning (1-4) G Become a modern manager (5-10) H Promote reflective practices (11) I Put learning centre stage (12) J Build a team sharing culture (13-15)	A Inspire modern managers (1-2) B Support learning in the flow of work (3-5) C Help managers solve team performance problems (6-9) D Help with team building and learning (10-12) E Support Communities of Practice (13-15)
PART TWO: CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT	F Build and maintain a professional network (16-21) G Establish a daily self-learning habit (22-30) H Acquire modern digital learning skills (31-36) I Manage your own professional self-development (37-43) J Take advantage of a wide range of self-development opportunities (44-50)	F Foster learnability (16-19) G Lead the way! (20-21) H Adopt a continuous self-development strategy n your team (22-23) I Support self-development in your team (24) J Provide opportunities for sharing success stories in your team (25)	F Kick start continuous self-learning in your organisation (16-17) G Support self-development initiatives (18-19) H Curate for self-learning (20-23) I Offer a learning concierge service (24) J Showcase success stories across the organisation (25)

A Guide for Individuals

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PART ONE: CONTINUOUS LEARNING FROM THE DAILY WORK

A: Take control of your own self-improvement at work

1 – Why take control of your own self-development?

Why should you take control of your own learning and development? Here are 3 good reasons:

1 – There's no longer such thing as a job for life; only a job for life, and as people are constantly moving around, we are now seeing the early stages of the so-called Freelance or Gig Economy. Some believe that the flexible nature of the modern workforce will likely see a 15-year-old today navigating a portfolio of 17 jobs in 5 different industries, but everyone is likely to be affected by it in some way.

2 – Knowledge and skills have a short shelf-life. It is frequently said that an individual's knowledge and skills will be out of date within 5 years, and a college degree will be obsolete before the loan is paid off. Intermittent education, training or self-study will not be enough, you will need to be learning continuously in order to survive and thrive in the new world of work. That doesn't mean continuously taking courses, but learning in many different ways.

3 – Organisations are now starting to recruit people who are not just competent to do a job, but can display "learning agility". This is the ability to keep themselves constantly up to date and focused on their own self-improvement and future development. The article, How to future-proof yourself at work explains

> *"Don't count on your employer to get you the right skills that'll help you keep your job or land the next one."*

It's therefore up to everyone to stay relevant, and prepare for the future, and in order to do that you will need to take responsibility for your own career development, for as the article, When it comes to career. it's up to every individual to stay relevant, states clearly:

> *"The workplace of today is changing, and workers' skill sets must keep pace with employers' expectations. However, who determines that expectation if your livelihood is dependent on some employer to make the right strategic moves.? They lose, and ultimately, you lose … For this reason, every one of us must have a career strategy, and that strategy should be guided by your industry's trajectory. You should be fine-tuned to the intricacies of your profession. You* have *to self-develop to stay relevant. Always remember that YOU are in charge of your career. Never get sucked into the "company knows best" approach to your career", get sucked into the "company knows best" approach to your career."*

Consequently everyone needs to take it upon themselves to self-improve and self-develop in this new and evolving world of work. In other words, everyone needs to be learning continuously not just for their current jobs - but for their future jobs. This means more than continuously taking training or studying courses, it includes discovering new things, keeping up to date with what is happening in your industry or profession as well as interacting with people inside and outside your organisation. It also means organising and managing your own professional development. In this Guide we'll be looking at all these ways for you to continuously learn and develop yourself.

TASK 1

What is the most important reason for **you** to take control of your your own self-improvement, learning and development?

2 – Become self-reliant and self-sufficient

The modern worker has very different views on the workplace; it's no longer a place to earn a living. Nowadays they are looking for a positive work environment and growth opportunities in a job. However, in order to thrive in the modern workplace, you will need to become self-reliant and self-sufficient and do much more for yourself.

- **Self-reliance** meanshaving confidence in and exercising your own powers or judgment.
- **Self-sufficiency** means having the ability and resources to take care of yourself without help. This is not about being a lone wolf or a maverick. It is about having the desire, the initiative and the ability to resolve anything that is within your sphere of responsibility.

There are two aspects to being self-reliant and self-sufficient:

1 – Self-reliance in your current job – This is about taking actions yourself to self-improve. It means

- recognising your own strengths and weaknesses – and how and where you might improve
- making decisions for yourself about what you need to do to self-improve – rather than be told what you need to do and learn
- getting the most out of your daily work so that it becomes a meaningful experience – and making sure you get the most from your manager, your work colleagues and others.
- reflecting on what your have learned from the day's events – both in your day job as well as in any planned organisational learning activities (ie organised training or self-organised learning)
- dealing with your own learning and performance problems in the ways that suit you best – but also asking for help when your need it
- sharing your experiences with others – so that they can benefit from them too.

2 – Career self-reliance – This is about the ability to stay ahead of the curve, which will enable your to move seamlessly to the next career opportunity. It means

- learning something new every day – not just from your daily work but from planned learning activities
- keeping yourself up to date with what is happening in your industry or profession – not just through traditional conferences but in other ways, e.g. through a continuous access to new ideas and thinking as well as through interactions with people
- taking responsibility for your own professional self-development – and identifying the ways, methods and channels that you find most comfortable and therefore enjoyable.

We'll be covering all these aspects of self-learning and self-development in this Guide.

When it comes to **recognising your own strengths and weaknesses – and how and where you might improve**, it might be useful to ask yourself the following three questions:

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses in the workplace?
2. What are some of the internal and external factors that influence your work? How might you take (more) control over them?
3. What have you done so far to try and improve your own work performance or develop your skills and knowledge further?

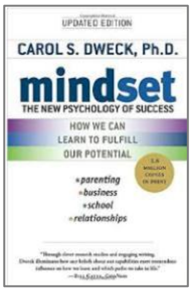
Being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses will help you know where to start and find some direction for your own self-improvement. It will also help you prepare for feedback that you receive from others.

The article, How self-reliance builds your self-confidence, explains how you can develop your own self-reliance.

TASK 2

How self-reliant and self-sufficient are you? What more do you need to do?

3 – Develop a growth mindset



What is a "growth mindset"? This is a term coined by Carol Dweck, a Stanford researcher and the author of the book, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.

In a recent Harvard Business Review article, What having a growth mindset actually means, Carol summarizes her research on "growth" versus "fixed" mindsets as follows:

"Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others) have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts)."

There is an animated explainer available on YouTube, called *Growth mindset vs Fixed mindset*.

So how can you develop a growth mindset yourself? Saga Briggs provides 25 ways to develop a growth mindset. These are itemised below, but you are strongly recommended to read the full article to understand them.

1. Acknowledge and embrace imperfections
2. View challenges as opportunities
3. Try different learning tactics
4. Follow the research on brain plasticity
5. Replace the word "failing" with the word "learning"
6. Stop seeking approval
7. Value the process over the end result
8. Cultivate a sense of purpose
9. Celebrate growth with others
10. Emphasise growth over speed
11. Reward actions, not traits
12. Redefine "genius"
13. Portray criticism as positive
14. Dissassociate improvement from failure
15. Provide regular opportunities for reflection
16. Place effort before talent.
17. Highlight the relationship between learning and "brain training".
18. Cultivate grit
19. Abandon the image.
20. Use the word "yet"
21. Learn from other people's mistakes.
22. Make a new goal for every goal accomplished.
23. Take risks in the company of others.
24. Think realistically about time and effort
25. Take ownership

TASK 3

Of the 25 ways to develop a growth mindset listed above, how many do you currently believe/follow? Which of the ways listed above do you think you need to focus on to develop (or enhance) a growth mindset in yourself?

B: Make the most of your manager

4 - Make the most of your manager

There has been a lot written for managers on how to manage their employees, but very little on how employees might manage their managers! This is sometimes referred to as "managing up" and is an important way for you to have an effective relationship with your manager that will reap rewards. After all, it is a two-way street; it is not just about managers getting the most out of their employees, but employees getting the most out of their managers.

You can have influence over how good your relationship with your manager is, it just takes just a little thought and effort to get started. Here is some guidance on how to build a healthy relationship with your manager so that you gain continuous feedback and support from them to help you grow and develop.

In an article, *5 ways to get the most out of your boss* (no longer online), Mark Smith offered the following tips for managing up. These have been abbreviated here:

- **Modus Operandi –** Put simply, individuals need to understand the motivations and drivers of their manager. If they understand what exactly their manager is trying to achieve, they can work with him/her to solve their problems.
- **Behavour** – Individuals should take some time to work out exactly how their manager likes to work. Many times, this is described as the "culture of a team" or the "style of a manager". As the new person in a team or someone trying to adapt, its best to "swallow their pride" and not attempt to change the culture or style but instead learn to work within expectations.
- **Time –** Value a manager's time. Everyone is under pressure, and time is the most expensive of commodities. Schedule a regular meeting and hold him or her to it.
- **Emotion –** Don't mistake building a relationship with becoming friends. Remember also that the manager will sometimes disagree and respond emotionally, so don't hold a grudge or let this fester. Move on.
- **Learn –** Learn from your manager.

In [Managing up: How to get the most from your boss](), Jackie Fitzgerald says that employees can influence how well their relationship with their manager works, so they can and should take ownership of it. Jackie also provides some tips (once again abbreviated) for successfully managing up.

- **Start talking.** Trust and the ability to communicate effectively are the foundations of good relationships, so make sure you are clear on what you boss expects from you, and seek regular feedback on how you are doing.
- **Set out your needs clearly.** Don't wait for the manager to initiate a conversation. When you ask for help or information, you should be clear about what you need, why, and by when.
- **Think about context.** It is important to think carefully about what you boss needs to know about you, your challenges, and your successes. Is it relevant and of interest to a boss, right now? Can it wait?
- **Work with, not against, your boss.** You and your boss should work toward a mutually beneficial relationship. A good manager provides guidance, wisdom, experience, and support. Your role is to learn, do a good job, and support him or her.

So how can you build or develop a good relationship with your manager? Evie Harrison offers 8 questions you should ask your boss to get ahead.

1. What is the most important milestone you hope to achieve in your life?
2. What keeps you awake at night?
3. How did you get to where you are today?
4. What should I know about your work style management?
5. What do you think of the employees who have previously worked for you?
6. What's one thing I can do differently?
7. Why did you hire me?
8. Want to grab lunch?

The questions you might choose to ask will depend upon where your are in the relationship. The article itself provides more context for each question and how it will help you to understand your manager.

Managing up is a win-win for everyone says Melissa Lamson.

> *"The stronger your relationship with your direct manager, the more they will be willing, even eager, to advocate on your behalf and for your team. This will build morale, increase productivity, and help attract and retain new hires. Managing up is indeed a win-win for everyone."*

One way of managing up is to regularly ask your boss for feedback and guidance – rather than just waiting it for it be given – we'll look at that on the next page.

TASK 4

How good is YOUR working relationship with your own manager? Could you improve it?

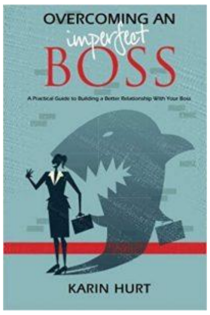
Try starting with the questions Evie Harrison suggests in her article linked above. How did you get on?

5 – Ask your manager for feedback

Getting useful feedback from a manager can be a fast route to growth and improved performance. So, when should you request feedback?

Well, it's not just something you just ask for in you annual review, but something that should take place on a regular basis, as Jessica Mattern explains in The 5 best times and ways to ask for feedback.

> *"There are small moments that occur every day when it's appropriate to ask for feedback, or when your boss will openly give feedback. This is ongoing feedback and the more often this happens, the more opportunities you have to grow in your career. It's an indication of a healthy working environment."*



When it comes to the questions you can ask, Jessica, in the above article, cites Karin Hurt, the author of Overcoming an Imperfect Boss, who recommends the following questions.

She points out it is important to ask both open-ended questions and specific questions, so you can get a true and thorough understanding of your boss's outlook.

- What specifically can I do to better support our team's mission?
- If your boss were to give me one piece of advice what would that be?
- Who should I be working with more closely?
- Specifically, what do I need to work on to be ready for (insert the job or assignment you're most interested in here)?

Karin Hurt also advises going in with an open mind and accepting feedback graciously.

> *"Whatever you do, say thank you, and don't get defensive," she says. "You don't have to agree with them, or necessarily follow their advice. But asking for feedback and then reacting poorly will do more harm than good."*

According to Peter Brugman, in the article, How to ask for feedback that will actually help you, here's how to increase your chances of hearing the truth.

- Be clear that you want honest feedback
- Focus on the future
- Probe more deeply
- Listen without judgment
- Write down what they say

But what should you do with the feedback you get? Just forget it? No, there is a good case for writing down the positive feedback, as it will help to keep you motivated at work. We'll consider that more a little bit later in this Guide. It will then be useful when you're looking for a promotion.

TASK 5

Find an opportunity to get some feedback from your manager. Why not start with the simple question: If you were to give me one piece of advice what would that be? How did you get on?

C: Solve your own performance problems

6 – Use Google effectively

Self-reliance starts with you trying to solve your own performance problems – rather than expecting a solution to be provided to you.

What happens if you come across a problem whist doing your job? You probably do one of the following things:

1. You ask a colleague for help.
2. You look for an answer (a job aid or other document) on the intranet.
3. You Google it!

Google is a powerful search engine; often described as the only learning tool you will ever need! But are you using Google optimally? Honing your Google search skills will be of more value than being provided with more and more performance support resources. Afer all, as the old adage goes:

> *"Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."*

At the Google website, everyone knows that that all they need to do is type in a word or phrase and press the **Google Search** button and Google returns a page of results that shows many resources that match a search word or phrase. But are you getting too many results? If so, you need some power searching skills to reduce your results to an effective number. Here are 5 basic things to note:

1. **Search string**: A group of search terms is called a string. Build a search string one term at a time to narrow down the search. Just leave a space between the terms.
2. **Google ignores** common or "stop" words, i.e. does **not** use them in a search. These include: the, a/an, in, where, how. To force them in to the search string, add + before each one.
3. **Phrase string:** When looking for an exact phrase or quote, not just the occurrence of the words entered, use quotation marks around the words, e.g. "greenhouse effect".
4. **Ranking:** Google favours pages with words in phrases, close together and in the order typed. Compare the top ranking results for searches in Google for these sets of keywords: grass snake, snake grass, snake in the grass, snake +in +the grass, "snake in the grass"
5. **Operators:** adding a minus sign (-) can narrow the search even further by eliminating words. For example:
   - a search for New York but not City would mean entering: New York –City
   - adding OR will look for one or more terms or strings, e.g. Kent OR Sussex, "global warming" OR "greenhouse effect".

Remember that creating a search string that uses some combination of specific terms, a phrase string and a negative term can reduce the number of your search results from a few million to fewer than one hundred! So, it's best to build one or two terms at a time, adding terms to your string as needed based on your results.

So how can you acquire proficient Google skills? One easy way might to print a copy of the Google Cheat Sheet (from the Google Guide).

TASK 6

Try using the Google power searching tips listed above to reduce the number of results to a Google question. Which tip has helped you to improve your search results?

7 – Make use of some Google tricks

Here are 6 more clever things you can do with Google

1 – Use Google to get definitions

Use the format **define:word**, e.g. **define:learning**

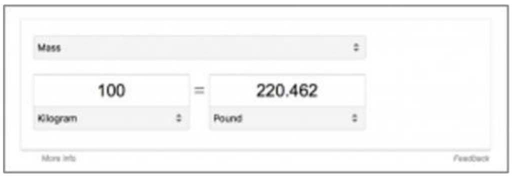
Google will come back with a list of definitions as well as links to articles that define not only the word you're looking for but the context in which it occurs.

2 – Use Google as a calculator

Google supports the mathematical functions + – * and /

So, for instance, if you type in, e.g. **5*3** into the search box, it will present the answer in a calculator.

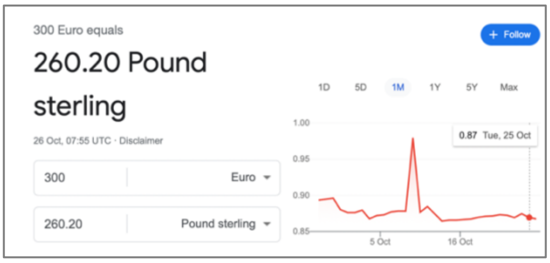
3 – Use Google for conversions



Google can convert imperial measurements to metric and vice versa

Use a format like **100 lbs in kg**

4 – Use Google for currency conversions



In the same way, you can use Google to convert currency at today's rates.

e.g. **300 eur in GBP**

5 – Use Google to get the weather forecast

Type **weather** to get the forecast where you are or type in **weather place** for the weather forecast at a specific location

e.g. **weather London**

6 – Ask Google a question

You can ask Google a question, like **When was Beethoven born?** and it will provide the answer.

If you find these Google search tips helpful, and want to find out more you could try out the interactive tutorial at Google Guide. If you prefer a reference guide, you can download the 2-page Cheat Sheet as a PDF and/or the 2-page Calculator Cheat Sheet as a PDF.

TASK 7

Which of these Google tricks will be useful for you?

8 – Validate the resources you find

One of the concerns about the Web is that there is lot of inaccurate or misleading information on it, so you will need to consider how necessary and important it is for you to make use of **reliable** sources.

Some might say that if they you use a resource that helps you solve a problem – like how to carry out a software task – then it doesn't really matter where it comes from. But others would say that if the information in the resource is to be used in a report or relied upon for some decision-making then it will be imperative to verify it. So how can you do that?

There is a lot of advice that you can take from educational libraries who advise students on such matters. Berkeley Library, for instance, suggests considering the following:

- **Authority** – Who is the author? What is their point of view?
- **Purpose –** Why was the source created? Who is the intended audience?
- **Publication and format –** Where was it published? In what medium?
- **Relevance –** How is it relevant to your research? What is its scope?
- **Date of publication** – When was it written? Has it been updated?
- **Documentation –** Did they cite their sources? Who did they cite?

But there is another way of validating sources through the **authentication** and **triangulation** of the content.

> "*The process of verifying social media data thus requires a two-step process: the authentication of the source as reliable and the triangulation of the content as valid. If we can authenticate the source and find it trustworthy, this may be sufficient to trust the content and mark is a verified depending on context. If source authentication is difficult to ascertain, then we need to triangulate the content itself.*"

In a very useful blog post, How to verify social media content: some tips and tricks on information forensics, Patrick Meier unpacks these two processes of authentication and triangulation, so take a look at it, to find out more.

TASK 8

How has applying the information you have read here helped to verify the reliability and validity of the sources you use?

D : Learn from your daily work experiences

9 – Reflect on your daily work

What did you learn at work today? Or yesterday?

When most people are asked this question, they think back to something they were taught or something they studied, but in fact most of what people learn in the workplace happens as they do their job, as this quote from The Multi-generational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities report explains:

> *"Formal education and formal training contribute only a small amount of what is learned at work. Most learning is informal, unplanned and, with perhaps a few exceptions, not clearly specified by one's organisation. Workplace learning results from the challenges and demands of one's work. Dealing with these demands involves both working (e.g. solving problems, dealing with one's colleagues, supervisors and clients) and learning (e.g. learning from one's experience, through observation, in discussions with one's colleagues, and from coaching and mentoring.*
>
> *Learning processes occur within the job itself (e.g. problem solving, experiment, working with others) through learning activities within the learning process itself (e.g. asking questions, talking to experts, learning from one's mistakes, getting feedback) and from sources outside one's job (e.g. being supervised, coached or mentored, taking courses, observing more experienced co-workers."*

Whereas planned formal learning is a visible activity – unplanned informal learning is largely invisible! Sometimes you might have a significant "aha" moment, when something you hear or read clicks into place, and you realise you have learned something quite fundamental. Other times you might be aware that you have found out something in what you have read or heard – so store it away for use later.

Sometimes, you may not even be aware you have learned something; it may just happen – subconsciously – as a part of doing another activity, and it may only be later that you realise you know something or can do something. I

In other words, we learn constantly from everything we do at work – it's just a matter of recognising the "learning moments" or "learning experiences" in your day.

One way to become more aware of what you are learning from your daily work is for you to spend some time reflecting on the day and what you have gained from your daily work experiences. Reflection is important, because as John Dewey pointed out:

> *"We do not learn from experience … we learn from reflecting on experience."*

Mark Chussil believes that it is through reflection that we can ensure mistakes don't go to waste.

> *"Don't waste the mistakes you're probably already making. Take extra time to follow them back through their roots, which may go deeper than you think."*

In fact, reflection is a well-known practice for many professionals, as Wikipedia explains

> *"Reflective practice is an important tool in practice-based professional learning settings where people learn from their own professional experiences, rather than from formal learning or knowledge transfer. It may be the most important source of personal professional development and improvement."*

In her article, 3 ways to exercise reflective practice, Angie Mohn writes

> *"Reflective practice is an essential part of developing new skills. On an even deeper level, it grows your capacity to respond to challenges, helps you make better decisions, manage your emotions, and cope with stressful situations."*

It is therefore a good idea for everyone, whatever their position in the organisation, to make time for reflection in their day. For example, the article, *Make time for some self-reflection* (no longer available) in the Manager's Digest makes this point.

> *"Self-reflection is one of the most powerful and useful tactics to help you progress, sustain momentum, reflect on successes and manage pressures. Working in high-pressured environments and constantly working towards goals or completion of projects is when taking some time-out for self-reflection can reap rewards."*

There are other good reasons to spend time reflecting on the day, e.g.

- Reflection on what has been learned makes the experience more productive.
- Reflection builds one's confidence in the ability to achieve a goal (i.e. self-efficacy), which in turn translates into higher rates of learning.
- Reflection can give a new perspective on the day.

TASK 9

As you go about your daily work today, try to be more aware of what you are doing and learning.

Then, at the end of the day think back over what you've done, and reflect on any work experiences or "learning moments" you've had – and what you've gained from them.

10 – Set up a work diary

Although many people do take time to think about their day, Charles Jennings points out that true reflective practice requires more than that.

"Reflective practice itself doesn't 'just happen'. It is a learned process. It requires some degree of self-awareness and the ability to critically evaluate experiences, actions and results."

For this reason, Nancy Adler recommends keeping a work diary or journal.

"Gaining access to your own insight isn't difficult; you simply need to commit to reflecting on a daily basis. Based on research (my own and others') and many years of work with global business leaders as a consultant and international management professor, I recommend the simple act of regularly writing in a journal."

1 – How will you set up your work diary?

A diary is a very private thing – so it needs to be done in the way that best suits you. It could be set up in a digital or non-digital format, for example using:

- **a paper notebook**, diary or moleskin
- **a digital notebook** like like *Evernote* or *OneNote* – these are commonplace tools in many organisations, so might abe n easy option
- **a word processing tool** like *Word* or *Google Docs* – these are also commonplace desktop tools in many organisations
- **a journaling app**, like *DayOne*, *Penzu* or *Momento* – these apps are ideal if you want too use your phone (or tablet) for your diary – as it would certainly make it very easy to make notes on the fly

2 – How will you use your work diary to record your reflections?

Once again, the best way is, of course, the one that suits you best. Here are 3 approaches; you can read more about them by following the links.

(A)
(B) Spend 30 seconds jotting down any significant points from an experience immediately after it takes place

In The 30 second habit with a life-long impact, Robyn Scott shared some advice from someone she knew:

"He was in his early teens, about to start senior school, when his grandfather took him aside and told him the following: Immediately after every lecture, meeting, or any significant experience, take 30 seconds — no more, no less — to write down the most important points. If you always do just this, said his grandfather, and even if you only do this, with no other revision, you will be okay."

Robyn has been doing this for some time, and reports

- It's not note-taking
- It's hard work
- Detail is a trap
- You must act quickly
- You learn to listen better, and ask better questions
- You're able to help others more
- It gets easier and more valuable

(B) Spend 5 minutes at the end of the day writing a "Today I Learned (TIL)" list.

In the article, Keep a "Today I Learned" log of all the useful stuff you learn, Thorin Klosowski explains that over on Hacker News, a user, jbranchaud, started tracking what he learned over the course of a year.

> *"The idea here is pretty simple. At the end of the day, take five minutes or so and write down a quick note about one useful thing you learned that day.*
>
> *You can keep these short, it's not about critical thinking, it's just about noting something useful."*

(C) Spend 10 minutes at the end of the day reflecting on your workday

TIME's Management Tip of the Day explains this strategy, in Keep a work diary.

> *"What's the best way to use the last 10 minutes of your day? Take this short time to reflect on your workday: what invigorated you, what frustrated you, and what you plan to do next. Then write down 100 words about it.*
>
> *Depending on what you choose to write, the exercise may serve to motivate you as you keep a record of your "small wins", incremental steps toward meaningful goals.*
>
> *Or it may help you to plan if you use it as a tool for drafting your next steps. You may find that writing fuels your personal growth.*
>
> *The diary can also be a way of working through your difficult events, helping you gain new perspectives on them. On frustrating days, it can serve as a reminder that you've made it through days that (at the time) seemed even worse"*

TASK 10

Which will be the best tool and approach to keep a work journal that will suit **your** work life?

If you already use a reflective work diary, can you improve the way you use it to record your reflections on your daily work experiences.

11 – Make use of your daily reflections

Once you establish a habit of recording your reflections of your daily work experiences, what do you then do with them to ensure that you learn from?

Here are some ideas:

1 – For personal growth and self-awareness

Some people will want to to keep their reflections **private**, and then regularly review them to see their own progress and identify their own future needs. Just flicking back through the pages of notes can trigger memories and further thoughts about how you have been progressing.

2 – Share reflections/learning on key work experience with your team

There may, however, be reflections that others could benefit from too, so rather than keep everything to yourself, you might like to share key experiences with your team as well as any actions that have resulted from your reflections on those experiences. This might be done in one or more ways:

- in a meeting, where manager asks, “What did you learn today?
- on a collaboration platform as part of “working out loud” (see **Task 14**)

3 – To focus more formally on your future self-development

One way to ensure that reflection is seen as a valuable business activity, is for you to summarise your monthly reflections and talk them through with you manager.

There might then be a coaching discussion around what you might take forward to learn from, or what you are going to do differently as a result of the reflection.

It will also help to focus where you might want to take it, identifying potential gaps that can be seen as opportunities for development going forward.

If “reflection :meetings like this are not already in place, then this is where managing up comes in (as shown in **Task 4**) – and you might instigate them.

The key thing about reflection is that it should not become a wasted activity, the purpose is to help you grow and develop as a result of reflecting on your everyday working experiences.

TASK 11

How would you see yourself using the reflections you have recorded?

E: Share knowledge and experiences with your team

12 – Establish sharing as part of your daily routine

> *"Many of the things we need to know to be successful – to innovate, collaborate, solve problems, and identify new opportunities – aren't learned simply through schooling, training, or personal experience. Especially for today's knowledge-based work, much of what we need to know we learn from others' experiences, through what's called vicarious learning."*
> (Source: Christopher Myers, Is Your Company Encouraging Employees to Share What They Know?)

When team members work together closely, share reflections and resources on a regular basis, they continuously learn from each other. This, in fact, is where the real social learning happens. However, although sharing sounds like the simplest thing in the world, it is fraught with difficulties.

There is an art to sharing; so, in the next few Tasks we are going to look at this more closely. We'll start here with **WHY** you should share with your team. The New York Times' Psychology of Sharing 2011 report showed that people share for five reasons:

1. **To bring valuable and entertaining content to one another –** 94% of respondents carefully consider how the information they share will be useful to the recipient.
2. **To define themselves to others** – 68% of respondents said they share to give people a better sense of who they are and what they care about.
3. **To grow and nourish our relationships** –78% of respondents said they share information online because it enables them to stay connected to people they may not otherwise stay in touch with.
4. **For self-fulfillment –** 69% share information because it allows them to feel more involved in the world.
5. **To get the word out about causes they care about** – 84% said they share because it is a way to support causes or issues they care about.

Despite all this, some people are still very reluctant to share. Is this you?

- Do you think what you have to say is so obvious to others it's not worth saying?
- Do you not feel close enough to the other people in your group to share with them?
- Do you still believe that "knowledge is power", and that by sharing your knowledge you are losing some of that power?

Knowledge is not power; Sharing knowledge is power. Knowledge sharing takes advantage of an organisation's most valuable asset – the collective expertise of its employees, as Peter Senge explains in The Fifth Discipline:

> *"Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them … Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes. It is about "working together", "helping each other" and "collaboration".*

Julian Stodd expressed it well in There's no point in knowledge if you don't share it.

> *"In the social age, knowledge itself is no longer power: your ability to synthesise meaning out of multiple sources, your ability to add value, to reinvent yourself and effect change, your generosity of time and expertise, these are the things that add value. These are the things that make you influential, that give you authority around a subject. It's not about what you know and hide away, it's about the conversations that you get into and how generous you are (and how willing you are to learn)."*

TASK 12

Why do you (like to) share? Can you commit to sharing with your team on a regular basis?

13 – Add value to what you share

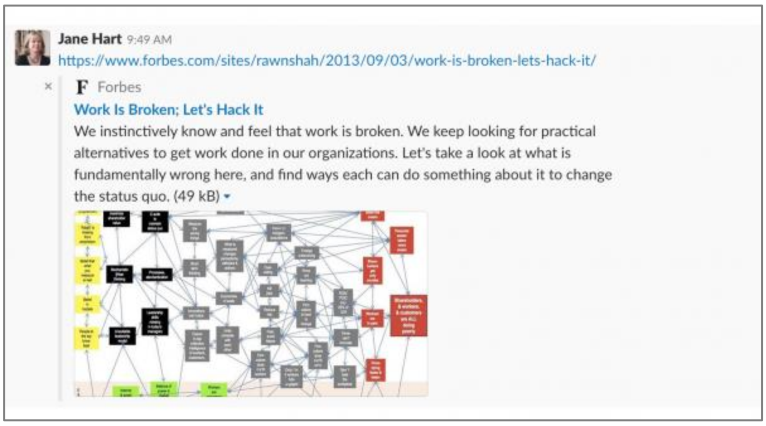
When it comes to **WHAT** to share at work, clearly in a work context, the main things you would expect to share are things like work experiences as well as links to useful internal documents and web resources.

But depending on your team and/or organisational culture, it may not just be work-related information that is encouraged but also news about you're your outside interests and activities – as this can help tocreate a "human workplace".

But one thing is important to bear in mind, that it is not about sharing for sharing's sake. This can too easily lead to over-sharing, which only produces "noise" rather than value; so it is far better to share less frequently and focus on **adding value**.

One of the easiest ways for you to start sharing on a team collaboration platform is to provide links to any resources you have come across on the Web. But it might be worth emphasising that you need to keep your posts concise. The recommendation would be to keep a post as short as possible, and link to any document or resource where the fuller information can be found.

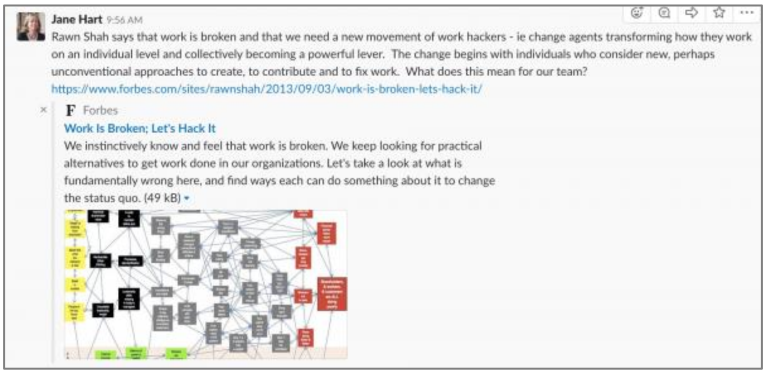
But it is also important to reiterate that simply sharing a link to an internal or external resource may not be very useful in itself – even though it may include an image and an extract – as shown below.



Others will want to have some idea if it is really worth their time to take a look at the resource – since there is only so much that they can review. So here are some of the things you might do to add value to any link you share.

- Make it relevant
- Explain why it is important
- Put it in context
- Synthesise the content/ extract the important stuff

Here is an example of how to add value to the post above. In this case it briefly synthesises the content and asks a question about its relevance for the team.



Here are some other ways of adding value that might help to inspire others to take a look at a shared link or resource:

- Write a post that features the piece's most interesting fact or statement.
- If a resource provides some advice, then maybe add the word "Tip!" at the beginning to make it stand out.
- Include images with the text as this provides more interest in the post
- Embed the original resource wherever possible into the post so that it is easily viewable – although once again this will depend on the social platform you are using how easy that is.

You also need to share with **discernment.** That means selecting the right people to share with, as Harold Jarche explains in The discerning mind.

> *"A shotgun approach to knowledge sharing does not work. Showing discernment in knowledge sharing helps to build trust. Becoming a trusted node in your communities and networks, with a good signal to noise ratio, ensures that your voice will be heard."*

TASK 13

Next time you find a useful web resource, think about **who** you might share it with, and how you might **add value** to it when you share.

14 – Work out loud

What does it mean to work out loud? Mark Foden explains ithe concept as follows:

"If we share an office or workplace with colleagues; we overhear, we ask quick questions, we sense mood, we have a feel for what others are up to. This can help teams to be hugely more effective; but, nowadays, many of us are part of lots of teams, groups, communities; we spend very little time with our colleagues; and we don't get these benefits of physical proximity. With large groups, even if everyone is on the same site, it can be very hard to get this feeling. Working out loud *is a way of working (enabled by collaborative software) that generates a sense of connectedness in large and/or distributed groups."*

John Stepper, the author of Working Out Loud: For a better career and life, explains that

"Working Out Loud starts with making your work visible in such a way that it might help others. When you do that – when you work in a more open, connected way – you can build a purposeful network that makes you more effective and provides access to more opportunities."

Working out loud looks different in different organisations, groups and situations. Ideally, it shouldn't just be a dump of your daily to-do list or a summary of your achievements. It might be:

- sharing thinking around a new project you are working on – and asking for input or additional thinking
- sharing a draft of a document you are working on – and asking for comments
- sharing a difficult experience you had with a customer or client – and asking for ideas to deal with it
- sharing a story that reinforces a strategic decision

So what is the benefit to **you** of working out loud? In How Working Out Loud helps us learn, Jane Bozarth explains it very succinctly as follows:

"Articulating our decisions helps us learn. Articulating them to others helps more … Helping others better articulate decisions helps them learn—and if we're paying attention, we might learn something, too."

In a LinkedIn post, Sheila Babnis, Head of Strategic Innovation for Roche/Genentech, writes about her own working out loud journey. This is how she sees it.

"Working out loud is more than just sharing information. I see it as a key to building and strengthening relationships, helping to identify the right connections and having the right conversations that open the door to co-creation. My team has cut our meeting time by about 50% as a result."

So how do you build a habit of working out loud? Simon Terry suggests checking into your group space for 5-15 minutes at 3 trigger points throughout the day, as follows:

- First coffee/tea of the day – Describe one moment in your day ahead
- About to leave for lunch – Like or answer a posting
- Leaving for the day – Recognise one person or team achievement

One thing is clear, working out loud should not be seen as an extra onerous activity on top of your usual daily workload – but an important integral part of your daily work.

TASK 14

Can you start to build a habit of working out loud with your team? Where will you work out loud?

15 – Ask and answer questions

One of the things that people like about online social networks is that they can ask each other questions and get quick responses to problems they may have, e.g.

- they might want help with the use of some software or for advice on some aspect of their work
- they might be looking for some information on a potential client company or for a project they are working on

The article, *5 ways in getting the most out of your Enterprise Social Networks collaboration platform* (no longer online) pointed out that an enterprise collaboration platform is the perfect place for communication:

> *"Need for social connection is part of the human nature. Enterprise social networks collaboration platforms can quickly help foster these relationships. Encourage positive conversations and work with your colleagues over collaboration questions. Using simple questions like which book are you currently reading, what was your first assignment in your first job, what was your good deed of the day, what do you think of the progress we've made, or want to work together on this project?"*

Let's look more closely at asking questions. Jelena Simonovic, in How to ask better questions at work, makes a good point.

> *"Let's be honest: asking questions at work can be really uncomfortable. We don't want to be seen as incompetent, inattentive, or even too eager. Some of us would rather avoid having to ask these questions, period.*
>
> *However, you can rarely have a productive day at work without at least a few questions directed at your coworkers and supervisors. So, whether we like it or not, this is a skill we can all polish."*

So what are better questions? She explains

> *"Asking "better questions" at the workplace involves asking the right questions at the right time, with the right intention …*
>
> *"Better" questions are those that, depending on the context, effectively accomplish one or more of these intended purposes in a manner that is timely and situation-appropriate.*

This is a very interesting article on asking better questions, and includes what the benefits are, as well as 9 tips to ask better questions, as well as exercises to help you ask better questions.

The 9 tips to ask better questions are summarised below

1. Before you ask, find out if the question hasn't already been answered
2. Conquer your fear of asking questions
3. First ask questions to yourself
4. Make use of technology to help facilitate question-asking
5. Ask authentic questions
6. Avoid loaded and leading questions
7. Ask open-ended questions
8. Listen closely to the answers
9. When people say you've failed, ask: "How can I improve?"

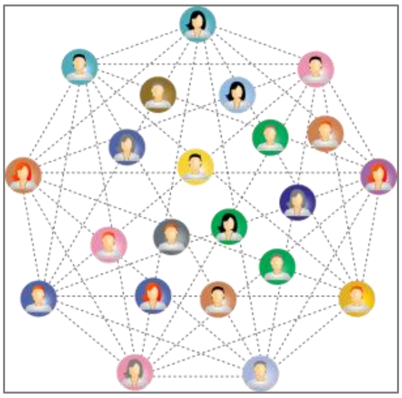
TASK 15

Take a closer look at Jelena's article. Have you learned anything about asking questions that you will use in the future?

PART TWO: CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

F: Build and maintain a professional network

16 – What is a professional network and why do you need one?



One of the most valuable things you can do is to build a professional network, and then interact with the people in it on a regular basis. Although for many this has now become a commonplace activity, if you haven't yet built a professional network, then this page will explain why you should do so and how you can maintain it. If you already have a professional network, then it will help you to improve it.

What is a professional network?

A professional network is the people that you gather around yourself, with whom you interact, and from whom you derive knowledge and support. It is a collection of people who bring **you** value in your professional life, and from whom you learn on a continuous basis. Every individual's professional network will be quite different.

- It is **personal –** You decide who you want in your network and why and where you want to interact with them. You choose exactly the way and how much you engage with the people in your network. Although you won't necessarily know everyone in your network "personally", you will develop personal connections with them based on shared experiences.
- It is **professional** – Allthough your network is going to be focused on supporting your own professional interests and activities – learning from your connections will undoubtedly be an important outcome.
- It is a **network** – Although most interactions will likely take place in online social networking sites, at the heart of your network won't be a single platform, but rather the people in it – some of whom may well have different backgrounds to you. Since everybody's professional network will be unique to them, it's all about finding the right people to have around you.

Why have a professional network?

Many people still view networking as a trivial personal activity, but there is great professional value to be had in it, as Harold Jarche explains.

> *"In today's digital economy, you are only as good as your network… When work is learning, and learning is the work, organizations need to look at how good people are at actively engaging in learning networks. The network they bring may be much more important than the individual skills they have."*

Here are some other reasons why a professional network is important:

To support your current work: Many of the people in your network will be able to help you with questions or issues you might have – both practical as well as strategic. You will learn from their shared knowledge, ideas, insights and experiences, and in doing so, they will also be able to provide you with a broader perspective on your work today.

To keep up to date with what's happening in your industry or profession: A professional network is a key way to help you keep up to date with what's happening in your industry or profession. The people in your network may be able to help you keep ahead of the curve.

For professional self-development: Professional networking is an important aspect of continuous professional self-development. You learn by being constantly exposed to new ideas, thinking and experiences from your connections. In the modern era, that's worth a whole lot more!

As Glen Llopis explains in 7 reasons networking can be a professional development boot camp:

> *"Your career requires you to network and in today's marketplace you must be more active than ever. But networking requires planning. An approach that is strategic and measurable; that you can learn from each time you introduce yourself to a new crowd or reacquaint yourself with an old one. If you are strategic and view networking through an opportunity lens, it can serve as a powerful professional development boot camp experience."*

To advance your career: Once you are seen to be knowledgeable and taking advantage of all the ways to continuously improve and develop yourself, you will be in a stronger position for promotion in your caree

To find a new job: In The one skill that can save your career, JT O'Donnell share's Jeremy's story after he was laid off, and why a professional network was so important to him.

> *"Jobs come and go, but professional relationships last a career lifetime. If you don't network regularly, you are putting your career at risk. Layoffs and other unexpected career setbacks are common. How fast you get back on track will come down to your network. Jeremy's story has a happy ending because he laid the groundwork to ensure should something unexpected occur, he could tap into his network for help. Or, in his case, have them proactively come to him. Who wouldn't want that?"*

To find a new career: A professional network can play an important part in helping you to make a career change, especially when you don't know what you really want. In How to network In today's digital world, Varelie Croes – writing about a woman she knows – says

> *".. it took her over a year after leaving her job as a tax attorney to figure out what she wanted to do next. But by talking with lots of people, reading blogs about potential businesses and joining a group of other aspiring entrepreneurs, she slowly began to refine her ideas. The women in Croes' group were all ambitious entrepreneurs who offered candid feedback, pushed her outside her comfort zone and helped her navigate the startup world."*

TASK 16

Based on the information above, what do you think are (or would be) the benefits of establish a professional network for **you**?

17 – Who you should have in your network?

It is all too easy just to connect with as many people as you can, in the belief that the more people you have in your network, the more opportunities will open up. In reality, it's much more important to take some time to consider carefully who you actually want and need in your network. Here are 2 different strategies to think about the people you should have in your network:

One: In These are the most important people in your network at each stage of your career, Rich Bellis makes the following suggestions:

- **Entry-level:** Family connections and alumni groups
- **3-5 years in:** A professional recruiter and a former boss
- **Mid-career:** Colleagues who've moved to competitors
- **Senior level**: People you've previously managed

Two: In How to build a professional network you'll actually use, Kayla Matthews takes a more pragmatic view, and suggests that you classify your professional contacts into four different groups:

1. People you talk to regularly
2. Acquaintances you trust
3. People you want to know
4. Industry influencers

In the short-term, it makes more sense to build connections in your own industry. After all, these are the people who could theoretically help you tomorrow. But, that's not a good long-term strategy. Instead, you need to cultivate a network that is both deep and broad, because the breadth of your network will be what enables you to thrive in the long-term. In other words, what you need is a **diverse network**.

Michelle Martin puts it like this, in Why you need to diversify your networking circles:

> *"It's like living in a village, isolated from the rest of the world. You start to believe that everyone else thinks like you do. You forget (or don't realize) that people in other places are having different experiences, getting different information, accessing different resources. Anyone who has travelled to another country knows what I'm talking about."*

What you will find much more valuable is having a broader perspective on your work and career. It is important to have access to a diversity of opinions and expertise that we can draw upon, in order to prevent groupthink, or an "echo chamber" effect. So, surrounding yourself with a diverse group of smart and successful people will give you a greater global perspective, provide you with more interesting discussions, and ultimately help you to develop in ways that you didn't know you could. So try to avoid these networking mistakes (as explained in Networking your way to nowhere? 6 newbie mistakes you don't want to make.

1. The oldest person in your network is 25
2. The youngest person in your network is 65
3. Your contacts are in a different location than you
4. Your contacts are in a different industry than you
5. Your contacts are all in the same industry as you
6. Your network is Facebook – and Facebook only

TASK 17

So, what are some of the ways you could diversify your own network? How will you avoid these 6 mistakes?

18 – How many people should you have in your professional network?

Often people ask how many people they should have in their professional network, and there is a consequent tendency to focus on the number of connections one has. But bigger is not necessarily better in networking.

It isn't the size of your professional network that matters – especially if you want to have a diverse network – it is about the value that the people in it bring **you**; it's about having the right connections for you. In other words, the health of your network comes down to the quality of your connections, not the number of people you follow.

In It's not the size of your professional network, it's how you use it, Alex Devkar explains

> *"Our strong ties, i.e. our closest relationships, cluster in small groups of people that all know each other well. Consequently, it is our weak ties that create bridges to other social groups and give us access to a much broader world …*
>
> *Our weak ties have information or connections that could greatly help us (and vice versa), but we have no idea which ones are relevant right now. We're missing opportunities because we don't know who to talk to."*

But what is a manageable size for your professional network? Is there a limit to how many relationships you can effectively maintain?

In the 1990s, a British anthropologist Robin Dunbar suggested there was a cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one could maintain stable social relationships, that is relationships in which an individual knows who each person is and how each person relates to every other person. By using the average human brain size and extrapolating from the results of primates, Robin Dunbar proposed that humans can comfortably maintain only **150** stable relationships. This is known as Dunbar's number. Dunbar explained it as follows:

> *"the number of people you would not feel embarrassed about joining uninvited for a drink if you happened to bump into them in a bar".*

Other researchers, however, have put the number nearer to **250**.

Ken Makovsky, in Dunbar's number: a key to networking, agrees with Dunbar, and also provides a few ways to maximize your relationships and interactions. When it comes to the Internet, he says

> *"While it's extremely difficult to maintain hundreds of personal relationships, the internet has made the task a little bit easier. Sure, emails are not the same as handshakes — but they give us the ability to keep track of our relationships more efficiently."*

Of course, at the end of the day it is your network – and you can decide how many people you want to have in it! Everyone approaches their professional network differently. Some just want to listen to what their connections are talking about. Others want deeper relationships. Some are quite happy to share their own ideas or reflections and hope for some feedback. But bear in mind the energy and time investment required in maintaining a large network can place an undue burden both on your professional and personal life.

TASK 18

What do you think of aiming for a network of between 150-250 connections? Do you think that is that too many or too few?

19 – Where do you find people to connect with?

You don't have to build your network all at once! In fact, it should be a continuous process of adding people gradually to your network – and even removing people, if you think they are no longer bringing you value.

You could start building or expanding your network slowly – one person at a time; one day at a time. Chris Bailey calls this approach, the killer networking habit, and explains

> *"…. reach out to just one person every day. That doesn't mean doing something as big as grabbing a coffee with someone every day; it simply means investing in one relationship every day, even in a very simple way, like by sharing a valuable/interesting book, article, or idea with them.*
>
> *Every day, reach out to just one person. Whether you do it by email, telephone, text, or a LinkedIn message, it's no doubt a killer habit that will pay great dividends as time goes on. So simple."*

So how do you go about finding new people to connect with – other practitioners as well as industry thought leaders and influencers?

Perhaps the easiest strategy for expanding your network is to ask the people you respect which contacts of theirs they think you should connect with. People tend to know others like themselves.

But how do you best connect with industry leaders or influencers? Writing in The 2-year networking project that will give you MBA-level connections, John Levy says

> *"Getting an introduction or meeting with a high profile individual can be difficult, especially if you don't have a recommendation from their inner circle. You may have to go to several events to connect with them or someone in their network. Even worse, you may be going to the wrong types of events.*
>
> *Hint: If the event has "networking" in the title, it's probably not worth attending. Industry influencers already have strong networks and are unlikely to attend an event simply to meet people."*

Of course, public social networks have changed things considerably. Never before have people with knowledge, fame and power been so accessible to the public, as Kate Rocovolis writes in How to create a global professional network from your desk.

> *"Professional networking is no longer confined to meeting rooms and attending events. There are more opportunities than ever before to create a globally impactful career by growing your professional circle – and you can make it happen without leaving your desk."*

So, it is now very easy to follow well-known experts and industry influencers (on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook) where you'll get to hear about their new insights. But as Kate Rocovolis goes on to say

> *"In order to make the most of these global networking opportunities, I'm not suggesting just scrolling down the list of "People You May Know" on LinkedIn and clicking "Connect." I'm talking about making these initial connections and turning them into interactions and conversations that can help move your career forward."*

When it comes to finding people to connect with, don't overlook the power of **serendipity** – i.e. stumbling across someone by accident, as Samuel Edwards writes in the 7 Secrets of Master Modern Networkers.

> *"Master networkers don't limit themselves to specific "networking" events or social media "networks." To them, networking is something that happens all the time – and it's so ingrained in their lives that they don't have to think about it as a separate designated strategy anymore. They're open to meeting people everywhere – at different events, for sure, and online, but also as strangers on the street, or random passers-by. They don't pinpoint people to meet, either; they're up for a conversation with just about anyone."*

Using public social networks sites as a way to build your professional network has some significant advantages over in-person networking:

- You have access to a wider net of people than in local events.
- You can more easily research the people who might be useful to connect with. For instance, there are many published lists with recommendations of people to follow.
- You can make the same number of connections in a few months that traditional in-person networking would take you years to achieve.
- You can easily find out who your friends and colleagues are connected to – which might be useful in getting an introduction to someone.
- You might find it easier to connect with someone online (in a less formal setting) before you follow-up with them in person.

For many people, a social network is their first level of connectivity – they use social activity (posts, shares, likes, photos, etc.) as a way of getting to know people. Whilst others use social platforms as a way to build and develop a deeper relationship with those they have met in person.

Whilst some question the meaningfulness of connections made online – since they don't believe you can get the level of depth online that you can in-person – others believe that their online relationships are just as strong as if they were made "in the flesh".

For sure, there are differences in the social networking platforms that make them suitable for different types of relationship building, so in the next two Tasks we will take a closer look at Twitter and LinkedIn, their pros and cons, and how you can get the most out of them.

But a final note: A professional network won't remain static; it'll grow over time. But over time your priorities will change so the people you want to remain connected with might change too. Some connections may no longer provide you with the value they once did, and some might overwhelm you with the number of postings. So, it will be important to review your network on a regular basis and clear out those who are not providing you with value. You shouldn't feel bad about doing this; it is **your** network after all, so it must work for you.

TASK 19

Where do you currently do most of your networking – in person or online?

How will that change in the future?

20 – Use Twitter for professional networking

Pros and cons of Twitter

Pros	Cons
• It is a very easy place to start networking. • Tweets consists of short (280 character) bursts of information, which are very good for quick resource and ideas sharing. • You can easily follow anyone you like – take a look at their profile and tweets to get a feel for what they talk about. Those you follow don't have to reciprocate the relationship, if they don't want to, which is why there is a big difference between the numbers that people follow and are followed by – i.e. more followers that follows! • It's easy to see the people someone follows, which is useful if you are looking to extend your network. • You can tweet to someone personally, by starting your tweet with their @username (which might be visible to others), or send them a DM (direct message) which won't be visible by others.	• Conversation threading on Twitter is poor. Although you can see replies to a tweet, you can't easily see replies to replies. • Twitter is not that good for deep discussion – with only 280 characters to play with, you need to be very concise, and that can often lead to misinterpretation and mis-understandings. • It's difficult to keep up with tweets when you are not online, although some tweets are now offered to you in a ICYMI (In Case You Missed It) area.

Many people find Twitter a very useful networking tool, but an article in Sloan Review, How Twitter users can generate better ideas, went one step further.

> *"New research suggests that employees with a diverse Twitter network — one that exposes them to people and ideas they don't already know — tend to generate better ideas …*
>
> *The more diverse a person's social network, the more likely that person is to be innovative. A diverse network provides exposure to people from different fields who behave and think differently. Good ideas emerge when the new information received is combined with what a person already knows."*

Twitter Lists

One of the key features of Twitter is Twitter lists. Lists allow you to organize the people you're following into groups – including people you're not following. So you might want to set up different Twitter lists for people in your professional network in order to categorise the people in different ways.

Todd Greider, in 5 reasons every professional should use Twitter, explains the value of Twitter lists for professional networking.

> *"Twitter delivers a wealth of information directly to your fingertips. Individuals and brands share the stage competing for their voice to be heard. You can find information on virtually any topic spanning every industry. To get the most out of the platform, I started creating lists, which enabled me to filter specific areas of interest and group the people and information for greater efficiency.*
>
> *Over time, your lists will become your go-to sources for learning. In some cases, I use this as a replacement for subscribing to blogs. For example, my areas of interest are in learning and development (training), marketing, and financial services. I created list of financial planners, industry organizations, marketers, and training professionals."*

Tweetdeck

Now that you have created Twitter lists you may find it more difficult to keep up with your professional network using the default Web interface. So, it might be a good idea to use *TweetDeck* instead. This will let you manage not just your lists, but also your different Twitter accounts (if you have them) all in one place. With TweetDeck you can create a customised Twitter experience by building custom timelines in columns. This is a useful way to display the timelines of your lists as well as monitor notifications and mentions.

You can also filter each column by content, users and alerts. When you write your own tweets, you can also add an image or schedule it for some time in the future.

TweetDeck **Settings** provide further flexibility – including the ability to mute users and/or terms.

Want to find out more TweetDeck? Try Mashable's Beginner's Guide to TweetDeck.

Twitter hashtags

You can also use TweetDeck to monitor Twitter hashtags. These are keywords beginning with the character **#** which can be placed anywhere in a tweet. Hashtags are used to keep related tweets together on a subject, so, if you click on a hashtag, you will see the stream of all the recent tweets that have used that hashtag. Hashtags are also used

- at conferences and other events to allow people to discuss the event in a Twitter backchannel.
- to enable synchronous discussions on Twitter, known as live Twitter chats.

Tracking an appropriate hashtag stream is another good way to identify people who you might want to follow individually or add to your Twitter list(s). The best way to do this is to isolate the Twitter hashtag. If you are using TweetDeck. then you might set up a separate column for a specific hashtag stream – specially if it is one you are watching on a long-term basis.

TASK 20

Using the advice here, can you define (or re-define) your own strategy for professional networking with Twitter?

21 – Use LinkedIn for professional networking

Pros and cons of LinkedIn

Pros	Cons
• LinkedIn was set up specifically for professional networking. • It's very good for job searching, and for connecting with organizations. • You can now see the connections of your connections – which is useful way of finding people for your own network.	• LinkedIn takes more of an "old school" networking approach than Twitter. Although this format suits many, others are put off by it. • There can be a lot of activity on LinkedIn so to avoid being overwhelmed, although you can CONNECT with others, it is recommend you only FOLLOW the ones whose posts you really wish to read. Don't worry they won't be informed you have unfollowed them! • Many vendors are on LinkedIn, and many will want to connect with you in order to sell you something, so be aware of that.

So, think carefully about who you accept an invitation from, as explained in Should I accept that LinkedIn invitation?

> *"To use LinkedIn to its fullest potential, you need to tap its power as an introduction machine: an address book in which all the entries can see and connect with another, to create a mini-network with you and the things you share at the hub. But that introduction machine only works if you are selective about which connections you initiate and accept."*

In fact, Justin Bariso provides 11 questions to ask before accepting a LinkedIn invitation.

Of course, once again, it is about deciding if you want to have lots of connections or fewer relationships – or a mix of both.

LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn groups are an under-utilised resource for accessing industry experts. Members of industry groups often have useful discussions relating to up and coming trends.

Joining a group might seem overwhelming, and you may need to spend some time working through the various discussion topics to find those that are of real interest to you, but you are likely to find some real gems there. You may find you need to join a number of groups at first, but once you have identified the ones that bring you the most value, that's where you should spend most of your time – rather than spreading yourself too thinly across groups where you are not getting any value.

Here are 5 ways to use LinkedIn Groups to build influential connections.

1. Identify the best group opportunities
2. Target the most popular discussions in each group
3. Start your own discussion
4. Follow up and follow through
5. Start your own group

TASK 21

Using the advice here, can you define (or re-define) your own strategy for professional networking with LinkedIn?

G: Establish a daily self-learning habit

22 – What does it mean to have a daily self-learning habit?

One way to ensure you are continuously learning is to establish a daily self-learning habit. This means setting aside some time each day to learn something new. You might think of it like a daily "learning workout" – just like any athlete who carries out a daily training regime to stay fit.

What's more a little bit of learning every day, all adds up. So how much time should you spend on some daily learning.

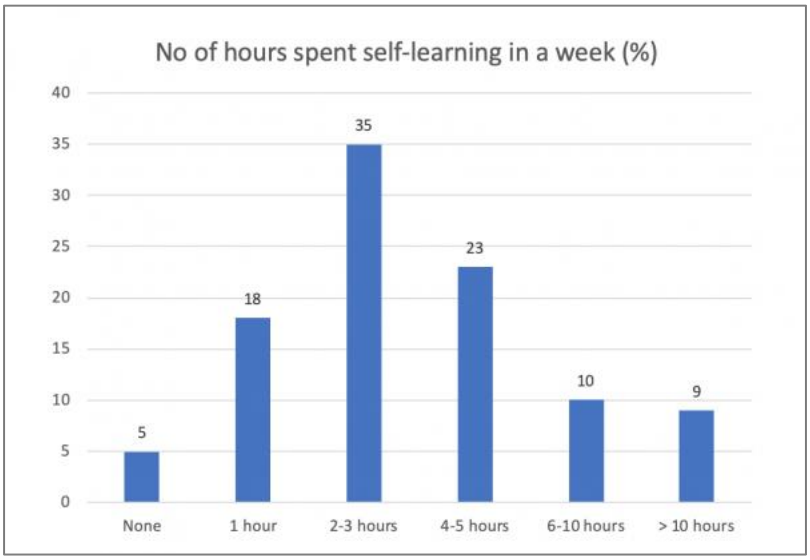
In Why constant learners all embrace the 5-hour rule, Michael Simmons explains how Ben Franklin spent **1 hour** every day on some deliberate learning.

> *"Throughout Ben Franklin's adult life, he consistently invested roughly an hour a day in deliberate learning. I call this Franklin's five-hour rule: one hour a day on every weekday …*
>
> *Franklin's five-hour rule reflects the very simple idea that, over time, the smartest and most successful people are the ones who are constant and deliberate learners."*

But 1 hour a day may be a lot for many people. Zoe B, at Lifehack, for instance, recommends spending **30 minutes** every day learning. She refers to this as The Half Hour Theory, and writes

> *"I love it because it's actually pretty easy to integrate into your life. The general idea is that you do one small thing every day for half an hour and then as time goes by you gradually improve. Sounds obvious, doesn't it?"*

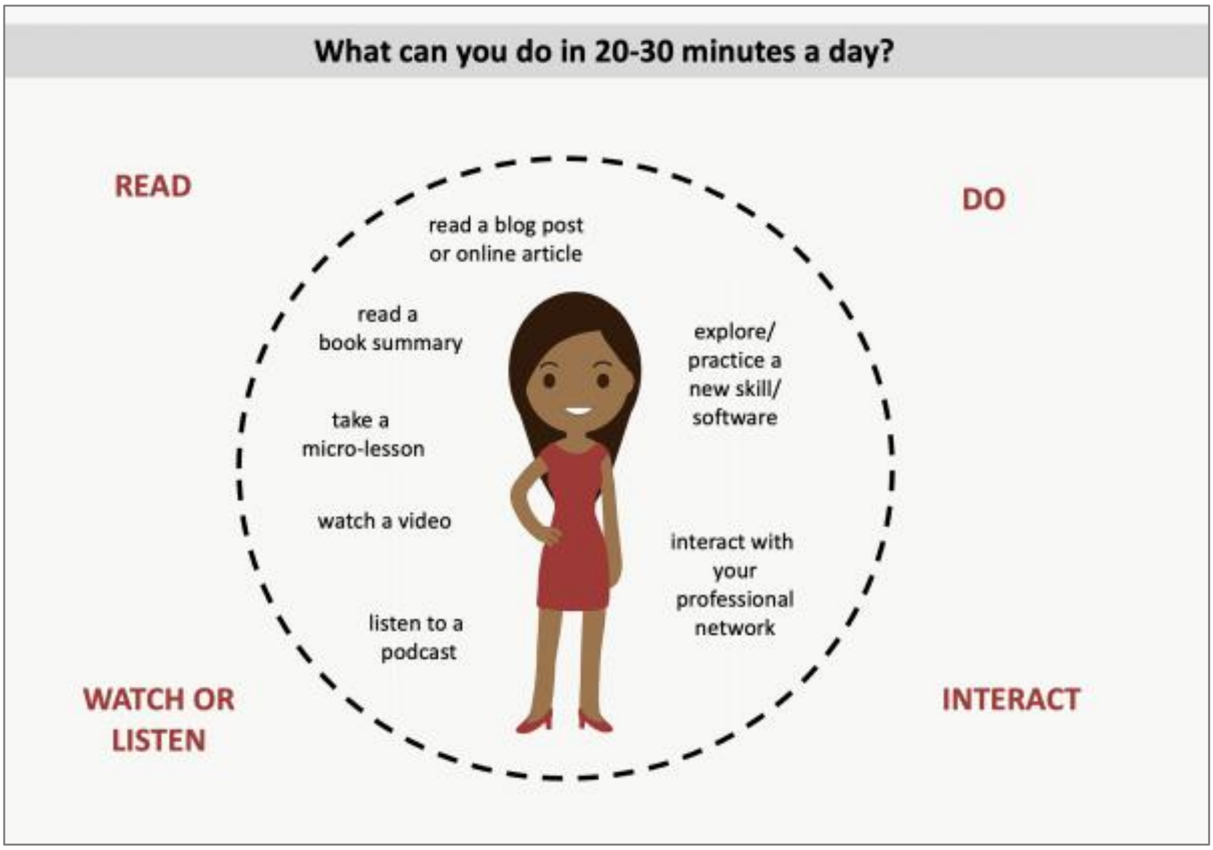
And, if fact, the results of a poll of over 2,000 from 40 countries (displayed in the graph to the right) show that the most popular period of time spent on self-learning is around 2-3 hours a week (or **20-30 minutes** a day),



This might seem a small amount of time, but it soon adds up:

→ to 2½ hours a week
→ to 10 hours a month
→ to over 100 hours a year – which is equivalent to around 12 conventional training days.

So, what can you do in **20-30 minutes a day?** This might sound a very short amount of time, but nowadays there are many things you can do on the Web for free – as shown on the graphic on the next page



There are essentially 4 broad categories of things that might been done in 20-30 minutes a day – shown inside the dotted circle on the image below.

1. **READ something –** e.g a Wikipedia article, an online article or blog post, a book abstract or take a micro-lesson
2. **WATCH or LISTEN to something** – e.g. a video or podcast
3. **INTERACT with your professional network –** eg on Twitter or LinkedIn.
4. **DO something –** there's no better way than learning by doing so you could focus your time on, eg. exploring how to use something (a piece of software, or device) or practising a skill (playing an instrument or speaking a language)

We'll take a closer look at some of the things you can **READ**, **WATCH** and **LISTEN** to in the next few Tasks.

But the key thing is to be **purposeful**! Although browsing the Web can lead to serendipitous learning, ideally a daily learning habit should be purposeful. So it would be useful to be clear about what you want to get out of your daily learning activity. For example, you might want to:

- keep up to date with what's happening in your industry or profession
- find out about some new thinking on a topic of interest
- improve some aspect of the work you currently do
- get ideas for your future career development
- discover some ideas for innovative new practices
- get some daily inspiration

TASK 22

Do you think you could set aside 20-30 minutes a day for some self-learning? When would be the best time for you to do this? How would you ensure you did it everyday?

What will be the purpose of your daily self-learning?

23 – Read a Wikipedia every day

One very easy way of learning something new every day is to open up an encyclopaedia at a random page and read the article that you see. But in the digital age, we can go one better, and make use of the well-known online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia.

Here are a couple of ways to make the most of Wikipedia:

1 - Wikipedia has a random article feature, and by clicking this link you will be taken to a random article.

2 - Wikipedia also has a featured article on its main page. You can sign up for a daily email with Wikipedia's featured article.

3 - Some people set up their **browser home page** to go to this link whenever they open their browser. That would certainly be a good way to ensure you get to see something where you can learn something new every day!

4 - Wikiwand is a browser extension (for Chrome and iPhone) that lets you browse Wikipedia effortlessly. You can find out more about Wikiwand in the article*:* Learn something new every day with Wikiwand.

TASK 23

What have you discovered on Wikipedia today? Will you use Wikipedia to learn something new every day?

24 – Read a daily email newsletter

Here are two free daily newsletters that will help you learn something new every day – in this case to some trivia or random fact!

NowIknow is a free daily email newsletter with more than 100,000 subscribers to find out random things like:

- Abraham Lincoln created the secret service – on the day he was shot
- Carrots used to be purple
- How turkey (the bird/food) got its name

TodayIfoundout is a free daily newsletter with more than 50,000 subscribers to find out trivia like:

- Does the UK really experience power surges when soap operas finish?
- Is it true that a T-Rex couldn't see you if you moved?
- How long would it take to count to a billion and what's the highest anyone has ever counted?

TASK 24

Have you discovered anything amazing today? Would either of these daily newsletters be of use to you?

25 – Read an online journal or magazine article

New articles are written on a daily basis, many of which provide information about, and analysis of products, tools, trends, techniques and tips. These will be useful for any one who wants to keep up to date with what's happening in their industry or profession on a continuous basis.

Printed journals and magazines have traditionally been the way to remain "in-the-know" about what's happening in one's industry or profession, and whilst many are only available in print, others do have online versions. This certainly makes it easy to consume a daily article online.

But don't just rely on trade journals, read other magazines as well. Consumer magazines, in particular, can offer insights as to how a field is viewed from an outsider's perspective. And you should look out for online magazines that will stretch your thinking too.

Here are 5 examples:

1. Fast Company

   "the world's leading progressive business media brand, with a unique editorial focus on innovation in technology, leadership, and design"

2. Forbes

   "global media company, focusing on business, investing, technology, entrepreneurship, leadership, and lifestyle"

3. Fortune

   "Fortune 500 Daily & Breaking Business News"

4. Harvard Business Review

   "new ideas and classic advice on strategy, innovation and leadership, for global leaders from the world's best business and management experts"

5. MIT Sloan Management Review

   "Business journal that evaluates and reports on new research to help readers identify and understand significant trends in management"

TASK 25

Can you identify some online journals or magazines that will provide you with a broader perspective on trends in your own industry or profession?

26 – Read a blog post

The difference between blogs and magazines is that blogs are written by individuals – rather than paid journalists. That doesn't mean that what they have to say is less valid, in fact, there are many respected bloggers out there whose opinions are as trustworthy and credible as mainstream journalists.

Blogs are therefore one of the most valuable resources you can use to stay updated on current trends. And just like mainstream journalists, bloggers will often do a lot of research to create their posts – as well as provide their unique take on the topic – which may not necessarily be conventional thinking!

Debra Askanase (in a blog post no longer online) explained why reading blogs is a key way of keeping up to date.

> *"There is obviously a connection between staying abreast of professional news, developing new ideas, and challenging old ways of thinking. I find that a combination of reading news blogs, bloggers in my field and bloggers outside of my field produces new ideas."*

There are now hundreds of millions of blogs on the Web, written by individuals, groups and organisations on all kinds of subjects. But rather than just reading blogs around your personal or professional interests, why not read some that are smart, inspiring and intellectually stimulating.

Here are just 5 suggestions.

1. The Marginalian (previously known as Brain Pickings)

   Written by Maria Popover, who explains *"The Marginalian is the record of the reckoning — a one-woman labor of love, exploring what it means to live a tender, thoughtful life of purpose and gladness, wonder-smitten by reality."*

2. Farnham Street

   Run by Shane Parrish, Farnham Street *"is devoted to helping you develop an understanding of how the world really works, make better decisions, and live a better life."*

3. Gaping Void

   Five days a week Hugh MacLeod posts an insightful image that tells a story about the world of work.

4. Open Culture

   Editor Dan Colman scours the web for the best educational media. He finds the *"free courses and audio books you need, the language lessons and movies you want, and plenty of enlightenment in between"*

5. xkcd

   This is a daily comic produced by Randall Munroe, taglined as *"a webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language".*

TASK 26

Can you identify some blogs to read on a regular basis?

27 – Read a book abstract

Books have traditionally been a key way for anyone to acquire new knowledge. Reading can also broaden our understanding of the world. So how can you fit reading into your daily schedule? Is it possible to read a new book every day? Probably not! But there are a number of other ways to achieve this.

The article, 5 ways to read more books and develop a habit of reading regularly, will help you establish reading as a regular habit – e.g. by taking just 20 minutes a day to work through a book

Note, here are 3 places where you can download a book abstract (onto your desktop or tablet). This can be a useful way to read in-depth material quickly, although depending on the site, there may be a cost involved.

1. Blinkist – Big ideas in small packages. Available as a mobile app for iOS and Android.
2. Instaread – Available in audio and text formats, Insights are referenced by chapter for your convenience.
3. GetAbstract – This is a premium service – but nonetheless very popular. It offers key knowledge of 15,000+ non-fiction books, summed up in attractive 10-minute readings.

TASK 27

Have you found a useful site where you can read a book abstract or get useful recommendations.

28 – Take a micro-lesson

Courses have traditionally been long affairs – taking days if not weeks or months to complete, and requiring a significant amount of study time.

There are still many courses like that, but here we are going to look at some places where you can study bite-sized lessons that only involve 5-20 minutes of study a day over a period of time (e.g. a week, a month or longer) – which build up into a bigger body of knowledge.

There are now a number of platforms that provide a regular flow of micro-lessons that can be delivered directly to you. Since micro-lessons are very short, they can easily fit into your daily work life – and you can work on them from your desktop, phone or tablet at your leisure.

Here are 2 platforms that offer a range of micro-lessons:

1. Highbrow offers 10-day courses of 5 minute lessons, delivered by email.
2. Curious delivers a customized CQ (Curious Quotient) Workout™ delivered to your inbox or mobile, every day. You can choose how long you to want to spend on them each day.

TASK 28

Which of these platforms will you use to have a bite-sized lesson delivered to your inbox every day?

29 – Watch a video

Video is clearly a powerful medium for learning, so here are a number of places to find videos that can inform, educate or inspire on a daily basis.

YouTube

YouTube is the most popular video sharing site – and it is very easy to find relevant videos there. But ideally if you want to automate the process and be alerted to new videos, you need to subscribe to YouTube channels.

Of course, not all YouTube channels post videos daily, but the more channels you subscribe to, the more likely it is that you will get a daily notification that a video has been posted.

TED

TED is a well-known organisation for spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (with well over a billion video views). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today it covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 110 languages.

You can watch individual talks and curated collections in the form of playlists, but if you are pressed for time, why not let the TED site recommend something for you. You just need to say what kind of talk you want to view, and how much time you have, and it will provide you with a suggestion – and then email you when others come available.

In the footer of every TED page, you will get the links to follow TED on social media – e.g. on Twitter, as well as how to sign up for email updates and get notifications when new talks are posted.

BigThink

BigThink is a knowledge forum. At Big Think they believe …

> *"… success in the future is all about knowing the ideas that allow you to manage and master this universe of information. Therefore, we aim to help you move above and beyond random information, toward real knowledge, offering big ideas from fields outside your own that you can apply toward the questions and challenges in your own life."*

Like TED, you can view individual videos of talks or curated playlists, but there is no recommendations feature. The best way to be notified of BigThink talks is to follow them on Twitter, or sign up for their weekly newsletter

To explore many other similar sites available, take a look through the list of 10+ Alternatives to TED Talks you may not have seen yet.

TASK 29

Which of these video platforms could provide you with a relevant daily video?

30 – Listen to a podcast

Podcasts are very popular in that they can easily be played "on the go" on smartphones – when driving in the car or even whilst making dinner at home! Podcasts therefore offer the opportunity to capitalise on all the dead time that exists in your day.

Podcasts usually form part of a series, so by subscribing to a podcast series , this means that you will receive new instalments automatically, whenever they are produced.

Popular Podcasts

Some interesting podcast series include:

- Think Again – a weekly series from Big Think.
- HBR IdeaCast – a weekly podcast featuring the leading thinkers in business and management from Harvard Business Review.
- HBS Managing the Future of Work – each episode features faculty from the world's leading business school interviewing CEOs, technologists and experts on the bleeding edge discussing how to survive and thrive by managing the future of work.

Heare two other very popular podcast shows:

- The Tim Ferriss Show is generally regarded as the best business podcast on iTunes, and it's been ranked in top place (of all 300,000+ podcasts) on many occasions.
- Freakonomics Radio is an award-winning weekly podcast with 8 million downloads per month.

But if you are looking for further ideas, take a look at 9 mind-blowing podcasts you can listen to during your commute.

Listening to podcasts

There are a number of ways to listen to a podcast. They can often be played on the website itself, but the best thing to do is to subscribe to a podcast series in order to keep up to date with new episodes.

- Whilst the Apple Podcasts app will let you find, subscribe to, and play your favourite podcasts on an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, other apps are available for both iOS and Android devices.
- Spotify has also become a popular podcast platform too.

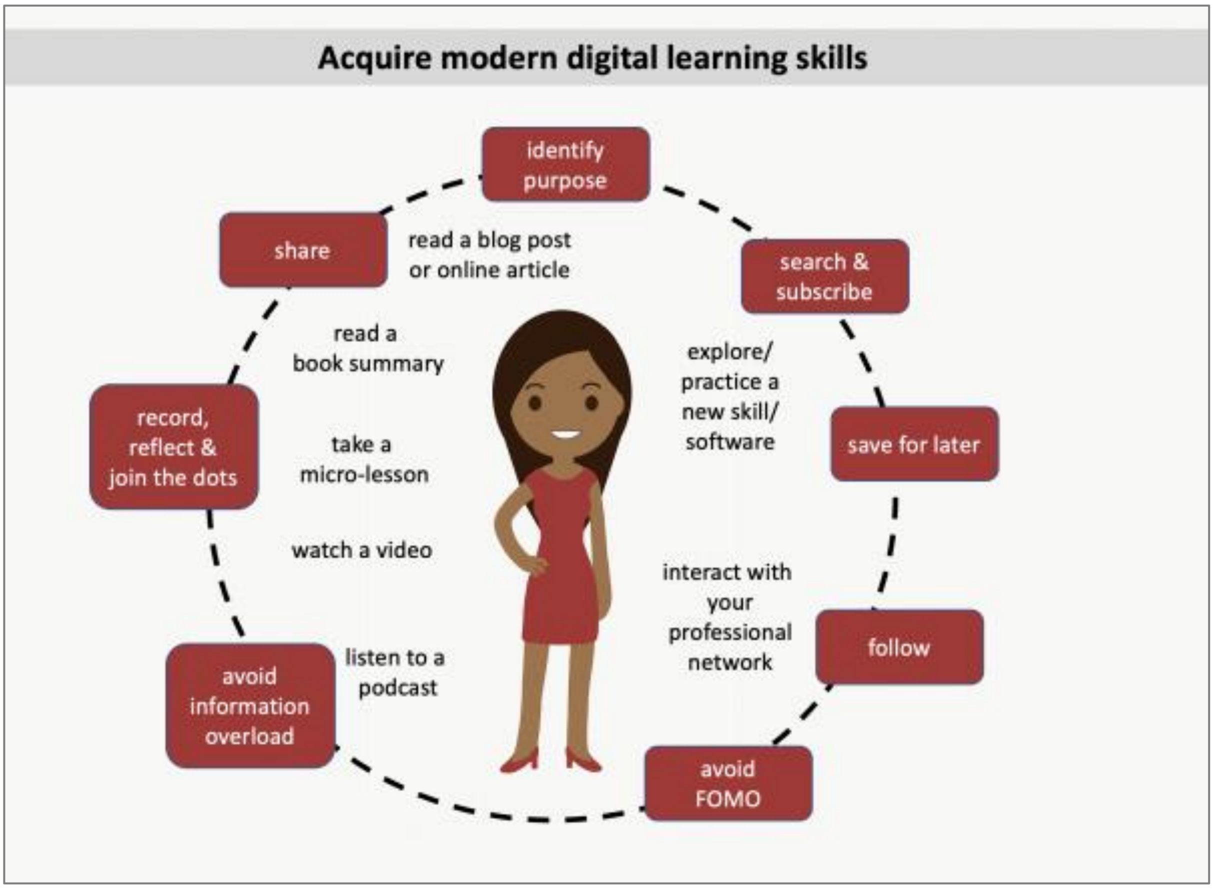
TASK 30

Can you identify a podcast series that will provide you with an interesting daily (or at least regular) podcast to listen to?

H: Acquire modern digital learning skills

31 – What are modern digital learning skills?

In order to establish an effective daily learning habit using the Web, you will need to have developed a range of digital skills. These are shown in the orange items on the image below.



We have already discussed the importance of having a purpose, so we'll take a closer look at what these other skills mean in the next set of pages. But before we do that, work on the task below

TASK 31

Looking at the skills listed on the graphic above, which of these do you currently feel comfortable with and which do you feel require more work?.

32 – Search and subscribe

Although good Google search skills will be important (as described in **Task 6**), you won't want to spend your precious daily learning time searching for new things to read or watch, so there are a number of ways that can help to automate the process.

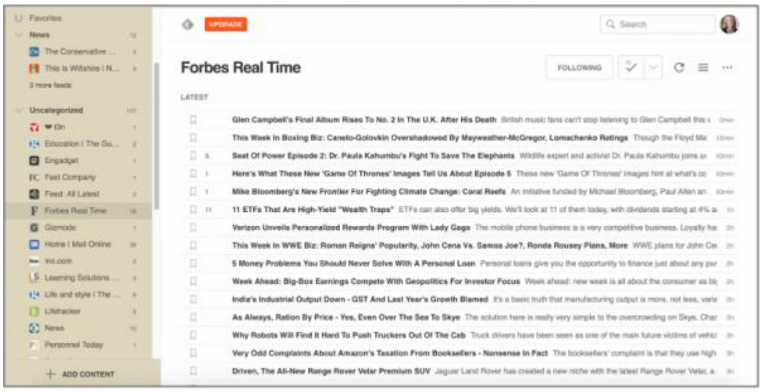
Subscribing to a website's or blog's news feeds means that you can get update on any new posts and articles that have been written.

What's more you can then organise and manage all your subscriptions in one place in a newsreader.

Feedly

One popular news reader to do this is Feedly**.** Here are some of its features

- You can store and read all your subscriptions (i.e. news feeds) in one place – and view all your subscriptions (or just those with unread posts. The feeds are shown in the left window, nd the posts in the feed in the right window



- You can click through and view a post in more detail in Feedly itself (in the right window)

- You can also save the post in different places, (e.g. in *Evernote*) and/or share the post in social media sites (like *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*).
- You can control a number of other preferences to enhance your reading experience, e.g. display density, source index and index link as well as the colour theme

For more help, take the Feedly Guided Tour**.**

Google Alerts

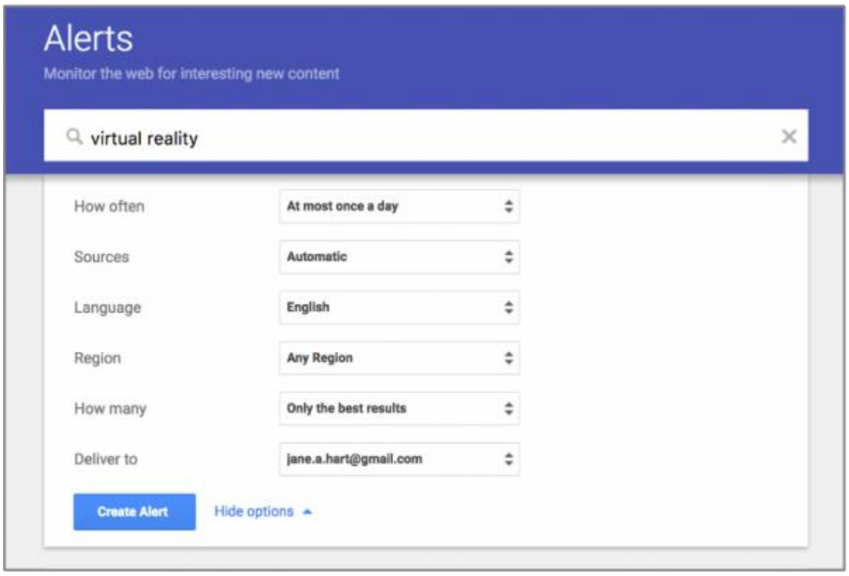
There are a number of other services available to help find new resources on topics of interest. Their job is to constantly scan the Web on specified topics and then present their results in different formats, which can easily be read on the desktop or on tablets and other devices. Google Alerts is one example

Google Alerts let you set up an alert with the search terms you are looking for, as well as specify

- **how often** you want to receive an email with new results
- the **sources** it should use, and
- **how many** results you want to receive, e.g. only the best results

It is therefore a useful tool to keep up to date with new resources relevant to your industry or profession. If you have a Google account, you can sign in to manage your alerts – i.e. amend or delete existing ones and/or add new ones.

Here's an example of how to set up an alert for "virtual reality" and the different options that it offers you.



TASK 32

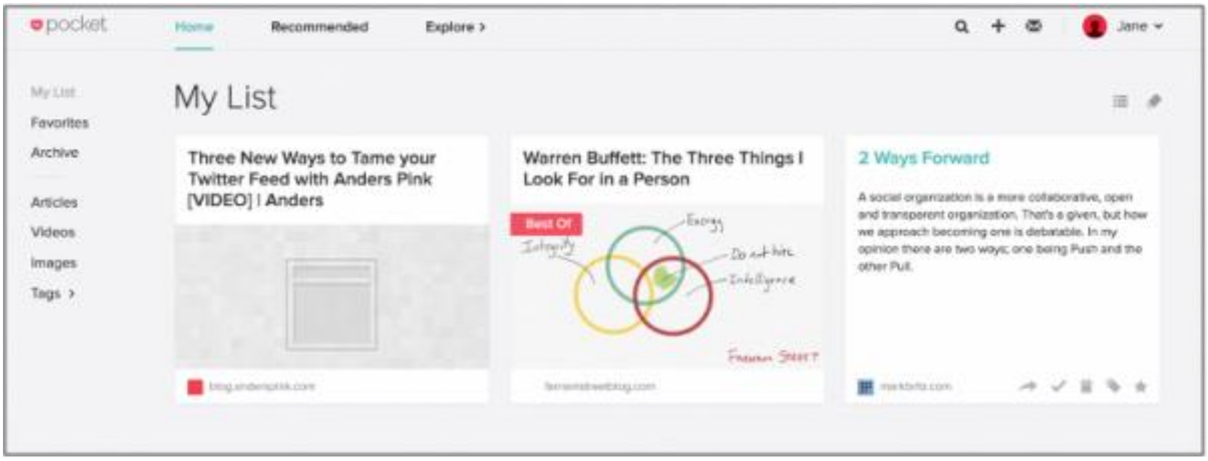
Would Feedly or Google Alerts be useful to help you to subscribe to new resources appearing on the Web?

33 - Save stuff for later

Of course, we don’t just learn in nice periods of discrete learning time – we learn all the time – whether we realise it or not. And sometimes, you will come across a resource during your daily life (either at work or outside of work) that you know might be useful for you but which you just don’t have the time to read at that particular time. So what can you do?

The answer might be to use a tool like Pocket, which will let you save web pages on your computer or smartphone to read them later – even without an Internet connection.

Once you save a page, it goes into your queue. You can then see all the items that you have in your queue on your computer or device (as in the screenshot below), where you can delete them or favourite them.



Pocket works with hundreds of different apps; in fact *Pocket* and *Evernote* make a great combination to save, share and make notes about your saved pages. Here’s an article how to use *Pocket with Evernote*.

Want to find out more about *Pocket*, you can do so in Pocket’s Help section.

TASK 33

Try out Pocket – and think about how you might integrate it with your own digital notebook - Evernote or OneNote - or other service you are using to track your daily learning. How did you get on?

34 – Follow, but avoid FOMO

We have already considered the importance of building a professional network (in **Task 6**) and how it is important to follow people who will bring you value – rather than just anybody who wants to connect with you.

We also recommended that you don't follow too many people to ensure you have a manageable network and can take full advantage of those with whom you are connected.

However, one common problem that some people experience once they become immersed online networking is FOMO – The Fear of Missing Out.

Wikipedia defines FOMO as

> *"a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent".*

In other words, if you are only spending 20-30 minutes a day on the Web, you may become anxious about what is happening when you are not online. FOMO is therefore mostly associated with those who are constantly checking their social networking sites in case they miss out on something important.

In order to overcome FOMO, Eric Barker, in his article, This is the best way to overcome Fear of Missing Out, explains that it is important to re-focus attention away from that activity. In other words, if you have a well-defined strategy for continuous learning and an allocated time to work on it, then you just need to keep to it, and remain focused the rest of the time on your other work.

If you think that you may succumb to FOMO, then nowadays there are a number of apps that help you focus. An article by Justin Pot provides a list of the 7 best apps to help you focus and block distractions in 2022.

TASK 34

Do you think you do or might suffer from FOMO? If so, how might you try and remain focused on your work?

35 – Avoid information overload

When it comes to learning on and from the Web, there is often a concern that people will be inundated with a "firehose of information".

Information overload is the term given to the phenomenon where so much information is taken in by the human brain that it becomes nearly impossible to process it. The Russian, futurist, Alvin Toffler, is credited with coining the term in his book *Future Shock.*

However, as Professor Clay Shirky explained in his talk at the Web 2.0 conference in 2008, information overload is not new; it is something that has always been with us, and the real problem is actually "filter failure". So, whenever you experience an information overload problem, he recommends you ask yourself: "What filter just broke?"

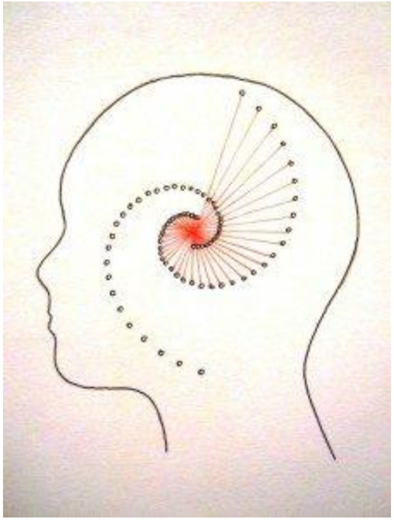
So, what can you do to manage information overload? Here are 5 techniques to ensure you are not overwhemed:

1. Don't try and read every word in your feeds: **scan** and **skim** – so that you only read what you think might be of interest.
   - **Scan** the headlines of the posts, and only if they look interesting, expand the post and **skim** the extract.
   - If the extract looks interesting, only then click through to the original post on the site.
   - **Scan** and **skim** again, to decide whether to read it in full
2. Focus on finding the people and resources that bring you value – prioritise what you find.
3. Don't be afraid to delete items in your inbox or elsewhere. If there was something important there it will come back to you from another source; the good stuff always rises to the top. It is much more important for you to feel in control of what you are doing – not be overwhelmed by it.
4. Keep your eye on the time, and just do what you can in the time available – don't let it take over your life.
5. You can spend your whole life reading and learning everything you want about your particular area of interest, but it will mean nothing unless you've actually applied any of that information. It's ultimately about what you do as a result.

TASK 35

Are you experiencing information overload? Do you think any of the tips here will help you address the problem?

36 – Record, reflect, join the dots and share



With self-learning you won't necessarily want to record everything you read or watch or listen to, but the process of jotting down ideas can help you to reflect on what you have done, and what you have learned.

It can also help you to "join the dots".

With instructionally designed courses, the "joining of the dots" has all been done for you – that is the material has been presented to you in a logical sequence to take you through the content step by step.

But out on the Web you will come across lots of content – out of logical sequence, if you like! – so you will need to find a logical path through the content to make sense of it all. In the new learning age this is a vital new skill.

In other words, as Seth Godin points out, it is not just about "collecting dots" (i.e. reading lots of stuff) but "connecting the dots" between what you read.

> *"Without a doubt, the ability to connect the dots is rare, prized and valuable. Connecting dots, solving the problem that hasn't been solved before, seeing the pattern before it is made obvious, is more essential than ever before. Why then, do we spend so much time collecting dots instead? More facts, more tests, more need for data, even when we have no clue (and no practice) in doing anything with it."*

So what does "connecting the dots" actually mean?

Marina Theodotou explained in a post (no longer available online):

> *"Connecting the dots means that you find a common thread that binds the issues, concepts and resources in your project. Such thread may be something you can see and touch, a person, a tool, or a task, or it can be a concept, an advantage, an opportunity, or a threat."*

Bear in mind though, as Jorge Baba points out in How are you connecting the dots?

> *"Connecting the dots isn't easy. When we actually do connect the dots, it usually happens when we're not even thinking of connecting them. But those of us who curate content on diverse topics .. have a higher possibility of connecting more dots because we engage with more information. And the wider the better."*

So, what tools and processes are you using to connect the dots?

If you are storing your articles and links in a digital notebook like *Evernote* or *OneNote*, then, you could tag them or at least cluster them logically together – that way you will more likely be able to see the connections between them.

Then take some time at the end of each month to review everythingyou have found that month and try to make connections between them in order to see patterns – and the bigger picture – emerge.

Reflecting on your learning

There are a number of good ways to reflect on your learning One is to keep a work or learning diary (as described in **Task 10**. Another is to blog about what you have been doing.

Writing a blog post will help you organise your ideas, think deeper by contextualising and synthesising ideas, and reinforce your learning. Blogging is a sign of a productive professional, and can in turn lead to a professional reputation.

There are a number of (free) blogging tools available. WordPress is the most popular blogging tool. It is available as a hosted service which means you can get started straightaway with blogging.

Tanmay Vora shows how blogging is a useful way to reflect and learn in this graphic from a blog post, [Share to Learn](#).

And he makes this valuable point:

> *"Tools really do not matter as much. What matters is that you find your voice and courage to express your thinking. That you build a posture of generosity when you share your insights along. What matters is what you learn during the process of sharing, articulating and shipping your thoughts out to the world – consistently and deliberately. Clarity of thought that you develop as a result of sharing regularly. The dots that you connect as you see your ideas unfold in increments."*

Of course, you won't want to share everything you discover, just the gems, or those resources that have made you think or gave you some inspiration. But some of these may be of interest to others – whether it be members of your professional network or members of your team too. However, when sharing remember the key points about sharing (in **Task 13**)

- **be discerning –** don't just share everything you come across, but be clear about what is of real interest or value to others.
- **add value –** don't just share inks to resources but add some commentary or analysis as to why a resource might be of use so others can determine whether it is worth them spending time reading it.

TASK 36

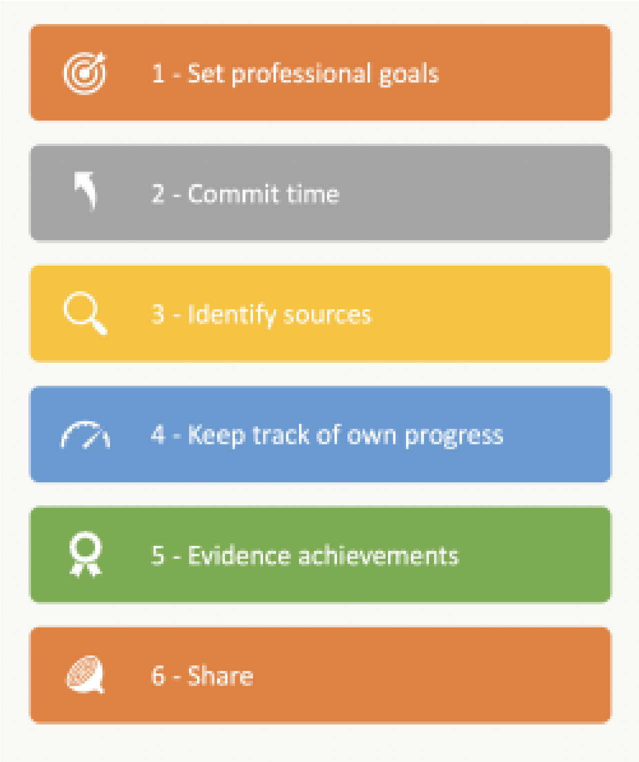
How are you going to ensure you don't just **collect dots** (i.e. read lots of stuff) but actually **connect the dots** (i.e. make the connections between them)? What process will you use?

I: Manage your own professional development

37 – Understand the professional self-development process

In the next few Tasks we are going to look at a formal process for self-development. This will be useful, for example if your organisationg gives you time to manage your professional self-development.

The professional self-development process consists of a number of steps as shown on the diagram below. Each of the steps will be considered in greater detail in the upcoming Tasks.



As you work through the self-development process you will need to make use of a variety of tools and services to organise and manage your self-development, so we will also consider what these might be too. But note, these should ideally be **personal** tools rather than **organisational** tools, since this will means that you will not only be able to choose the ones that suit you best, but also ensures that you **own** your own professional self-development, and maintain your learning and development records yourself.

However, If your organisation is going to invest time in your self-development, they will likely want to get something in return! They may well ask you to share your professional development plans with them, as well what you have learned and what the results of your self-development have been.

But when an organisation supports professional self-development in this way, it is win-win for both parties: You get to do what is best for you, and the organisation gets wider value out of your activities, which in turn also helps the organisation to thrive and grow.

TASK 37

Are you ready (a) to take responsibility for your own self-development and (b) to share what you do with your organisation?

38 – Create a Professional Self-Development Plan

At the heart of the professional self-development process is your Self-Development Plan.

An example of a Plan is shown on the next page. You can use this to document your own self-development.

It includes the following aspects:

Time period

The period that the Self-Development Plan covers. It might be 1 month, 3 months or 6 months.

Time commitment

The biggest investment in your own self-development will, however, be time. Ideally your manager should be happy to provide you with some regular time for your personal planned self-development if it is going to be of value in your job, but if you are working on this on your own you will need to consider how much time you want or can commit to it.

Your SMART professional goal(s)

This is what you want to achieve within the time period and how your goals align with your job/team objectives. (We will look at this in **Task 39**.)

Evidence:

This will document how you will evidence the fact that you have achieved your goals and what you can do now (We will consider this in **Task 40**)

The resources you will use to achieve each goal

This is the content, people, events or experiences you will make use of to achieve your goals. (We will look at this in **Tasks 43-50**)

TASK 38

Complete the following items on the Self-Development Plan (on the next page)

- The **time period** for your professional self-development
- The **amount of time you will commit** to your professional self-development? Can you agree some "protected learning time" with your manager?

Professional Self-Developmetn Plan	
Name	
Time period	
Time commitment	
GOAL(S) What is/are your SMART goal? What do you want to be able to do when you have achieved each goal? How does each goal align with your job or team objectives?	
EVIDENCE How will you know when you have achieved this goal? What evidence will you provide to demonstrate this?	
RESOURCES What resources (ie content, people, events, experiences) will you use to achieve this goal?	

39 – Set your professional goals

When setting your professional goals, think first about whether you are more interested in **improving yourself in your current job** or **preparing for the future**?

If you said **improving yourself in your current job**, then the Centre for Management & Organizational Effectiveness recommends you ask yourself the following questions to identify where you should focus your professional goals:

- What are the challenges that you face every day?
- What do you find to be the most frustrating aspect of your role?
- Which areas of your role or the organization do you wish you knew more about?
- What would you like to see yourself doing in the future?
- What is preventing you from maximizing your effectiveness?
- What skill(s) or additional knowledge would help you do your job more effectively or productively?

If you said **preparing for the future**, then ask yourself these questions:

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time? In the same organisation in a different position or in a different organisation in a different position?
- What are some of the skills and knowledge you think you may need to get to this position?

In order to answer the first question, you may need to do some legwork finding out what is up and coming in your industry or profession – if you are not doing so already. You may also want to find out what your organisation's vision is for the future, and how you might fit into it.

Professional goals might then be focused on improving your current level or knowledge and skills or on acquiring new knowledge or skills. In other words, your goals might be **performance** goals or **learning** goals. When it comes to goal setting, Mark Murphy offers some useful advice.

> *"There's a big difference between learning goals and performance goals. Performance goals are those goals that focus on getting a desired end result, like wanting someone to play Für Elise. It's not overly challenging work if you know what you are doing. But when you have no clue what you're doing it can feel like trying to achieve the impossible.*
>
> *By contrast, a learning goal is a goal where you're less concerned with employees producing results and far more focused on having them learn the necessary fundamentals (so eventually playing Für Elise is something they can actually do)."*

It is also important to ensure your goals are actually **achievable** by making them SMART goals – so that they are more than just a list of dreams! SMART is an acronym standing for:

- **S**pecific (simple, sensible, significant).
- **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating).
- **A**chievable (agreed, attainable, accepted).
- **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based)
- **T**ime bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).

When it comes to SMART professional goal setting, the recommendation is to have no more than **four**. In shorter time frames (e.g. a month) just **one** SMART goal may be enough.

TASK 39

On your Self-Development Plan, complete the section marked **GOAL(S)**. If you have more than one SMART goal, you might want to document each on a separate sheet.

40 – Explain how you will evidence your achievements

Although learning is important, in a formal process of professional self-development, it will be important for you to evidence your achievements. In other words, demonstrate what you are now able to do. This might be done by one or more of the following ways:

Photo or video evidence – These are both useful ways of demonstrating a new skill. The photo or video might be taken by you, or someone else might take it showing you performing the skill.

Testimonials – An independent expert might confirm the fact that you can now perform a new skill. The testimonial might take the form of a written or video testimonial.

Reports – This might be a useful way for you to document any new knowledge you have acquired, as well as provide analysis and possible recommendations on how to implement or apply them in your job or workplace generally. A workplace report will be particularly relevant where you have taken on an assignment or special project since your manager will likely want you to document the outcome of that activity. So, the report might be written for your manager, for your team or for wider consumption in the organisation.

Articles – Another possibility might be for you to write an article for a journal or magazine. This could be for an industry or professional magazine, or for an internal company magazine, or even for a learned journal. The format of the article will, of course, vary depending on the type of magazine, but will probably not be as long nor as formal as a business report.

Blog posts - Yet another possibility might to set up a blog and write your own blog posts. This way you have full control over what you say – and how you say it.

Briefings – You might provide a briefing (to your manager or your team). This may or may not include supporting slides, but will be short, sharp and provide the essential points that you want to make that have arisen from your new knowledge or skills. How to give a successful briefing explains that

> *"The key to giving a successful briefing is to keep it accurate, concise and clear. Although the objective may be similar to a presentation or speech, the format itself is different. Just as in other types of oral communication, however, a successful briefing focuses on the audience. While the information supplied during a briefing is important, what's more important is that the information evokes the desired response."*

Presentations – A presentation will probably be longer than a briefing, so this would give you an opportunity to go deeper into your work. To provide an effective presentation you will need to have good presentation writing skills as well as good presentation delivery skills.You might even video your presentation so that you can keep the evidence.

Some other product – There may well be other ways to demonstrate new or improved performance. For example, if you proposed to learn a new computer programming language, the evidence you will undoubtedly want to provide to demonstrate successful achievement would be the production of a relevant program in the language you learned.

TASK 40

What will be the most appropriate way(s) to evidence achievement of your own professional goals.

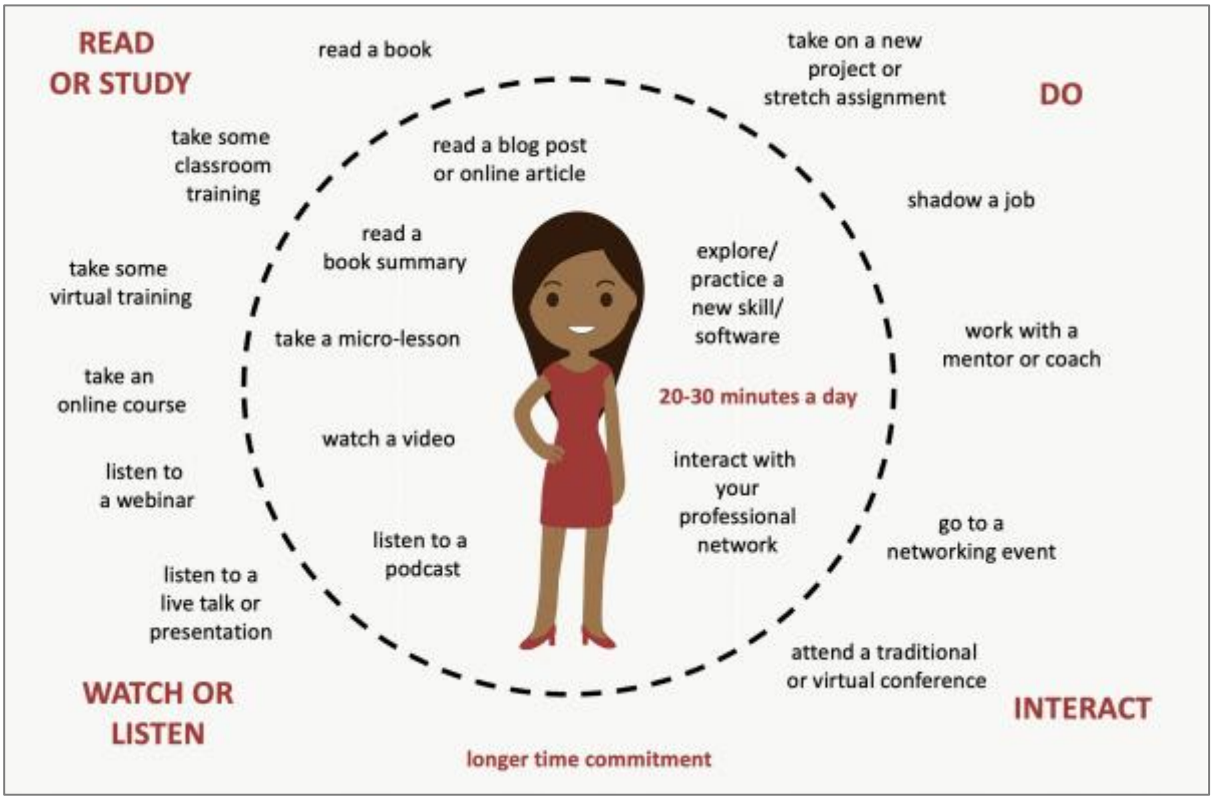
Complete the **EVIDENCE** section of your Self-Development Plan with this information.

41 – Identify how you will achieve your goals

Now that you have set up your SMART professional goal(s), and identified how you will evidence them, the next step is to decide what you will do to achieve them.

You might think that professional goals need to be achieved by taking some formal course but they might be addressed in different ways: formally or informally, inside or outside the workplace.

In addition to the variety of things that might be done in 20-30 minutes a day, there are other things that might require more time and will need to be scheduled over a long period, These other self-learning approaches aren't necessarily digital – but sometimes the old traditional ways are just as valuable. The graphic below shows the wider range of self-development approaches and therefore includes activities that require a longer time commitment than 20-30 minutes a day.



You might already have an idea how you will achieve your goals, but if not you will have an opportunity to explore further self-development opportunities in **Tasks 44-50**, but essentially they are as follows;

- **READ**: books, ebooks or audio books
- **STUDY**: take classroom or virtual training or an online courses
- **LISTEN** to live talks and webinars
- **INTERACT:** attend conferences and participate networking events
- **DO:** Work with a mentor or coach
- **DO**: Take on a new project or stretch assignment
- **DO:** Shadow a job

TASK 41

At this stage – ie **BEFORE** you have explored the full range of self-development opportunities, how do you think you might achieve your goals?

AFTER you have taken a closer look at the range of self-development opportunities (in **Tasks 44-50**), re-think how you might **better** achieve your goals. At that point add the information into the **RESOURCES** section of your Professional Self-Development Plan.

42 – Keep track of your progress

When it comes to self-development, it is not up to the organisation to keep track of what everyone does as part of their own self-development – rather it is up to the individuals to do that themselves.

One useful way of tracking progress is to create a Learning Log. Hull University defines a Learning Log as follows.

"A Learning Log is a journal which evidences your own learning and skills development. It is not just a diary or record of "What you have done" but a record of what you have learned, tried and critically reflected upon."

A Learning Log is therefore also, in itself, good evidence of continuous learning.

Some commonplace tools that are perfect for creating a Learning Log are **digital notebooks**, like *Evernote* or *OneNote*. These tools provide a centralized place for capturing, organising and annotating all kinds of personal and professional information: typed or handwritten notes, Web pages, images, video, and audio.

Evernote and *OneNote* are now in use in many teams and organisations, which means they are a familiar tool. *Evernote* can also be integrated with a collaboration platform, like *Slack*, so that anything of significance can easily be shared with team members in the course of the daily work, and *OneNote* is of course part of the Microsoft suite, which means it effortlessly integrates with *Teams*, etc.

Another option for keeping your Learning Log is of course to use a **word processing tools** like *Word* or *Google Docs*.

Note: Digital notebooks and word processing tools were of course, recommended for setting up a work diary (in **Task 10**) – so using the same tool for your Learning Log would make a lot of sense.

Blogging tools, like *WordPress*, are yet another useful way of creating a Learning Log as blogs support the production of a chronological record of reflections as all posts are date stamped. It is also very easy to embed relevant resources like images, photos videos, slidesets, etc, which can also be tagged or categorised to keep related items together.

TASK 42

How will you keep track of your own self-development progress? Will you use a digital notebook, word processing or blogging tool – or something else?

43 – Set up a digital portfolio

A Digital Portfolio (aka an e-Portfolio) is a place where you can display your achievements for your (current or future) employer – just like a photographer or graphic designer might have a portfolio of their photos or designs, to show what he or she is capable of.

Wikipedia defines a digital portfolio as

"a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. E-portfolios … can be maintained dynamically over time."

A Digital Portfolio is therefore the place where you can to put on show both your evidence of your continuous learning as well as your new performance. In other words, it is the place for you to demonstrate your commitment to continuous learning throughout your career. It might also be seen as the place where you can begin to build your own professional brand.

Once again, digital portfolios are ideally built with personal (rather than organisational) tools since they need to store more than just your organistional learning records but your personal, professional achievements.

Whereas some people prefer to keep their Learning Log and Digital Portfolio separate, others prefer to use the same tool and combine the two activities. Digital notebooks and blogging tools make it easy to do this.

Other options for creating a Digital Portfolio, include website tools like *Google Sites* or *Wix* or *Weebly*. Here is an article from Wix: How to Create an Online Portfolio: The Ultimate Guide.

TASK 42

How will you create your Digital Portfolio to store and present your achievements digitally? Will you use a digital notebook or a blogging or website tool?

J: Take advantage of a wide range of self-development opportunities

44 – Read a book

In these final tasks of the Guide we are going to take a look at the wider range of self-development opportunities (that were visualised on the graphic in **Task 41**). We start by considering reading a book.

Of course, reading has long been the way to acquire new knowledge.

In fact, reading lots of books, is often cited as the reason why some people have become so successful in their field, as in the case of Elon Musk and Bill Gates.

In **Task 27** we looked at how you might read a book abstract as part of your daily learning habit, but of course you may prefer to spend longer time reading a book in full.

Do you need help in finding interesting books to read? Here are 3 websites to get recommendations:

1. Book of the Day will suggest a different book every day.
2. Five Books will provide you with the 5 best books on everything
3. GoodReads will help you find your next favourite book – say what titles or genres you've enjoyed in the past, and they'll give you surprisingly insightful recommendations.

E-Books

Of course, in this digital world, many books are now available as e-books. Whereas the Kindle devices was originally intended as a way to read e-books from Amazon, a free Kindle Reader app is now available for iOS, Android, Mac and PC – which means that books can now be read on other devices too.

Audiobooks

Audiobooks are another excellent way to read a book - by having one read to you. And it's possible to do this at any time on a commute to and from work.

You may be surprised to see how quickly you can learn from and absorb when using audiobooks. For a good audiobook platform, try Audible.

TASK 44

If you like reading books, how will you ensure that you have a regular list of recommendations of books to read?

45 – Take classroom or virtual training or an online course

Some form of training may be an appropriate self-development in certain circumstance – particularly if you want to acquire a new body of knowledge in a short space of time. Here's a summary of the pros and cons of the 3 main training approaches.

1 – Classroom training

Classroom training has been the standard way for people to learn for well over 100 years and is the format that most people are used to throughout their years in education – i.e. being taught by an instructor with a group of other people. The style of classroom training can vary quite a bit.

In many cases classroom training still uses a "sage on the stage" model where the instructor delivers content to the participants – working through a deck of PowerPoint slides. For participants this can be a passive activity – largely confined to making notes on their handouts, and this approach is no longer a popular way of learning for many people. However, for others the familiarity of having a teacher in front of them, and being hand-held working through a body of content, is quite comforting.

In other cases, classroom training has become a very different experience, when it is usually referred to as a "workshop". Here the emphasis is less on content delivery and more on practical – often collaborative – activities that help the participants apply the theory to practical problems. In workshops participants learn as much from one another as they do from the facilitator, whose role is more a "guide on the side".

For any individual considering classroom training, it will therefore be important to ensure that the experience matches their preferred approach. There will also likely be a cost involved in participating in classroom training, as well as the fact that the individual will need to travel to the classroom event, which will mean time away from work.

2 – Virtual training

A virtual classroom is an online classroom where participants can view presentations given by a trainer as well as interact with other participants in real-time online.

Virtual classrooms can be used to deliver lectures or tutorials, and often support participants working together in breakout rooms online.

There will likely be a cost involved to participate in virtual classroom training. but the individual will not need to travel to the event, all they will need is an Internet connection.

However, since these are synchronous events, the individual will need to schedule the appropriate time to take part.

Although virtual classes can be recorded, this does mean that the content can be accessed after it has been delivered, which is a bonus for those who want to repeat the class or take it at a different time. But it is often not quite the same experience as the live one.

3 – Online courses

There are now many providers that offer Web courses that individuals can sign up to themselves – either for free or for a fee.

Some of them are self-paced courses, which means that individuals can access the content at any time, and then work through it in their own time, taking breaks whenever they wish, and generally controlling the pace at which they learn.

However, the sophistication of these online courses varies quite considerably. Whereas there are still a lot that use the "click-next-button" approach for users to work through the (mainly text and graphics-based) content, others offer participants a more engaging and appealing experience, which often includes video and a range of stimulating activities.

Other online courses have a scheduled start and end date, as well as an online tutor and the opportunity to learn alongside other students. Most offer some sort of certification whether it be a paper certificate or a digital badge.

Here are some of the most popular online course providers (in alphabetical order).

- Codecademy – free online coding courses
- Coursera – the world's best online courses, for free
- edX – online courses from the world's best universities
- FutureLearn – free online courses from top universities and specialist organisation
- LinkedIn Learning – to develop new skills and improve old skills.
- Udemy – online video courses

Before choosing a course you should make sure it is delivered in a format that you are comfortable with.

TASK 45

If you feel that some form of training is required to meet your professional goals, which approach would suit you best? Classroom training, virtual training or an online cours?

46 - Listen to a live talk or webinar

Listen to a live talk or presentation

Lectures have been the standard delivery mode in universities for many years, but they've now got a bad reputation as a way of learning! But despite that there are still many people who like to hear a person talk about their subject – and get inspiration from them. There is nothing like a charismatic presenter who can leave a lasting impression on their audience.

This is the reason why TED Talks have become so popular – because there has been a huge emphasis on having speakers who are awesome presenters – not just experts in their field. TED conferences run twice a year. TEDx, on the other hand, are local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. Here's where you can find local TEDx events.

Listen to a webinar

A webinar is a live online event that connects the presenter with viewers/listeners from (potentially) all over the world. Presenters can give presentations on a topic, as well as share their computer screens for demonstrations or products, software, etc.

Depending on the organisation running the webinar, there may be a cost involved to participate, but the advantage is that the participant won't need to travel to the event, all they will need is an Internet connection. And since webinars are often recorded, this means that the content can be accessed after it has been delivered. Although webinars are now commonplace, people still need to ensure they don't waste their time and get the most value from them.

An HBR article, Making the most of webinars, provides the following tips for webinar attendees:

1. **Choose your webinars carefully –** It is important to understand the purpose of the webinar. Is it essentially a marketing or sales tool or is it an educational/awareness event? The source of the webinar will probably be a big clue to its purpose, and what type of information it will provide.
2. **Watch the webinar as a group –** This allows for a better discussion of how applicable the content is for the group or even your organization.
3. **Take and distribute notes –** Taking notes will help you focus, and distributing them will give you *"recognition as someone who has learned and synthesized the material presented during the webinar*".

TASK 46

Do you prefer to listen to talks in person or in a webinar?

How could you make them more effective as a learning experience?

47 – Attend a conference or participate in a networking event

In-person conferences

Attending an annual conference has traditionally been the way to keep up to date with what's happening in one's industry or profession, since it allows an individual to listen to (and connect with) both industry influencers as well as other practitioners.

However, they take place very infrequently, and can often require travel to distance locations which can involve substantial expense as well as considerable time away from the workplace. And since there are now many other ways to keep up to date continuously, these might be the reasons why conferences are no longer considered an important source of learning.

But if you do decide to go to a conference, here is some advice on how to get the most out of it:

1 – Prepare

- Ensure the conference is going to cover the topics you are interested in.
- Study the program in advance and tailor your own program based on the summary of the sessions.

2 – Take notes

- Write down the most exciting and important ideas that came into your head from each session. Try to do this as soon as you can – otherwise they are likely to slip away. If you don't want to do it as you listen, take some time in the break to do so.
- Distill each talk down to a one- or two-sentence summary or perhaps three key takeaways.
- Try to connect what you have heard to your own work and/or note any follow-up work you want to do.

3 – Network

- Use the opportunity to build new connections – rather than just stay close to your current colleagues.
- If there are any industry experts or thought leaders you want to connect with, don't be afraid to ask them questions or just tell them you loved the presentation! Face-to-face conferences are not just a place to hear about future trends but also to connect with people who you want to interact with in the future.

Virtual conferences

Since lockdown many conferences have gone virtual, and although some have now reverted to being in-person, others now have a hybrid approach.

Tthere are significant advantages of attending a conference without actually being there. Here are some of them.

1 – Cost is the most obvious advantage. Not only do you save on travel and hotel expenses, but virtual registration costs are usually significantly less expensive than the live registration fee. In fact, the average virtual event costs about 20% of the cost of a comparable physical event.

2 – You can also easily leave a session if it seems irrelevant, and enter another session being held at the same time without distracting the audience or offending the presenter.

3 – The flexibility to view sessions when and where you want is also an important factor. You won't have to choose between two interesting topics because you'll also be able to access sessions that are held concurrently because the sessions will be recorded and saved on the conference website.

4 – You can even attend the sessions in your pyjamas if you want to – as well as enjoy food and drink while you listen! You can multi-task and do your emails at the same time, if you wish – although this isn't necessarily the most effective way to attend a virtual conference. In fact, if it going to be too easy to be distracted by your everyday routine, then you need to block off your calendar in advance, and find a quiet place where you can focus. In fact, timing is critical, so you also need to find a virtual conference that works with your schedule – so that you don't waste your investment.

5 – You can more easily download the slidesets and handouts from a virtual conference site, which means you won't necessarily need to make quick ad contemporaneous notes, and you will be able to review the content in your own time.

6 – Online networking is very easy.

7 – It also means that you can attend more conferences more frequently – rather than it just be a once a year event.

Conference backchannels

Whether or not you attend a physical or virtual conference, you can easily take part in the conference backchannel using *Twitter* – if it exists. The backchannel is the conversation that takes place alongside the conference and means that others can discuss the various presentations in near real time. Normally a backchannel is initiated by the conference organisers by providing a Twitter hashtag, e.g. *#ABCconf*. This means that all tweets that include that hashtag can be kept together and presented in a hashtag stream (as explained in **Task 20**).

The backchannel is often displayed in different places at a conference – sometimes even in the presentation room itself so that the presenter can actually comment on the tweets in the stream, if they so wish. But since it is hosted on *Twitter* it also means that others who are not even attending the conference can become involved in the conversation too in order to keep up with the resources shared and the conversations around the sessions.

Networking events

Networking events are likely to take place locally and fairly regularly. They will provide an opportunity not only to listen to professional experts on different topics, but also to meet others – particularly other practitioners and professionals in the field – who can offer new perspectives on an individual's work. Some would say that in-person networking is superior to social networking in that it offers more opportunities to meet people in the local community and develop deeper relationships

Many people it seems – perhaps those who are not used to social networking – do prefer face-to-face networking, and like to get to know people by shaking their hand and looking them in the eye. Others believe you can only develop meaningful relationships face-to-face, which is why they choose to make the initial contact in person.

But even in-person networking can put someone outside their comfort zone – although the more they do it, the more confident they will become. In-person networking does require good communication – and, in particular, listening skills. In fact, building relationships means doing much more listening than talking!

TASK 47

Would attending a conference or networking event be of value to you in terms of achieving your own professional goals?

48 – Work with a mentor or a coach

There may be a time when you could benefit from a specialist coach or mentor, for example, if you might want some help with a project you are working on, or if you want some advice on your career progression.

The terms **coaching** and **mentoring** areoften used interchangeably, but although they are similar they are not the same. John Reh defines them as follows

> *"**Mentoring** is a long term relationship where the focus is on supporting the growth and development of the mentee. The mentor is a source of wisdom, teaching, and support, but not someone who observes and advises on specific actions or behavioral changes in daily work.*
>
> ***Coaching** is typically a relationship of finite duration where the focus is on strengthening or eliminating specific behaviors in the here and now. Coaches are engaged to help professionals correct behaviors that detract from their performance or, to strengthen those that support stronger performance around a set of activities."*

A mentor or coach could be a co-worker or someone from outside the organisation. He or she will be a more experienced or more knowledgeable person then the individual concerned but not necessarily older than the person concerned. When the mentor is younger than the person concerned, then this is sometimes part of a reverse mentoring process, where older executives are mentored by younger employees on topics such as technology, social media and current trends in return for business advice or how to climb the career ladder. Mentoring is a very powerful way for individuals to learn and grow, particularly for those moving or preparing to move into a new role or taking on new responsibilities.

Informal mentoring – where individuals find their own mentors – is generally considered more effective and rewarding than being assigned a mentor, as Nathan Tanner points out in A Tale of Two Mentors: How Informal Mentoring Can Change Your Career.

> *"… the best mentoring relationships develop organically. Formal mentoring programs can be effective, but if the relationship feels forced or the mentor lacks a desire to participate, the program's goals will likely go unachieved. Informal mentoring, where the mentee proactively seeks out a mentor for career advice and guidance, is almost always more rewarding to both the mentee and mentor."*

So you might look for a mentor either inside or outside your organization.

- **External mentors** can bring fresh ideas and thinking, and might be found on social networking sites.
- **Internal mentors** might be colleagues (perhaps managers) in other parts of the business

But **how** do you find a mentor? Ellen Esher, a Professor of Management, believes that the best mentor-protégé relationships evolve organically. In an course she teaches at Loyola Marymount University, she assigns students to go out and find their own mentors, and she's come up with 8 steps to follow.

> *"1 – Examine yourself*
> *2 – Decide what you want in a mentor*
> *3 – Cast a wide net*
> *4 – Be specific when you reach out*
> *5 – Go after more than one mentor*
> *6 – Offer something in return*
> *7 – Be an active protégé*
> *8 – Follow up"*

So **where** can you find an external mentor? In [Mentoring in a millennial world] Randy Emelo explains that mentoring is a collaborative networked learning experience that involves many people.

> *"Having grown up using social networks and mobile devices to crowdsource information and wisdom, millennials are most likely to seek a broad array of learning relationships to support them at work … Today, millennials have shaken things up again. For them, mentoring is collaborative, networked learning that includes many people. It is a process where they use technology to connect with people across an organization so they can share knowledge and skills, and solicit advice and opinions. They use it as a way to provide practical context to their daily work."*

So, is there a wrong way to find a mentor? In the article, 8 successful people share how not to find a mentor, Janet Mock says

> *"One key bit of advice I would give is not necessarily to look for someone that you can build a relationship with, but look for someone who you can ask a very simple question to, who can reply to an email very easily to you. What is it that you need? … Because I think that's what has helped me a lot is when there's a certain question that I have, and I kind of point it to the right person that I know who can actually answer it. It takes the pressure off the person who is being asked."*

And once an individual has found a mentor, what are some tips for making the most of their mentoring relationship? There's lots of advice available, but here are two useful resources.

One: Asana offers 6 ways to make the most of your mentor:

1. Come prepared
2. Establish a cadence for your meeting
3. Know that there are (at least!) two kinds of knowledge you can acquire
4. Jot down goals and milestones
5. Don't automatically limit your relationship to a strictly professional one
6. Never stop evaluating the relationship

Two: Here are 10 killer questions to make the most of your mentor meeting – again, listed briefly below. Read the article for more information about each one.

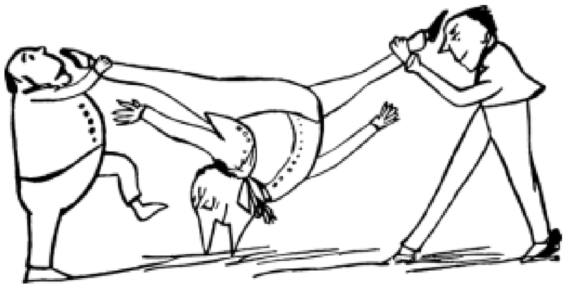
1. How do you spend most of your time?
2. What would you do if you were me?
3. How can I help you?
4. Is this where you thought you would end up?
5. What used to be your biggest weaknesses?
6. Who else would you recommend I connect with?
7. What are you most proud of?
8. What professional organizations are you associated with and in what ways?
9. Anything FORM (FORM is an acronym for Family, Occupation, Recreation, and Motivation)
10. If a specific question comes up, can I follow up with you?

TASK 48

Do you have a coach or mentor? How have they helped you in your work or career?

If you haven't, do you think this would be a useful way for you to achieve your professional goals?

49 – Take on a new project or stretch assignment



"Live business projects" are often referred to as **stretch assignments**, and since most professional development occurs through experience – i.e. by doing your job – a stretch assignment is therefore a great way for you to improve or prepare for the future.

Ryan Byrne defines stretch assignments as follows:

> *"Stretch-assignments are rapid developmental activities designed to develop your employees in a real-world environment. They see you asking an employee to undertake a project or task, which they don't currently have the ability to successfully complete. Placing them in the deliberately uncomfortable position of needing to develop in order to succeed, or risk failure."*

The main reason for taking on a stretch assignment as a development approach acknowledges the fact that employees don't learn by just doing the same thing over and over again, they need to try new things. A stretch assignment will therefore allow you to learn experientially. Ryan also points to four other benefits of stretch assignments for both managers and employees.

> *"1 – It reduces training costs – Stretch-assignments are more cost effective than structured education.*
> *2 – It increases engagement – Stretch-assignments increase employee self-worth.*
> *3 – It solves your real world problems – Stretch-assignments focus on the now.*
> *4 – It enables you to evaluate results – Stretch assignments can be measured for ROI."*

Different stretch assignments develop different abilities. So, it is important to first identify the specific skill(s) you want to develop, and then find the right assignment that will provide you with the relevant exposure. So, for instance:

- **Strategic assignments** help develop competencies related to expanding one's awareness of organizational functions and strategy.
- **Interpersonal assignment** help develop competencies that increase an individual's effectiveness to work with and manage other employees or teams.
- **Personal effectiveness assignments** are oriented around competencies most closely related to an individual's performance and personal development.

Here are some examples of common stretch assignments.

- Managing a volunteer or intern
- Executing a new or important company project
- Organizing and leading an important company event or meeting

If you take on a stretch assignment you will need the active support and participation of your manager before, during, and after the process:

- **before** – to discuss what skills you want to develop and help identify your professional goals
- **during** – to give feedback, support and encouragement as needed, and provide you with access to any required resources
- **after** – to reflect on what was learned during the assignment and how this can be applied to your current job or future development

TASK 49

Have you had a stretch assignment? How did it work out? If not, do you think it would be a useful activity to take on a stretch assignment as a way of achieving your professional goals.

50 – Shadow a job

In this final task, we are going to look at a way of changing jobs or careers through job shadowing. Wikipedia defines job (or work) shadowing as follows

> "*Job shadowing (or work shadowing) is a popular on-the-job learning, career development, and leadership development program. It involves working with another employee who might have a different job in hand, might have something to teach, or can help the person shadowing him or her to learn new aspects related to the job, organization, certain behaviors or competencies. Organizations have been using this as an effective tool for learning."*

It also explains how job shadowing is good for career development:

> *"With multiple options available for somebody to grow in an organization, job shadowing can help to get a better sense of options available and the required competencies for the same. An employee may shadow senior employees in various positions/functions to appreciate and get a better idea about what it takes to build a career there."*

CareerAddict provides some of the reasons you might consider job shadowing:

- You test out possible careers
- You learn about an organisation's culture
- You learn from colleagues' experiences
- You build professional connections
- You learn practical skills
- You get a glimpse into a job's perks and challenges
- You gain work experience and build up your CV
- You'll have a safe place to ask questions
- You discover the areas you can improve in
- You explore other career interests with your employer

Job shadowing can be a short term (1 day activity) or a long-term (days-long or even months-long activity – either part-time or full-time

There are 3 types of job shadowing:

1. **Observation** – "fly on the wall" – As a visitor/guest you will spend an agreed period of time observing the day to day work of your host. This d should be a typical representation of what the "host" individual does on a daily basis.
2. **Regular briefings** – "burst interactions" - Here, a visitor/guest will shadow the host for specific activities over a period of time which are all preceded by a mini brief and follow up debrief. This type of shadowing provides short periods of focused activity, rather than passive on-going observation. It needs careful timing and planning so as not to be disruptive.
3. **Hands on** – "job sharing" - This is an extension of the observation model, where the visitor/guest starts to undertake some of the tasks they have observed. This provides the visitor/guest with hands on experience of the role whilst having the safety net of being closely supervised by the host.

Job shadowing might be more easily undertaken in a large team where there is a wide range of roles. In small teams where there are fewer opportunities, you might need to liaise with other managers across your organisation to ascertain the possibilities of job shadowing in their teams.

TASK 50

Would job shadowing be a useful way of changing your job or career? How might you go about it?

A Guide for Managers

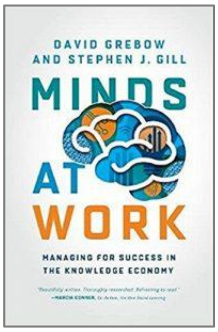
Table of Contents

PART ONE: CONTINUOUS LEARNING FROM THE DAILY WORK

A: Understand the changing world of work and learning

1 – Understand the evolving world of work

A lot has been written about the way work has changed over the centuries, and a YouTube video Animated History of Work (from MIT OpenCourseware) boils down the history of work into 3 minutes.



The Minds at Work book summarises the position neatly, showing how as the Agricultural Economy gave way to the Industrial Economy, work moved from the fields into the cities, and that by the 20th century work was focused on the mass-production of goods – like food, clothing as well as cars – on assembly lines.

Companies hired hands. The skills people needed to do their jobs were simple and largely manual, and their work changed very little. People remained in the same place – primarily on the factory floor – day after day. People learned to do their jobs in the same way as they did in school - in the classroom. Mass-training ensured that they were able to perform the same task or set of tasks the same way. Frederick Winslow-Taylor's 1911 book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, described the effective way of optimizing work on the assembly line.

However, by the late 20th century there was a change in work. The Knowledge Economy - an economy in which the production of goods and service, based primarily upon knowledge-intensive activities, was now undertaken by "knowledge workers", a term invented by Peter Drucker.

Companies hired heads. The work people did, changed frequently, as globalisation forced companies to innovate. People mainly worked in offices, although they could work from anywhere at any time. And the skills people needed as knowledge workers became increasingly complex and continuously changed. Yet, in the main, people still learned to do their jobs in the same way as before - through mass-training.

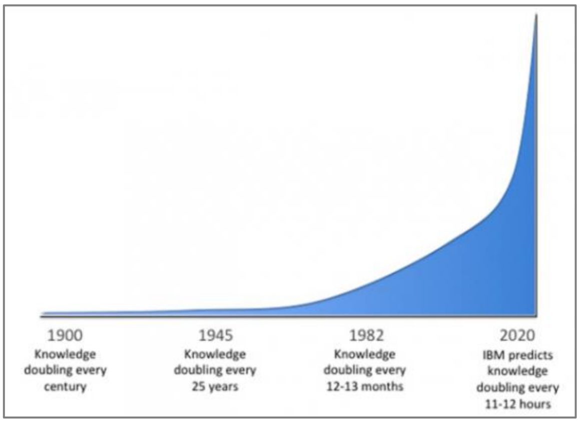
Once again we are now seeing a number of new forces that are fundamentally transforming the world of work – forces that are changing the nature of jobs yet again - which mean a new reality for organisation and for individuals.

For individuals, it means thinking about what it means to be a modern worker, and for organizations, it means thinking about what it means to be a modern manager.

TASK 1

In the next few tasks, we will take a closer look at some of these new forces, but what external factors do you see impacting your own workplace – now and in the future?

2 - Understand the effects of information explosion



Information is **increasing** at a phenomenal rate.

Buckminster Fuller created the "Knowledge Doubling Curve" (see image left) where he illustrated the fact that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century, but by 1945 it was doubling every 25 years.

In 1982, human knowledge was doubling every 12-13 months, and IBM believed that by 2020 knowledge it would be doubling every 12 hours.

To put this into perspective, students who began medical school in the autumn of 2010 will have experienced approximately three doublings in knowledge by the time they completed the minimum length of training (7 years) needed to practice medicine. Students who graduated in 2020 will have experienced four doublings in knowledge.

But although information itself is growing exponentially, the half-life of knowledge (or facts) is **decreasing.** Wikipedia explains that

> *"The half-life of knowledge or half-life of facts is the amount of time that has to elapse before half of the knowledge or facts in a particular area is superseded or shown to be untrue."*

In other words. the time between when knowledge is acquired to when it becomes obsolete is rapidly diminishing. So how quickly is it changing in your own area? Wikiedia notes that

> *"Donald Hebb estimated the half-life of **psychology** to be five years.*
>
> *An **engineering** degree went from having a half life of 35 years in ca. 1930 to about 10 years in 1960.*

According to some, the half-life of skills is also diminishing fast, with some skills having only an 18-month window.

Knowledge and skills now have such a short shelf-life, that it is frequently said that a college degree will be out of date before the loan is paid off. Some educational institutions recognise this, as *The impact of the half-life of facts on education* explains.

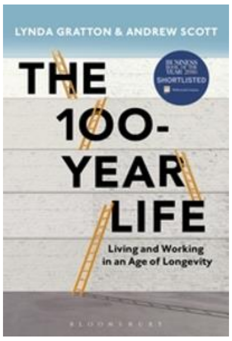
> *"Medicine acknowledges the problem of the change of knowledge. Doctors are taught that much of what they learn will be obsolete in a few years of graduation, and they must always devote time to the latest changes in their field.*
>
> *It's not just about constantly learning new facts, but having the resources to understand how those facts will change and be on top of the information needed to function in the world."*

In the wider world of work ,the implications are that workers will need to be constantly replacing out-of-date knowledge with new knowledge in a continuous process of unlearning and learning.

TASK 2

How do you think information explosion and a shrinking half-life of knowledge will affect your own job as well as those of your team?

3 – Understand how jobs are changing



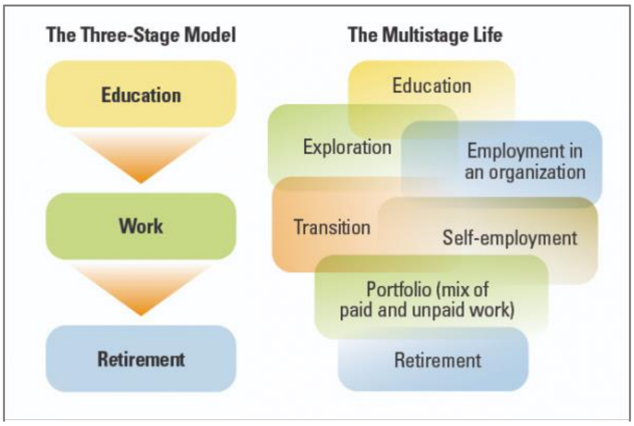
The book, The 100-year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity, written by Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott from the London Business School, shows us that individuals are now living longer than ever, and that as life expectancy continues to rise many people will be routinely working for 60 or 70 years.

A subsequent MITSloan Management report, The corporate implications of longer lives, written by the same authors, explains how few organizations have come to grips with the opportunities and challenges that greater longevity brings.

One of the implications is that the traditional 3-stage model of education-work-retirement will no longer apply, and will be replaced by a multi-staged model, where there are a variety of ways to arrange the steps (see image right).

Sometimes individuals will be in full employment, other times freelancing in the so-called "Freelance-" or "Gig Economy."

The consequence is that the traditional "job for life" model will disappear and will be replaced by a "life of jobs" model, as the report explains



Source: The corporate implications of longer lives

> *"the flexible nature of the modern workforce will likely see a 15-year-old today navigating a portfolio of 17 jobs in 5 different industries."*

It is therefore thought that individuals will change specializations more than once over their career. This will mean building a portfolio of skills over a collection of experiences that will in turn support multiple careers. This is the reality of today's ever-changing world and poses new challenges to all. Furthermore …

> *"As working lives become longer, the need for lifelong learning will increase. As working lives become multi-staged and the sequence of those stages becomes more customized, individuals will take an interest in skills with value that extends beyond the current employer and sector. This will weaken the one-size-fits-all approach to learning and development. Instead, there will be a growing need for more decentralized and flexible approaches to learning, curated more by individuals than by employers.*

The report recognises this will cause the following tensions:

- people want personalization; corporations want conformity
- people want flexibility; corporations want standardization

The authors conclude

> *"We expect the pressure building from these tensions to grow in the years ahead. Without changes in corporate policies, employees will struggle to build working lives that have resilience over an extended period of time and that support healthy and prosperous longevity. In response, companies need to initiate a top-to-bottom redesign of their human resource practices and processes."*

TASK 3

What are the implications for you as a manager with a team of people that changes on a frequent basis?

4 – Understand the implications for workplace learning

In this new environment – this employee economy – the current workplace learning model (i.e the training model) can only achieve so much since it is primarily focused on training people in the essential things they need to know to do their job today.

A continuous self-learning approach, on the other hand, where everyone is responsible for constantly learning means organisations can be more agile, and is the only way forward.

Lindsay Witcher believes that successful companies will be those that embrace the new employee economy.

> *"As the war for talent continues in the years to come, it will be increasingly important to give employees the resources and room they need to grow and progress — or risk losing them altogether to a new opportunity ..*
>
> *This can create quite a paradox for managers and leaders within your organization who aren't sure it's worth taking time and energy to invest in individual employees. The reality is, it's always worth the time. Whether they stay with your company for 3 months, 3 years, or 3 decades, employees will influence your organization and brand for years to come given the new employees relationship economy."*

In fact, providing individuals with the opportunity to take charge of their own self-learning and development in the workplace is not just one way to build a continuous learning mindset, it also gives employees choice, flexibility and ownership of their learning. It also offers a balance between achieving professional and organisational goals, and provides a motivation for the individual that is not often present in many organised learning initiatives, since individuals have significant control over what they actual do to achieve their goals.

So it is a win-win. By taking a greater interest in employees as individuals – with their personal needs and preferences – and helping them to prepare for their own futures, they are more likely to stay in the organisation than seek employment elsewhere.

But, of course, organisations now need workers to be self-sufficient too – that is people who are constantly discovering new things – new ideas, new thinking, new resources – and bring what they learn into the organisation, so that others can benefit from them too. In fact, this is the only way to build a true "learning culture" or "learning organisation".

Managers are the lynchpin in building a successful culture of continuous learning in their organisation, so you will need to manage your people very differently in the new world of work; you will need to become a **modern manager.**

TASK 4

What do you perceive are the opportunities as well as the challenges for building a continuous self-learning culture in your team?

B: Become a modern manager

5 – What does it means to be a modern manager

Managers have traditionally been expected to direct their people's work and performance; their focus has been on improving performance by reducing costs and improving cash flow, rather than on improving the performance of their people. They have not usually been expected to develop employees; this is something that they have traditionally handed off to the L&D department.

But in the modern workplace a new type of leadership behaviour is required to engage and motivate employees. Here are 9 differences between being a manager and a leader:

1 Leaders create a vision, managers create goals
2 Leaders are change agents, managers maintain the status quo
3 Leaders are unique, managers copy
4 Leaders take risks, managers control risk
5 Leaders are in it for the long haul, managers think short-term
6 Leaders grow personally, managers rely on existing, proven skills
7 Leaders build relationships, managers build systems and processes
8 Leaders coach, managers direct
9 Leaders create fans, managers have employees

In particular, modern leaders see the value in developing their teams and spending time with them to help them reach their potential. In fact. Mark Murphy says, in If your employees aren't learning, you're not leading, that there's a strong positive relationship between how much people learn on the job and how much they love their job.

Monique Valcour goes further and says, If you're not helping people develop, you're not management material.

> *"Skilled managers have never been more critical to the success of firms than they are today. Not because employees can't function without direction, but because managers play a vital role in talent management. Gone are the comprehensive career management systems and expectations of long-term employment that once functioned as the glue in the employer-employee contract. In their place, the manager-employee dyad is the new building block of learning and development in firms."*

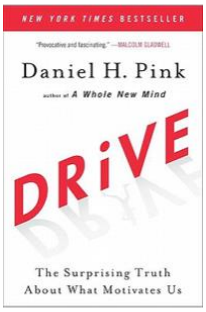
IdeasforLeaders puts it like this

> *"For organizations to learn and adapt, their employees must also learn and adapt. Leaders inspire learning through a range of relationships with direct reports and peers. They must develop relationships that encourage and facilitate individual learning. Different types of learning relationship need distinct personal leadership behaviours. Leaders can adapt to the different learner expectations and create conducive conditions for improving organizations' learning performance".*

TASK 5

Looking at the 9 differences between a leader and a manager, which would you consider yourself to be, and why? What areas do you need to focus on to develop your own modern leadership skils?

6 - Understand the key to motivation at work



Understanding what motivates people at work has always been a complex task, but Dan Pink explains in his book, Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us, how 4 decades of research show human motivation comes from three key elements: Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose.

With respect to Autonomy, Dan Pink writes

"Human beings have an innate drive to be autonomous, self-determined and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives. The opposite of autonomy is control. And since they sit at different poles of the behavioral compass, they point us to different destinations. Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement."

The RSA Animation (on YouTube) Drive the surprsing truth about what motivates us, illustrates the hidden truths behind what really motivates us at home and in the workplace.

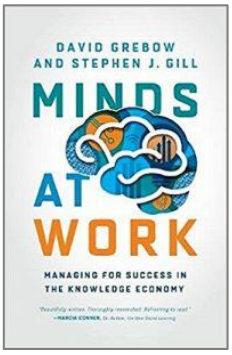
The Centre for Management & Organistion Effectiveness boils motivation down to 3 employee motivation secrets your leadership team needs to know:

- **Invest in their skills and development** – From the moment you hire new team members, you should start investing time, energy, and resources in their skills. This will enable them to be productive employees throughout their tenure with your company.
- **Foster flexibility and freedom** – Having more freedom and flexibility will not only encourage employees to act responsibly, it will also motivate them to stay on track.
- **Reward and recognise** – While money still reigns supreme when it comes to workplace rewards, monetary incentives aren't the only way to keep employees motivated and inspired to give it their all.

TASK 6

What have you learned about human motivation from the video above? How do you think you can apply it to your own work as a manager?

7 - Foster flexibility and freedom



In the modern workplace managers need to take on a very different role from the one they are used to and have been trained to do, in order to help people thrive and survive. They also need to exhibit a very different management style, and one of the key features of a modern leader is relinquishing the old command and control approach.

David Grebow and Stephen J Gill in Minds At Work explain how the command-and-control model dates back to the Roman Empire, if not earlier.

> *"Modern corporations codified this structure to control the numerous hands that needed to be managed. As the Industrial Revolution gained steam, command and control became the accepted approach to building corporations – it was ingrained in the processes and procedures and codified into articles of incorporation used today for old and most new corporations."*

But they point out that a command-and-control management style is often the main barrier to corporate learning.

> *"Command and control stops creativity and centralizes decision-making. The structure erects a wall against the possibility of managing minds because it assumes that the person at the top of the command structure is always right. Open communication is discouraged and reaction to unexpected results is slow, because the flow of information is top-down. Learning is severely limited in an organization where the locus of control is not open to any feedback."*

They go on to say that switching to a people-centred approach means relinquishing control and trusting that employees will not abuse that responsibility. They admit, that this is not easy to do for most managers.

> *"But trying to maintain the illusion – or delusion – that control in today's knowledge economy is even possible is far more dangerous."*

For managers, it means moving from a position of "I tell you what to do and make sure you do it" to one of providing freedom and responsibility for individuals to make their own decisions.

In Evolving Leadership: From Command-and-Control to Engage-and-Align, Bob Marcus believes that *"Our age of disruption demands an evolution in leadership"* but points out that

> *"Engage-and-Align is not about leaders abdicating responsibility or authority. Engage-and-Align leaders still play first-order roles in resource allocation, decision-making and holding people accountable. But they share the responsibilities of, and in some cases, the authority for, leadership more widely.*
>
> *Engage-and-Align is the logical evolution of Hub-and-Spoke leadership—ensuring that the talent within an enterprise contributes its full measure in today's more complex, challenging environment. Engage-and-Align allows teams, functions, and geographies to communicate regularly and collaborate readily without a central hub controlling their interactions and giving orders."*

With respect to workplace learning, this means giving individuals the freedom to learn in the ways that best suit them, and the responsibility to manage their own self-development themselves.

TASK 7

What do you consider to be your own leadership style – Command-and-Control or Engage-and-Align?

If you feel it is more "Command-and-Control", what could you do to move towards Engage-and-Align?

8 - Build a growth mindset

In **Task 3** of **A Guide of Individuals** it was explained how it was important to develop a growth mindset, but it is important for managers to have a growth mindset too.

As a reminder, according to Carol Dweck, who has done decades of research on achievement and success, and who wrote the book, Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential …

> *"Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others) have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts)."*

So why is it important for you as a manager to have a "growth mindset"? Monique Valcour explains in People won't grow if you think they can't change.

> *"Believing that employees can change doesn't just make managers more willing and able to coach; evidence also suggests that it makes them more accurate judges of improvements or drops in performance. Leaders with a fixed mindset are less likely to notice a change, especially in someone whom they've judged (either favorably or unfavorably) in the past. And this behavior can alienate top performers and undermine motivation.*
>
> *The people who are most committed to learning are likely to leave or disengage if learning opportunities are scarce or if their growth goes unrecognized. On the other hand, when leaders do demonstrate a belief in people's ability to grow, research shows that employees are more motivated to improve their performance, more satisfied with their jobs, and less likely to quit."*

More and more organisations are beginning to understand the importance of a growth mindset, so how can you you cultivate this attitude in their team?

In The Manager's Guide to Developing a Growth Mindset, Steffen Mainer, points to the importance of feedback in developing a growth mindset.

> *"Feedback is not only helpful for improving your employees' performance, but also allows you to pinpoint adjustments that need to be made to your management style …*
>
> *Remember that employees with fixed and growth mindsets may react differently to your feedback. If an employee becomes defensive or emotional when you review their performance, this may be a sign that they have a fixed mindset. To create a positive feedback culture, it's essential that you coach your employees on how to open themselves up to and benefit from feedback."*

TASK 8

Firstly, do you have a growth mindset? If not, work through Task 3 of A Guide for Individuals. If you believe you do, what characteristics do you exhibit.

Secondly, how you can begin to build a growth mindset in your own team?

9 – Give regular feedback

There is definitely an art in giving feedback – but this is something that improves with practice.

> *"Feedback can be difficult to give, especially when it deals with behaviour or a character flaw. And as humans we tend to avoid it. But, feedback, similar to exercise, gets better and easier when the muscle is stretched on a regular basis.*
>
> *You will notice a strength and organizational dynamic that comes with real-time, direct feedback. Think of giving feedback as a gift."*

In Want to be a better manager? Start by ditching these three excuses to avoid giving feedback, the author lays out the reasons why many managers avoid giving feedback – and provides a mantra to overcome each one.

1 "I don't want to feel uncomfortable" > "This is going to be uncomfortable – and that's normal"

2 "I don't want to make them feel bad" > "I want the best for my team"

3 "I'm scared this will impact our relationship" > "A healthy relationship is one that has open communication, not hidden frustrations"

In The Feedback Fallacy, Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall write.

> *"The search for ways to give and receive better feedback assumes that feedback is always useful. But the only reason we're pursuing it is to help people do better. And when we examine that—asking,* How can we help each person thrive and excel? *—we find that the answers take us in a different direction."*

Feedback about performance should be part of a regular conversation rather than something for an annual performance review. A survey of professionals showed that while significant amounts of time and energy are spent on annual performance reviews, they miss the mark for helping employees become better at their jobs. Feedback just once a year is "disappointing and "ineffective".

> *"It's critical that managers regularly have conversations about performance throughout the year, which is far more effective in* ***driving performance improvement*** *than trying to have a conversation about what people could or should be doing differently at the same time that you are sharing compensation information with them."*

All this requires a different type of management style – one more akin to being a coach than a manager – as we will consider in the next Task.

TASK 9

How do you think you could change or improve your approach to giving feedback in the context of having a growth mindset?

10 – Be more of a coach than a boss

> *"Twenty-first-century managers simply don't (and can't!) have all the right answers. To cope with this new reality, companies are moving away from traditional command-and-control practices and toward something very different: a model in which managers give support and guidance rather than instructions, and employees learn how to adapt to constantly changing environments in ways that unleash fresh energy, innovation, and commitment. The role of the manager, in short, is becoming that of a coach …*
>
> *Increasingly, coaching is becoming integral to the fabric of a learning culture—a skill that good managers at all levels need to develop and deploy. We should note that when we talk about coaching, we mean something broader than just the efforts of consultants who are hired to help executives build their personal and professional skills. That work is important and sometimes vital, but it's temporary and executed by outsiders. The coaching we're talking about—the kind that creates a true learning organization—is ongoing and executed by those inside the organization. It's work that all managers should engage in with all their people all the time, in ways that help define the organization's culture and advance its mission. An effective manager-as-coach asks questions instead of providing answers, supports employees instead of judging them, and facilitates their development instead of dictating what has to be done."*
>
> (Source: The Leader as Coach)

Although one of the primary responsibilities of managers is to develop talent, there are some who take this role more seriously than others.

> *"There are managers who coach and managers who don't. Leaders in the latter category are not necessarily bad managers, but they are neglecting an effective tool to develop talent."*

This is the thrust of the Harvard Business Review article, 4 reasons managers should spend more time on coaching. The 4 reasons being:

1. They see coaching as essential for achieving business goals
2. They enjoy helping people develop
3. They are curious
4. They are interested in establishing connections

Keith Ferrazzi, writing in Forbes magazine, explains that although managers traditionally provided coaching to their people, over-stretched managers often don't have the time to do so nowadays, yet top executives believe there is an urgent need to ignite their managers to coach employees. He therefore provides six practical tips to help managers "*slip back into the role of coach as effortlessly and efficiently as possible*", as follows

1. Use regular one-on-one check-ins
2. Encourage more peer-to-peer coaching
3. Create mentoring partnerships
4. Tap into the potential coach within everyone
5. Support daily learning and development activities
6. Seek formal training

Although managers may believe they need to have formal training to become a coach, Lisa Quast points out that whilst training can be helpful, coaching is all about helping others achieve results or overcome obstacles to where they want to be in the future.

She talks about an approach she calls “coaching in the moment” that doesn’t require lengthy training since all it entails is the ability to observe others, ask questions and listen to their responses.

> *“The 3 coaching “in-the-moment” questions:*
> *1 – What went well?*
> *2 – What didn’t go as well as expected?*
> *3 – If you had a do-over – what would you do differently?”*

Of course, managers first need to identify “coaching moments”, and Beth Armknecht Miller provides a list of common opportunities when this might be done, including verbal and written communications, decision-making speed, and teamwork.

She then recommends, once an opportunity to coach has been observed, that the manager starts by asking “May I share an observation with you?” or something similar.

In Jonathan Passmore’s TrainingZone article ‘In the moment’ coaching: How can managers encourage it and what are the benefits? he writes

> *“Evidence shows that ‘in the moment’ coaching is a more efficient and effective learning tool than traditional instruction. Businesses with a strong coaching culture have a larger percentage of highly engaged employees than other organisations, which is crucial considering the current job market demand for a competitive employee experience.*
>
> *Whilst some managers may already be applying coaching tactics to their management style, there is always a benefit to honing these skills and developing an overall coaching culture within the organisation. Leaders can consider offering formal training to managers, offering further information on the benefits of coaching-driven management, and advising managers on the development of such a style.”*

TASK 10

How would you rate your own coaching skills? How do you think you could improve your “coaching in the moment” skills?

C: Promote reflective practices

K - Promote reflective practices

Task 9 in **A Guide for Individuals** explained the importance of reflection as a way for individuals to learn from their daily work experiences – for as John Dewey tells us

"We do not learn from experience … we learn from reflecting on experience."

It was then recommended (in **Task 10**) that individuals should set up a Work Diary as a way to record their daily reflections.

As a manager it therefore makes a lot of sense to encourage reflective practices in your team – both as a personal, private activity and as a collective, team activity.

In the latter case, the whole team is able to learn together by reflecting as a group – so that lessons learned from experiences are not lost, and inspirational ideas don't go to waste.

One way to promotive collective reflective practices might be by starting a small project where a team of people work together experimenting with reflective journalling as part of capturing and sharing experiences.

Jon Moon writes about such a project. Here are a few soundbites from his LinkedIn post.

> *"The founding premise was very simple, last thing each working day before logging off, the participants would all go onto our shared blog platform and write a short post reflecting on their day. These posts were aimed to be brief reflections and we established a rule of thumb that 100 words was plenty to keep the others interested in reading the posts …*
>
> *"One of the first observations on the project was how quickly everyone adopted the experiment and routinely posted and commented on each others posts, offering support, advice and even just a motivational boost …*
>
> *"Outside of the project group, however, was an unplanned outcome, in the development of a community of followers who didn't interact with the blog posts very much, if at all, but would in conversation make reference to having read our posts."*

A number of lessons were learned from Jon's project, and this included

> *"… whilst reflective practice like this is similar to keeping a diary, the fact of it being on a platform accessible by others gives it a significant advantage over diary keeping.*
>
> *This advantage is that other people do read it, as evidenced in the project by the number of non-participants making reference to items from posts in day-to-day conversations."*

TASK 11

First of all consider your own reflective practices; how do you reflect, record and share what you have learned from your daily experiences?

Now think about how you might support reflective practices in your team. Will it simply be encouraging personal reflection or will you aim towards collective reflection?

D: Put learning centre-stage

12 - Ask your team what they are learning

In *Learning how to develop others* (no longer available online), Steve Roesler suggested managers encourage their people to think of themselves as "professional learners".

He recommends that one way to do this is, in meetings or in one-on-one conversations, to make a point of asking: *"What have you learned today?"*

The manager then needs to lead the way, and start by sharing what he or she has learned. This not only provides concrete examples for the team to emulate, but also demonstrates how the manager values their own learning.

The team might give examples about what they have learned …

- from an experience that had in or out of work
- from something someone said to them (or they overheard)
- from watching a video or reading a book
- from something they found out quite by chance – i.e. serendipitously.

In other words it doesn't have to be something they learned from a formal learning experience, ie in training or on a course.

This simple activity is very easy to do, and is also very important because

- it shows how much learning is valued
- it helps people to think about what they are learning
- it helps them to "extract" the learning from their work experiences
- it helps them to value all kinds of learning – both formal and informal
- it shows the importance of collective reflection.

It might seem an artificial activity, especially as the first time it takes place it may take some time to complete, since individuals are likely to struggle to remember something they have learned. But once it becomes a normal part of any meeting, individuals will come prepared for the question.

In fact, encouraging your team members to keep a work diary (as mentioned in the previous Task) means that everyone has at at their fingertips examples of what they have learned from their work. And it also shows (a) how valuable this personal activity is in the workplace and (b) becomes embedded in everyday work.

There may also be opportunities to modify the question, and add to the "*what did you learn today?*, e.g.

- How did you learn that?
- Where have you seen yourself improve most in the past year?
- What have you learned in one situation that you can now use in others?
- How could you improve the chances to learn serendipitously?

All these questions will help your team to start to focus on the learning that happens ***naturally*** as part of daily work and which they largely take for granted, but which is so important in the workplace. Additionally, they will be able to look back at their daily reflections and see how they have progressed at work.

TASK 12

How can you ensure that learning is kept centre stage in your team meetings and activities?

E: Build a team-sharing culture

13 - Understand why knowledge sharing is important

Knowledge sharing, at its best, takes advantage of an organisation's most valuable asset – the collective expertise of its employees and partners, as Peter Senge explains in The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organisation.

"Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them … Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes. It is about "working together", "helping each other" and "collaboration"".

However, a knowledge sharing culture is not something that can be imposed on a team; it is something that grows within a team, as Christopher Meyers explains.

> *"Leaders tend to place a disproportionate emphasis on tools like training materials or knowledge portals partly because they are easier to manage and control. It is less clear how to manage amorphous, interactive learning processes; you can't simply force coworkers to interact and share experiences.*
>
> *However, more often than not, leaders simply need to remove obstacles that discourage people from seeking or sharing knowledge and learning vicariously."*

When team members work together closely, share reflections and resources on a regular basis, they continuously learn from each other.

However, if knowledge sharing is seen as extra to the daily work it won't become a habit, so it will means ensuring it becomes an integral part of everyday work.

In fact, you will need to grasp every opportunity to bring your team together and share, as Liz Ryan explains.

> *"Grab every opportunity you can to let employees talk together and build community. Every training session is a trust-building opportunity, if it's led that way. Every meeting can build glue on your team as well. Whenever employees are together face or face or virtually, it's a chance to build relationships."*

In other words, knowledge sharing needs to become a part of every meeting, huddle, or group activity.

TASK 13

What are you doing to encourage your team to share their knowledge and experiences with one another?

14 – Make the most of your collaboration platform

Although knowledge sharing doesn't require any social tools to take place, social technologies can make the process of sharing much easier. Although a team might share experiences in meetings and in other in-person sessions, a lot of the good stuff can easily be lost and forgotten.

So, the purpose of a team space is, then, to extend interaction and communication between members of a work team or group, rather than replace any face-to-face conversations and discussions. It can also help team members work more closely together, and in doing so learn from one another on a daily basis.

Christopher Myers puts it well in a Harvard Business Review, Is your company encouraging employees to share what they know?.

> *"Creating a common space that individuals recognize as the gathering place for sharing ideas and experiences lays the foundation for these interactions to unfold."*

Other benefits of using social technologies are wide-ranging:

- the ability to capture and retain organisational knowledge – by team members sharing their tacit knowledge and experiences with one another
- improved communication – through faster access to information
- a reduction in face-to-face meetings – as both synchronous and asynchronous conversations can take place online with all supporting resources in one place
- less reliance on email – by replacing email distribution lists with online conversations
- improved employee engagement – by "humanising the workspace"
- accelerating team work – around common projects and collaborative activities
- the ability to gain valuable insights into work status, problems and issues arising, as these become more visible in the conversations.

However, knowledge sharing doesn't just happen simply by making use of an online team space, and it certainly won't be successful if the team is compelled to start "being social". Furthermore, as Susan Hanley explains

> ***"You don't need 100% adoption to be successful – you need meaningful outcomes.***
>
> *All the planning and preparation and communications in the world will not get 100% adoption – and that's OK."*

So, rather than focusing on tracking social activity on your collaboration platform – like clicks, views, likes, posts and follows – to measure the success of the team's social sharing, focus on understanding how it is enabling and contributing to your team's improved performance. For instance, this might be measured in terms of:

- **increased sales:** how your team can more quickly and effectively work together collaboratively on a proposal, by tapping into the knowledge and experience of other experts in the team who have worked with the prospective client or on a similar project in the past.
- **improved productivity:** how by working more closely together on projects and sharing what they are doing, problems can be become more visible and meetings can also be kept to a minimum.
- **improved job retention:** how through improved engagement, a humanised workplace and a feeling of recognition and belonging, there is less absenteeism and job loss.

In the end these are the kind of "measures that matter".

Although you will probably have a clear idea about what you are looking for in terms of performance improvements, it may well be that knowledge sharing brings about other unexpected benefits – so you will need to keep a look out for these too. This might include the "feel-good factor" which can lead to increased employee engagement.

It is important to remember, that these qualitative improvements are just as important as business improvements.

But the more the social platform is used for real work, then the more likely it will be that people will see it as a natural place to share and learn, which is why team collaboration tools have proven to be more popular than enterprise social networks.

TASK 14

What performance indicators you will be looking for to measure the success of knowledge sharing in your team?

15 – Help your team see the value of sharing

Whilst technology-enabled knowledge sharing will undoubtedly bring business benefits including improved communications and productivity, team work and ultimately business performance, individuals will want to know what value it will bring to them.

In an article (no longer online) Michael Fauscette explains the rationale for knowledge sharing for individuals.

> *"Building a knowledge sharing culture requires trust, but it also must become the accepted norm. This means that the organization establishes that sharing knowledge helps you do your job better, it gets rewarded both in incentives and in career development and growth for getting things done, and it garners personal recognition. If knowledge sharing behavior is a key component to why you keep your job then culture will change."*

Knowledge sharing is not something to be forced but encouraged and supported, and there will likely be people who still are reluctant to share. There are two main reasons for this – **personal** and **organisational**.

(1) **Personal reasons**

Here are some of the personal reasons why individuals don't participate, and some of the ways that you can address them:

They think that what they have to share is obvious – They will need to be reassured that what they think might be obvious to them, is not likely to be so for others. You might point them to examples where someone has shared something and others have commented on how valuable it was for them.

They see sharing as extra to their daily work – This might be due to the fact that they don't see sharing as a daily habit; it needs to become an integral part of their job.

They don't see the WIIFM (What's in It For Me) – David Gurteen provides some pragmatic advice on how to motivate people to share.

> *"The real answer is to help people see for themselves that knowledge sharing is in their personal interest … If people understand that sharing their knowledge helps them do their jobs more effectively; helps them retain their jobs; helps them in their personal development and career progression; rewards them for getting things done (not for blind sharing); and brings more personal recognition, then knowledge sharing will become a reality."*

They believe that "knowledge is power", and that by sharing their knowledge they feel they are losing some of that power – This is a common feeling for many who have spent a long time acquiring knowledge, but as Julian Stodd points out in There's no point in knowledge if you don't share it …

> *"In the social age, knowledge itself is no longer power: your ability to synthesise meaning out of multiple sources, your ability to add value, to reinvent yourself and effect change, your generosity of time and expertise, these are the things that add value. These are the things that make you influential, that give you authority around a subject. It's not about what you know and hide away, it's about the conversations that you get into and how generous you are (and how willing you are to learn)."*

(2) Organisational reasons

There are also a number of other significant reasons why people are reluctant to share, which have a lot to do with the organisational (or team) culture.

Being told to share – This is particularly annoying when it is done by those who are not sharing themselves, e.g. managers and others who take a "don't do as I do, but do as I say" approach. This is why you need to be a role model and share yourself too.

Being forced to share – Those who are comfortable with sharing, don't like being forced to share in a prescribed way in a social group. And those who are unfamiliar with sharing, don't like being forced to share with others they don't know very well. Forcing people to share will only be counter-productive.

Lack of trust – Moderating what people share does nothing for building engagement and participation. Trust is cheaper than control.

Over-monitoring of sharing – Checking who is sharing and reprimanding those who are not, will only have a negative impact. The goal is not the amount of social activity but the value that social collaboration is bringing to the individuals.

Rick de Marco summarises the position very well, in Leaders who think they can control everything are setting themselves up for disappointment …

> *"A control freak will face a difficult, if not impossible task trying to create a culture of collaboration and engagement. That culture requires an environment of trust, openness, candor, creativity, and a willingness to share the best ideas from everyone on the team. And that only happens when the leader stops trying to control people and situations and focuses more on inspiring them."*

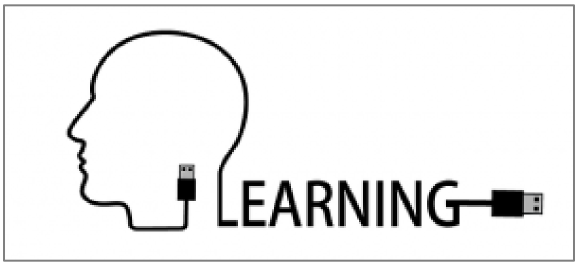
TASK 15

What can you do to encourage your team to share their knowledge and experiences with one another?

PART TWO: CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

F: Foster learnability

16 – What is learnability?



In **Task 4** it was shown how organisations now need workers to be continuously and independently learning. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Mara Swan in a Harvard Business Review article, It's the company's job to help people learn explain

> *"most jobs today demand … the capacity to keep learning and developing new skills and expertise, even if they are not obviously linked to one's current job. As academic reviews have pointed out, people's employability – their ability to gain and maintain a desired job – no longer depends on what they already know, but on what they are likely to learn."*

A special report in The Economist, Lifelong learning is becoming an economic imperative, explained how organisations need "**learning agile people",** in fact it said that the ability of individuals to learn fast and learn well was critical to organisational survival, and that the economy depends on people learning throughout their careers.

> *"To remain competitive, and to give low- and high-skilled workers alike the best chance of success, economies need to offer training and career-focused education throughout people's working lives."*

This capacity or skill is known as both "learning agility" and "learnability". It is the ability to keep learning and developing new skills and expertise, even if they are not obviously linked to one's current job. Learnability (or learning agility) is therefore one of the key skills of the employee economy. Although some companies are now recruiting people with this skill, Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Mara Swan are too well aware that this is not always the case.

> *"Sadly, most organisations have yet to wake up to this reality, so they continue to pay too much attention to academic qualifications and hard skills, as if what entry-level employees had learned during university actually equipped them for today's job market."*

Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Mara Swan therefore make the following three recommendations how to foster learnability in the workplace:

1 **Select for it:** To maximize the benefit of limited training investments, focus on employees with higher learnability: curious and inquisitive individuals who are genuinely interested in acquiring new knowledge.

2 **Nurture it:** Managers who want their employees to learn new things should encourage that behaviour by doing it themselves. We are all time-deprived, but high learnability people make the time to learn new things.

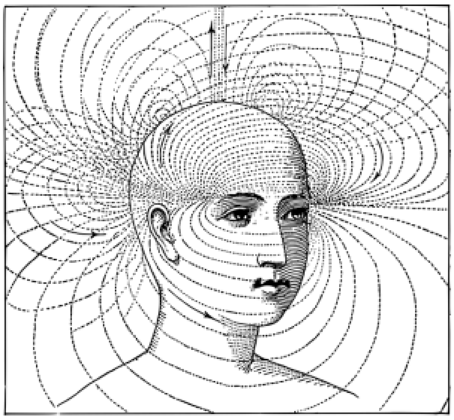
3 **Reward it:** If you want to change people's behaviour, you should show them that you mean it. It is not enough to hire curious people and hope they display as much learnability as you do. You should also reward them for doing so.

We'll take a closer look at these three aspects in the next few Tasks.

TASK 16

Do you currently consider "learnability" or "learning agility" a necessary capability for the members of your team? What do you think you could do to value it as a key skill for the future?

17 – Select for learnability



Some organisations are already looking for "learnability" or "learning agility" when they recruit new employees. Eric Schmidt from Google, for instance, looks for "learning animals" – people he describes as curious and inquisitive, and who are genuinely interested in acquiring new knowledge.

Accenture is another.

> *"For the recruitment team of Accenture, the new approach means that they will have to embrace learning agility as a key factor in the search and selection process. …*
>
> *recruiters will have to be able to recognise the 'intellectual curiosity' of candidates, in addition going forward the approach will have to systematically be embedded in Accenture's overall recruitment strategy and working procedures."*

In other words, in addition to checking off a list of competencies or capabilities for a job, you also need to look for curiosity and a desire to continuously learn and self-develop – as a key skills.

To ascertain a potential new recruit's level of learnability you might ask them for evidence of:

- recent learning experiences – both at work and outside the workplace
- how they are applying what they have learned in their job
- how they are self-sufficient in problem solving
- how they set their own professional goals and how they achieve them
- how they keep up to date with their profession
- how they tracking their professional self-development
- how they ensure they stay relevant in the workplace

So, can learnability be measured?

The Manpower Group has developed a web-based visual assessment to assess an individual's Learnability Quotient (LQ), and the results are expressed via three dimensions:

- **Adventurous** – the intrinsic desire to explore
- **Intellectual** – the motivation to learn
- **Unconventional** – questions the status quo.

The score indicates someone's level of motivation for self-development which then allows an organisation to make decisions around how to nurture them and their ongoing development needs.

TASK 17

What process can you put in place to ensure selecting learnability is part of your recruitment strategy?

18 – Nurture learnability

When it comes to learnability, obviously not everyone will be at the same level. Experis (part of the Manpower Group) has identified 3 different levels of learnability – as well as some brief ideas to nurture them

> ***"High learners –*** *These are workers who are positive about their job prospects. They take responsibility for their own training and development. They're eager to learn, and would even consider moving jobs for skills training. Employers need to focus on creating opportunities to keep these individuals engaged.*
>
> ***Potential learners –*** *Potential Learners recognise that training and development will lead to career success – but they're not quite High Learners yet. By offering safe learning environments and regularly talking about their future career, you'll help them to map out attainable development goals with clear pathways and outcomes.*
>
> ***Lower learners –*** *Our research found that 7% of the workforce are 'Low Learners'. They don't have much of an appetite for training at all. It may be a challenge to move this group up. So employers should assess learnability factors early-on and make them a part of the initial hiring discussion."*

What do these learnability levels mean in terms of their engagement with self-learning and self-development?

High learners will find continuous self-learning and self-development a joy and a natural part of who they are.

Potential learners will probably respond to the rationale for continuous learning in terms of keeping themselves marketable,

Lower learners won't see continuous self-learning as a necessary or, indeed, a part of their job description, so this means they will likely will need a lot of persuasion to be willing to engage in it, as well as have the competence and confidence to do more things for themselves.

Clearly, it will be useful to understand every team learnability level so he or she can be helped in the best possible way for them.

TASK 18

What would be the best way for you to discover the learnability level of your team members? Through one-to-one conversations, an online assessment (like the Manpower LQ survey mentioned in the previous Task) or something else?

Is this something you would want to undertake, or something you would need help with?

19 – Reward learnability

Finally, if you are serious about learnability as a business skill, it will mean rewarding high learnability.

In This skill could save your job – and your company, Mara Swann talks more about how to do this.

> *"Put your money where your mouth is when promoting learning. We've all seen how well monetary incentives and competition work in motivating employees to change their physical fitness habits – think of team Fitbit challenges – so why can't we do the same for mental fitness?*
>
> *We could reward employees who organize internal activities that promote learnability, such as bringing in external speakers, hosting roundtable discussions or simply writing a blog and sharing challenging pieces on social media.*
>
> *Consider rewarding learnability by only promoting employees to a higher level after they have gained lateral expertise in other departments. The best employees want to broaden their expertise, so provide them with opportunities to challenge themselves."*

Mara concludes the article, by saying …

> *"If you've managed to build a team of employees hungry to learn and grow – good. But the job doesn't stop there. The kind of organization that will survive into the future needs to successfully feed those learnability cravings and keep the virtuous cycle turning."*

TASK 19

What might you do to reward learnabilty in your team?

G: Lead the way

20 – Lead the way!

When it comes to continuous self-learning and self-development, you will need to lead the way. Why is this important?

In How leaders face the future of work, Lynda Gratton (one of the authors of the book, *The 100 Year Life*) explains that leaders needs to actively champion the learning agenda, by making their involvement in learning initiatives a priority, and by role-modelling adult learning through their own development activities.

This means showing your team how you are continuously learning for yourself but, more importantly what you are achieving because of this. After all, you won't be able to instill a continuous self-development mindset in others, unless you have one yourself. So, it's not about telling your team members to continuously self-develop, but demonstrate how you are already putting this into practice yourself.

In other words, continuous self-learning is just as important for **you** as for your team, as Kenneth Mikkelson and Harold Jarche point out in their article, The best leaders are constant learners.

> *"As we attempt to transition into a networked creative economy, we need leaders who promote learning and who master fast, relevant, and autonomous learning themselves. There is no other way to address the wicked problems facing us. If work is learning and learning is the work, then leadership should be all about enabling learning."*

In 10 skills every modern manager needs – but 90% of managers lack, Liz Ryan names this skill as one important leadership skill.

> *"Every manager needs to learn to manage his or her own career, completely apart from managing their department. We are all free agents now. We are all independent economic units. Leadership training can incorporate the idea of career self-determination and help managers develop their own long-term career plans, whether those plans keep them in the company that provided the training or take them far away from it!"*

In fact *"Leaders grow personally, managers rely on existing, proven skills*" was one of the 9 differences between being a manager and a leader**.** cited earlier.

> *"Leaders know if they aren't learning something new every day, they aren't standing still, they're falling behind. They remain curious and seek to remain relevant in an ever-changing world of work. They seek out people and information that will expand their thinking. Managers often double down on what made them successful, perfecting existing skills and adopting proven behaviors."*

TASK 20

Are you leading the way in your team? Are you a "constant learner" – continuously learning and developing yourself? What benefits are you seeing from doing this?

If you are not a constant learner, then in the next Task we'll take a look at what you might do to improve this**.**

21 – Become a constant learner

Are you a constant learner who continuously seeks out new ideas and thinking?

As has been shown in Part Two of **A Guide for Individuals**, this doesn't mean taking a series of formal training events or online classes, the easiest way to do so it to establish a daily self-learning habit so that you learn something new every day.

It is a powerful way to acquire a new body of knowledge, skill, or achieve any self-improvement goal – almost without realising it. It doesn't have to involve studying. It's more about making the most of what the Web has to offer

Of course, what you do doesn't necessarily have to be work-related. However, if you are time-deprived you will probably want to focus on keeping up to date with your industry or profession as it changes. The rationale for doing this on a regular basis is clear

- Staying up-to-date with new trends within your industry can keep you ahead of the curve and benefit both the work that you do now as well as your long-term professional success.
- It doesn't matter what your role is in the organisation, being on the ball and keeping up with industry news and trends will help you gain valuable new experiences, enhance your expertise, as well as help you identify potential opportunities for professional growth, and in doing so it will give you a competitive edge in the job market or positioning yourself for a promotion.
- Staying informed about "the new frontiers of knowledge" can also increase your credibility and value in your industry or profession.
- By staying ahead of the curve – rather than simply staying current – when change happens, you will be well prepared for it.

Take a look at **Tasks 22-30** in **A Guide for Individuals** for guidance on establishing your own daily self-learning habit.

TASK 21

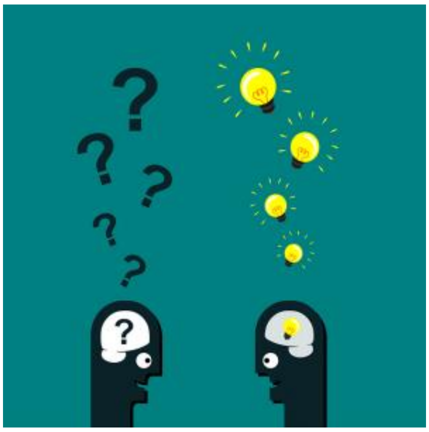
What will your purpose, goal or aim for your daily self-learning habit?

When will you set aside the time to do so?

How will you know whether it has been successful?

H: Adopt a continuous self-development strategy in your team

22 – Select a self-development strategy



So, how do you adopt a continuous self-development strategy in your own team?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach; it depends on a number of factors – not least the working environment and practices of your team

A Guide for Individuals offered two main strategies for self-learning and self-development. They are not mutually exclusive, but it may be that you prefer to adopt one or other of them in your team – or maybe even a mix of the two!

The first option is to **encourage a daily self-learning habit** – so that your team members spend some time every day, learning something new for themselves (See **Tasks 22-30** in **A Guide for Individuals**:)

The second option is to make use of a more **structured professional development process**, where your team members set up a Professional Development Plan (that records their professional goals, the activities they will undertake to achieve those goals, and how they will evidence their achievements) and then manage the process themselves. (See **Tasks 37-50** in **A Guide for Individuals**:)

The first option is the more flexible of the two, in as much as you are giving your people free rein to do what they wish in their self-learning time, and there is no process in place to either check what they have done other than to encourage them to share good ideas, etc with the rest of the team.

The second option is a more formalised process where everything is documented, recorded and tracked – but which means they can take advantage of a wider range of self-development opportunities.

Your decision as to which self-development approach to implement will undoubtedly be determined by the following factors:

(b) the amount of **time** you are prepared to provide for self-development, we'll look at that in the **Task 23**;

(a) the amount of **control** you wish to have over the whole process, e.g. whether you want to ensure that the time provided has been well spent and that performance goals have been met

(c) the amount of **support** you are able to provide for this activity – we'll look at what that involves in **Task 24**.

As stated above, your decision will largely depend on the work of your team and the learnability levels of your team members. Nevertheless, you should aim to be as flexible as possible as you can.

TASK 22

Before we consider the aspects of time and support, which self-development option do you currently favour for your team?

23 – Provide time for self-learning and development

A Guide for Individuals showed that the most popular time commitment for self-learning and development is around **2-3 hours a week (or 20-30 minutes a day)**.

However, Empact explained why constant learners all embrace the 5-hour rule.

> *"Throughout Ben Franklin's adult life, he consistently invested roughly an hour a day in deliberate learning. I call this Franklin's five-hour rule: one hour a day on every weekday …*
>
> *Franklin's five-hour rule reflects the very simple idea that, over time, the smartest and most successful people are the ones who are constant and deliberate learners."*

So if you are serious about adopting a self-learning and self-development strategy in your team you will need to provide some "protected" self-development time for each individual. So here are some questions to think about:

1 How much time are you prepared to give them? 2-3 hours a week? Or more?

2 Could you perhaps offer them some protected learning time during the working day, and ask them also to devote some of their own time to it? What would be the WIIFM that would convince them this was a good deal?

3 When will you advise them to work on their self-development? Will they be able to take a "protected learning time break" at any during the day, e.g. in the form of an extended coffee break, or should they make a decision when they are going to work on their self-development activities themselves and stick to it.

4 If they unable to spend their protected learning time in one week, can they carry it over and/or save it for something more substantial, e.g. if you offer 1 hour a week, could they save up 8 weeks worth and then take 1 day off for a conference?

You can see how things can become quite messy when it comes to **time**, so once again you need to be as flexible as possible, otherwise you will be bogged down in the minutiae of recording self-development time.

TASK 23

Now that you have considered the issue of time, has that influenced your decision about the self-development strategy you will adopt in your team?

I: Support support for self-development in your team

24 – Provide support for self-development

When it comes to supporting self-development initiatives, it will be important to consider what you are likely to need and who will provide it.

Although for many high learners, self-development is a natural process of continuous learning and improvement, low learners may struggle with this.

You may therefore get questions like *"I don't know what my goals should be"* and *"I don't know what to learn"*. Some individuals may therefore need quite a bit of structure and support to become comfortable and confident in being self-directed.

Will you be able available to support all self-development initiatives **yourself** as part of your leadership role – or will you want **help** with this - perhaps from your L&D teams? This is an important question, and in the first run, you may want to have someone on hand to help you.

Here are some of the areas that individuals may need help with particularly with respect to a more structured and formalised self-development initiative:

- how to identify their professional goals
- how to decide the best way to evidence their achievements
- how to determine the best resource, event or activity that will help them
- how to keep a learning log and build a digital portfolio
- how to find relevant courses, resources, webinars, conferences, etc.
- how to ask for stretch assignments
- how to find a coach or mentor
- how to shadow a job

There are clearly a number of these areas that L&D team can help you with, so it will be important to work with them to identify what help you require.

Although it will be important to have relevant support in place, this issue shouldn't overshadow the substantial benefits of empowering individuals to be more involved with their self-development initiatives.

It may well be a case of "suck it and see" – that is dealing with any support requests as they arise, and then building on them in the future.

TASK 24

Now that we have considered the issue of **support**, has this influenced your choice of self-development?

J: Provide opportunities for sharing successful self-development stories

25 – Reward success

In **Task 12** we explained the need to for you to keep alive the importance of continuous learning – by asking your team what they have **learned**.

So, it would also be a very useful activity to make time for individuals to share their success stories in terms of what they **achieved** through their continuous self-development initiatives.

In other words, although they will undoubtedly share their learning experiences, the emphasis should focus more on what they can now **do** as a result of it.

These types of events might take a number of formats: They could be within a regular team meeting, or in a Lunch & learn event – where the team come together and has lunch together as well as listen to some inspiring sessions.

They might take place in person or online (using your Zoom or Teams platform) or even be a hybrid event – where some participants are online and others in person. If a virtual presence is involved then the following pieces of advice

- Keep them short – so that they are focused on the essentials
- Keep them interactive – so that other team members can engage with the presenter

Team success sharing events like these are very important, as they are one way to reward learnability by raising the profiles of the individuals concerned. But more significantly, they also demonstrate that you as a manager **value** their self-development activities and their achievements.

TASK 25

How might you best share success stories from your team members?

How regularly would you see these events taking place?

A Guide for L&D

Table of Contents

PART ONE: CONTINUOUS LEARNING FROM THE DAILY WORK

A: Inspire modern managers

1 - Inspire modern managers

The **Introduction to Modern Workplace Learning** showed how there needs to be a new approach to organisational learning and development where

(a) **individuals** take (more) responsibility for their own self-learning - both as they do their jobs as well as in planned self-development activities
(b) **managers** take (more) responsibility for the growth and development of their teams, and
(c) **L&D** enable and support both individuals and managers.

Since managers are the lynchpin for a successful new organisational learning culture in the organisation, it is best to start with them – and establish a group of managers who are ready and willing to make changes in their own and their team's work practices to bring about this mindset and cultural change

Whereas **A Guide for Managers** provides advice and guidance on how managers can adopt a modern "enabling and supporting" leadership style, for many managers this will be a completely new way of working from the traditional "control and command" management style they have been used to. So how can you inspire them to adopt new ways of working and learning in their teams?

The best way to inspire managers to adopt their new role at work is **not** through putting them on a formal leadership program, but rather through other more personal awareness or inspiration activities. Here are just some examples you might consider. Probably, just one of these approaches won't be enough, you will need to initiate a a range of different activities – to inspire different managers at different times.

Draw up a 1 minute elevator pitch: This will ensure you provide a consistent message on the role of the modern manager and the importance of continuous learning - both at work and through self-development. This elevator pitch might come in hand if you meet a manager somewhere who says something like this to you *"What's all this I hear about encouraging people to learn themselves".* You then have a succinct reply to give them. Here are a couple of examples of elevator pitches created by past workshop participants.

> *"Can you tell how you became so good in your job? Did you train to be a Product/R&D Manager…? Most of us haven't been trained for our jobs, yet we have managed pretty well. Reflecting back to when you started your job, can you recall if at times you were yearning for clarity, for guidelines? And today, who do you turn to seek advice on current challenges? In today's modern workplace, employees struggle individually to attain relevant information on the web and from internal resources. We, as managers, can help our employees excel in their jobs quicker, feel accomplished and become engaged, by encouraging knowledge sharing in our teams, by making knowledge resources and platforms available to them, and by providing constructive feedback and guidance. You are most probably doing it already, so let's practice collaboration right now in this forum and share our best practices: how do you support your employees in their learning?"* ***(Ari Pazi)***

> *"Training employees through formal courses takes time, effort, and money, but often provides little benefit in the way of improved performance. You have to request it, source it, purchase it, and book it. Wouldn't it be better to give employees the skills to seek out the answers they need to the everyday problems they encounter without pulling them of the job to attend a course? This is an approach called Continuous Independent Learning. If you choose to to engage with my team and I, we will commit to transforming your team into agile, self-sufficient learners, capable of seeking out their own answers and sharing those solutions with each other. Rather than running through the steps of sourcing training that may or may not improve their performance, you'll be able to promote a bunch of skills and behaviours many of them employ day-to-day. Here's my card. Please call me if you're interested."* **(Conlan Webster)**

Set up a short 1-to-1 meeting with a manager: Use this time to discuss the new role of the manager and how you can work together in the future. You will probably want to draw up a set of notes and questions to work through. This will help you identify their current thinking and approaches as well as the best way for you to work with them. You will of course also answer any questions they have. But be sure to set up a follow-up meeting immediately to take it to the next step, so that that you retain momentum

Find managers in your organisation who are already modernising their leadership style, and taking more interest in the growth and development of their teams. Have conversations with them about what they are doing and what might work in other teams. Invite them to talk to manages at open meeting and workshops you run.

Set up open meetings (or a workshop) and invite managers to come along and discuss the work of the modern manager and how workplace learning is changing. Ideally get them to do some interactive activities to help them understand how workplace learning is changing.

Build a community of practice for like-minded managers who want to continue to discuss their activities and support one another (see more **Tasks 13-15**)

Offer a resource, like **A Guide for Managers** for your managers to work through in their own time but also provide an opportunity for them to feedback to you as well as deal with any queries they have.

Take advantage of any opportunity – in any meeting – or elsewhere, to present your ideas, as well as answer questions and discuss queries.

Bear in mind that you won't be able to change every manager's views on work and learning, so this means it is best to start work – at first – with those who are receptive to the ideas you present.

TASK 1

Thinking about the example of running open meetings/workshops to inspire modern managers, what do you think the agenda for such a workshop would comprise?.

2 - Support modern managers

Once you have inspired managers to adopt new modern management practices, and build a new culture of self-learning and self-development in their teams, you will need to continue to support them as they do so.

It will therefore be important to build a good relationship with each manager so that you can discuss their needs and how you might adequately support them. It may well be that they want personal one-to-one help or they may be happy to have sessions with other managers who also require support in different areas of their work. Once again it won't be about putting them on a leadership programme, but providing very bespoke support in the ways that they want it – and fit in with their work schedules too.

With some managers you may need to provide little or no support – they will intuitively understand that this is an effective approach to growing and developing their team. Others, however, who are less confident or less in tune with the realities of the modern workplace, may need a lot more help and guidance.

Some of the topics they might wish to discuss may well lend themselves to group sessions – in which case it could mean using in-house or external specialists to offer their expertise and experience with a group of managers. Examples of topics like this might:

building a growth mindset (see **Task 8** in **A Guide for Managers**) – this is probably a very new concept for many – not just for them personally but also in terms of how, as managers they need to have a growth mindset for their team members.

coaching in the moment (see **Task 9** in **A Guide for Managers**) – although coaching programmes do exist in many organisations, what is required here is support with "lite" coaching, and understanding how to take advantage of situations when they could provide some very constructive feedback to one of their team members

adopting reflective practices in their team (see **Task 11** in **A Guide for Managers**) – although reflection is something that many people do on ad hoc basis, reflective practices take time to establish, so managers might like to hear more about how others are adopting this in their teams, and particularly the benefits they are seeing.

recruiting for learnability (see **Task 17** in **A Guide for Managers**)– it was established that "learnability" is now a key skill for the future, so how can a manager assess learnability in a new hire? Who might help them to develop a selection process that allows them to gauge the learnability level of a recruit – and in fact for the current members of their team?

There will be of course be other aspects of the modern manager's work where you will need to provide bespoke support, and this might particularly be the case when managers come to adopt self-development practices in their own teams – so we'll consider that later in this Guide.

TASK 2

How committed are you and your L&D team to working with managers and supporting them to change their work practices?

Do you have staff experienced enough to do this, as well as the time to work very closely with managers as their partners and advisors?

Support learning in the flow of work

3 – Understand the 5 moments of need

When it comes to supporting learning from the daily work, modern thinking is now that individuals shouldn't be taken out of the workplace for traditional training events (unless it is absolutely necessary) but to provide more for them as they do their daily jobs.

In fact it is as much about supporting their performance on the job as it is about learning – so this area is also often referred to as performance support.

Rick van Echtelt, CEO at AG5, defines performance support as follows:

> *"'Performance support' refers to the process by which staff get exactly the right information at the right moment to do their jobs to the highest possible level."*

Rick also explains that the underlying theory is based on the Pareto Principle – aka the 80-20 principle, in which Pareto postulated that 80% of outcomes arise from 20% of causes. So, when this is applied to learning, it means you need to learn the basics (20%) before you can start a new task. After that, you only need to understand the details (80%) as and when required.

Bob Mosher and Conrad Gottfredson, the authors of the book, Innovative Performance Support, have shown that there are, in fact, five main occasions when we are motivated to learn new things, which they call The 5 Moments of Need. The YouTube video, The 5 Moments of Need provides an overview of their thinking.

Bob Mosher also explained the 5 moments of need – with some useful examples – in the ATD article, Learning at the Moment of Need – which are summarised below:

- When people are learning how to do something for the first time (**learn new**).
  Example: A first-time supervisor, promoted from within, needs to learn the progressive discipline policies of the organization.
- When people are expanding the breadth and depth of what they have learned (**learn more**)
  Example: The first-time supervisor needs to learn how to conduct a verbal counseling session under the progressive discipline policies of the organization.
- When they need to act on what they have learned, which includes planning what they will do, remembering what they may have forgotten, or adapting their performance to a unique situation (**apply**).
  Example: The first-time supervisor needs to perform the task of conducting a verbal counseling session (acting on what they have learned). This requires the supervisor to plan the encounter, remember what they may have forgotten, and possibly adapt their performance to a unique situation
- When problems arise, or things break or don't work the way they were intended (**solve**).
  Example: During the verbal counseling session, the employee presents the first-time supervisor with new medical documentation and notice that legal counsel has been retained.
- When people need to learn a new way of doing something, which requires them to unlearn deeply ingrained skills and relearn to adjust to new practices, requirements, and so forth (**change**).
  Example: In response to legal challenges, the organization has significantly changed its time and attendance policies and procedures. The first-time supervisor, formerly a line employee of several years, must overcome familiarity with the way it has always been and internalize the new approach.

So whereas the first two moments (**learn new** and l**earn more**) might require specialist knowledge in the form of formal methods of instruction, performance support is most relevant to the third, fourth, and fifth situations where there is a need to **apply**, **solve** or **change** as people do their jobs. Learning in this way is therefore also often referred to as "learning in the workflow".

So what are the benefits of performance support (or learning in the flow of work) – and what are its advantages over more formal training methods?

- It means that individuals don't get overloaded with information on a training course, so whilst they might learn the basics in this way (the 20%), they can learn the details (the 80%) as they do their job.
- It means that individuals don't need to learn something just-in-case they might need to perform a task, but rather they learn something just-in-time to perform that task, where the information will be fresh in their mind.
- It means that individuals can learn new tasks or processes themselves quickly without participating in time-consuming training events.
- It means they can put into practice what they learn straightaway.
- It means they don't have to remember all the details about how to complete a task but rather where they can find the information again if they need it.

TASK

When it comes to the 5 moments of need, what are you doing (or what could you be doing) to ensure you support help the third, fourth, and fifth moments of need, ie where there is a need to **apply**, **solve** or **change** as people do their jobs?

4 - Provide resources

When it comes to supporting learning in the flow of work, there are two main initiatives here, although they are not mutually exclusive:

(1) Individuals become self-reliant and solve their own performance problems (which was discussed in **Task 6** of **A Guide for Individuals**) and

(2) L&D teams provide performance support for team-specific performance problems. This latter initiative falls into two areas: content **and tools** – we'll discuss content in this task and tools in the next Task.

What does it mean to provide content for performance support? Well, we can learn a lot from understanding what people do when they try to solve their own performance problem. Essentially, they go for short, bite-sized pieces of content, rarely do they opt for an e-learning course! And, depending on their own personal preferences as well as the problem in hand, they tend to search out videos or screencasts, so that in the case of tasks that need to be completed they can watch someone carry out the task before they undertake it themselves. However, they might just as frequently also make use of (textual) cheat sheets, checklists or quick reference guides.

Hence when it comes to providing performance support in the form of content, it will be important to create resources rather than courses. Here are the 5 principles of modern resources design.

1 – Create flexible resources that people might use for different purposes: Think how they might be used for a variety of purposes – just-in-time (JIT) learning, reference or as a job aid – possible even as a lite training resource in its own right.

2 – Provide resources in the most appropriate format: Find out from the people what they actually need. Don't assume you know what is best for them. In other words, it is more important to ensure that is appropriate and relevant than make it engaging. It might also need to be available for multiple devices (i.e. don't just design for the desktop) or even to be printed out on paper.

3 – Keep resources as short and simple as possible: Don't over-engineer the content. Don't add bells and whistles to try and improve the content and "engage" the individual. It will may only serve to irritate him/her. But don't dumb down it down either. Ensure it is digestible and palatable. So how short should it be? JD Dillon summarises as follows:

> *"While there is no one-size-fits-all response to this ever-prevalent question, there is a clear answer. It should be as short as possible to address a specific, measurable objective and fit within the audience's available time."*

4 – Ensure resources are flexible and personalizable: Design it so that it can be used in the way that best suits the individual concerned – rather than in any prescribed way, This supports the notion of personalization by the individual – where he or she can decide how much he or she wants to access at any one time.

5 – Make resources easily accessible in the workflow: When it comes to providing resources, don't lock them away in your LMS but host them where they can be easily found, ideally on the organisation's intranet or the team's collaboration platform

Finally, though, remember not to reinvent the wheel – it is not just a matter of creating lots of new content, but curating existing resources for teams.

TASK 4

How might you help your organisation shift from a "courses to resources" approach, so that you focus on creating short, multi-purpose resources that can be embedded in the workflow – rather than long e-learning courses?

5 – Provide performance support tools

When it comes to performance support, most people focus on content – but there are now a wide range of tools available. We will look at some of the key ones here.

Basic tools: Many people use basic performance tools without even realising it, for example *Google Maps, Google Translate, Grammarly*, to name just a few. There are now so many consumer tools that can be used effectively in the workplace, that this means L&D has a great opportunity to help teams locate useful tools that workers can use to support themselves.

Remote desktop sharing: For technical problems, some organisations use remote desktop and screen-sharing software, which means that two computers can be connected together and each can view and control each other's desktops. This software allows people in real-time to support problems remote workers are experiencing on their desktops.

Chatbots: A chatbot, is a piece of software that's designed to simulate a conversation with a (human) user in the interest of giving you information that you want or enable you to complete a transaction.

Conversational or chat bots, often make use of artificial intelligence and natural language processing technologies, and they've been around for some time. Take for instance, Alice and Evie, their purpose is also to learn from you as they chat with you so that they can provide you with better answers to your questions.

It is true that a lot of the mobile chatbots that are to be found in messaging platforms are very primitive in comparison, as they only offer a strict set of preset commands to connect with a user. In other words they won't "understand" anything outside of that command set, so, they certainly wouldn't pass the Turing Test.

But even these simple bots can provide some useful functionality, in as much as they can offer a level of automation or personalisation to content and services that was not achievable before – for example they can make it easier to find something without having to do a Web search, or open up multiple apps.

Chatbots are now common place, and the more sophisticated ones use AI (Artificial Intelligence) methods to support one-to-one conversations as well as automating tasks, like customer service, etc. Here is a useful article with the 16 best AI chatbots in 2022.

When it comes to chatbots for L&D, bear in mind this thought from this ATD article, 3 Lessons L&D Professionals Can Learn From Customer Service Chatbots.

> *" … using a chatbot to support learners in a complex organization has the same "gotchas" as a customer service chatbot. If not implemented well, a chatbot may frustrate learners with less-than-satisfying user experiences. To avoid this, organizations can consider the following best practices:*
>
> *1 Set very clear user expectations*
> *2 Invest in linking up internal systems*
> *3 Iterate and improve*

TASK 5

When it comes to performance support tools, which category/s of tools mentioned above do you feel **you** should find out more about so that you can support workplace performance in other ways than providing content?

C: Help managers solve team performance problems

6 – Use Performance Consulting to solve performance problems

What traditionally happens in a team if a manager feels there is a performance problem? He or she probably phones up the L&D department and asks for a course. This is why L&D is often described as a "course order taker". This situation has arisen since some managers only see solutions to work problems as courses – and yet we know that courses are often not the best solution to a performance problem. Training, in any form, has to be a valid and appropriate response to a need.

Let's take a look at the traditional approach to problem solving more closely:

1 A manager or stakeholder identifies a problem and orders some training from the L&D department. *[He or she has therefore already decided the solution to their problem is a course.]*

2 The project is then picked up by an internal instructional designer or outsourced to a content development company. *[A course is to be designed.]*

3 Sometimes a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is undertaken with the stakeholder or Subject Matter Expert (SME) to find out what needs to be taught, but there is often little discussion with the target group concerned and assumptions are often made about them.
[This tends to lead to a solution that is designed around the content rather than what suits the individuals.]

4 An Instructional Designer (ID) then works with a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to design a solution. The SME provides the knowledge **what** should be learned, and the ID decides **how** it should be learned. The process often employs the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate).
[This is focused on meeting defined learning objectives. It employs a "we know best", approach that is largely based on the application of mainstream training techniques – doing things the way they've always been done (in particular using e-learning templates in authoring tools). It also assumes that a one-size fits all approach is best – so that everyone has the same experience.]

5 A course (of some sort) is then developed and delivered, and each individual's use of it is monitored and tracked in a LMS, where success is largely measured in terms of course completions or test scores.
[But does it solve the performance problem?]

It is clear that this approach may very well result in an inappropriate solution for a problem that brings about no change in the performance problem and/or a frustrating experience for the individuals concerned, since it is based on the premise that training is the (only or right) answer to the problem. In fact, seeing training as the solution to every problem, is akin to using a hammer to crack a nut.

What is more important is bringing about the necessary performance change or improvement that is required, and to do that you need to adopt a Performance Consulting approach to solve performance problems.

The **Performance Consulting** approach focuses on fully understanding the performance problem in hand, and identifying whether it is due to something like inadequate resources or unclear expectations (or even a managerial problem), before coming to the conclusion that it is due to a lack of knowledge or skills. After all, a trained worker, without the right resources and with unclear expectations, will still not perform up to the desired standard. These types of issues can frequently be achieved by non-learning solutions. This doesn't mean that training isn't the best solution to the problem in some circumstances – but it is unlikely to be the cheapest.

There are 6 steps involved in performance improvement consultancy approach:

STEP 1: Define the PERFORMANCE PROBLEM – what's wrong?

STEP 2: Define the PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES – what do they need to be able to do?

STEP 3: Define the SUCCESS METRICS – how will we know if they achieved it?

STEP 4: Identify the OBSTACLES – what is holding back the desired performance?

STEP 5: Define the SOLUTION – what is the role of the individual, manager and L&D team

STEP 6: Implement the solution and MEASURE its success

We will look at each of these steps more closely in the next few Task but first a few words about the key differences with a Performance Consulting approach:

- The solution is only considered in Step 5 once the performance problem is fully understood
- The solution is as much as possible work-based and integrated into the workflow.
- There is shared ownership of the solution. The manager and the individuals concerned should not just be passive recipients of things that are done to them by L&D; they will need to be active and proactive in ensuring that it works for them and have a shared responsibility for ensuring it is successful.

*Please note: this is **not** the same as carrying out a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) . A Training Needs Analysis has already decided that training is the solution to the problem; performance consulting goes back one step and identifies the root cause of the problem before determining the solution.*

TASK 6

Identify a real performance problem from your workplace that you would like to solve.

7 – Steps 1-4 of the Performance Consuling approach

STEP 1: Define the PERFORMANCE PROBLEM – what's wrong?

The problem may be presented to you (by a manager) in a number of ways, e.g.

1 - Newcomers have not transitioned into their role effectively after 3 months
2 - My team needs a communication course
3 - A particular training program has not been effective.

Some of these so-called problems may well be solutions in disguise (as in example 2 above). With others the symptoms of the problem may be different from the root cause. Hence you will need to work with the manager and the team to find out what the cause of the problem actually, as sometimes a manager will not have understood this him/herself. This may only become clear as you work through Steps 2-4 so you will need to keep that in mind; hence your initial definition of the problem may need to change.

STEP 2: Define the PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES – what do they need to be able to do?

You now need to define exactly what the required (new) performance will look like, i.e. what the team should **actually be able to do.** So for the examples above, you would need to define in a number of clear statements each of the new desired performance outcomes:

1. what it means for new joiners to have become effective members of their teams within a defined given period, e,g they will need to be clear about their role, have the necessary knowledge and skills to do their job, be an engaged member of the team, etc etc
2. how and with whom they need to communicate
3. what the trainees from the specified program should be able to do back on the job.

STEP 3: Define the SUCCESS METRICS – how will we know if they achieved it?

For EVERY performance outcome you have defined in Step 2, you will need to define what good performance looks like, i.e. how the team will be able to show they have achieved the performance outcome. This will mean defining a specific real-world task/activity that they will be able to **do** to demonstrate they have met that particular performance outcome. Note: don't use words like "understand" or "know" but relevant action "doing" verbs!

It is also very important that these success metrics are **not** phrased in solution terms, e.g. if there is a performance outcome that says individuals need to have specific IT skills, the success metric will **not** be that they have had training on a system, but rather that they can demonstrate they can use the system in a tangible way to accomplish a relevant real-world task.

STEP 4: Identify the OBSTACLES – what is holding back the desired performance?

The next thing to consider with the group concerned is why the desired performance is not being achieved, i.e.

- if there are barriers or obstacles preventing good performance, and what these might be
- whether the employee has everything they need to do their job, and if not what more they need, or
- whether this is a motivational issue.

Here are some questions you might ask. Answers to these questions may also help you define the performance problem more clearly and/or provide the answer (or part of the answer) to a solution in Step 5. These questions are provided for guidance only; they will not be relevant in all situations, but might prove of use as a way of thinking through the problem.

- EXPECTATIONS – Do you fully understand what is expected of you?
- FEEDBACK – Do you get adequate feedback?
- TEAM COMMUNICATIONS – is there adequate communication between your team members?
- TOOLS/PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – Do you have everything you need to do the task?
- POLICIES AND PROCEDURES – Are company policies/procedures helping or hindering you?
- INCENTIVES – Is good or bad performance rewarded?
- PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES/MOTIVATION – Is the individual happy and motivated?
- LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR SKILLS – Does the individual have necessary knowledge or skills to perform the task

TASK 7

Work through Steps 1-4 of the Performance Consulting approach for the real workplace performance problem you identified in Task 6, and record them on the Checklist document on the next page

PERFORMANCE CONSULTING CHECKLIST

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">1 - THE PROBLEM</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What is the problem? Identify root causes not symptoms</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2 - PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES</td><td>3 - SUCCESS METRICS</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What new performance is required? Specify the outcomes</td><td>How will you know when theses have been achieved? What will the individual be able to DO (not just know or understand)?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">4 - OBSTACLES</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What is currently holder back the new performance?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">5 - SOLUTION
What will it look like and what will everyone’s responsibilities be?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual
What will he/she have to do?</td><td>Manager</td><td>L&D</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">6 - MEASURING SUCCESS</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Who will measure the success (defined in Step 3)?</td></tr>
</table>

8 – Step 5 of the Performance Consulting approach

STEP 5: Design the solution

You may have picked up some ideas for the solution to the problem in Step 4, but these shouldn't hold you back from thinking of other (innovative) ways to address it. The purpose of this step to design a solution that:

(a) is focused on achieving the **defined performance (change or improvement) outcomes** that will ensure the success metrics will be met and which overcome the hurdles.

Note that in some cases this may happen simply by removing any hurdles, or by improving communication or collaboration, rather than pay roviding any training solutions. In fact, this is the aim, to try and find the least expensive options to solving the problem.

(b) will support **shared ownership of the solution** – so that each party – the individuals/team, the manager and the L&D team – has a clear understanding of what they need to do. As explained earlier, the manager and the team each need to play their part; they will need to be active and proactive and take the initiative, and not just be passive recipients of things (i.e training) that are done to them by L&D.

In other words, when it comes to describing the individual's part in the solution (on the Performance Consulting Checklist) you shouldn't just write "take the training".

The solution is best designed in some form of meeting that uses an **iterative, inclusive, collaborative process** with everyone who is affected, so that it solves the problem and meets the needs of the individuals concerned as well as their manager. Having had a big say in the way the ultimate solution has been designed, will mean that the individuals concerned will be more likely to adopt it and make use of it.

It will also be important to embrace **innovation, creativity** and **flexibility** in the design stage – rather than just repeating old ways of training – although innovation for the sake of innovation is not the priority here, rather the outcome needs to be an appropriate and usable solution for the problem and the people concerned.. Some people refer to this type of collaborative process as "design thinking".

TASK 8

What solution have you come up with as an answer to the real workplace performance problem you identified in Task 6?

9 - Step 6 of the Performance Consulting approach

STEP 6: Implement the solution and measure its success

Implementation

For the manager it will be particularly important that he or she understands that they have a significant part to play in ensuring that the solution succeeds.

Even if some training solution is considered the best solution, they still have a part to play, as Faye Ekong explains in Training is not the "magic" formula but the line manager is.

> *"… the transfer of learning to the work environment is arguably not possible unless trainees receive proper support from their line managers and peers. Again, the HR practitioner can play an advisory role in the post-training phase but the crucial actors are line managers.*

In fact, Phil Geldart explains that the manager's role is one of coaching.

> *"Once something new has been learned, the most effective way to make it operational is to have ongoing coaching from a manager. This puts the responsibility on the manager to know what has been taught, as well as what new behaviors are intended. However, armed with this knowledge, the manager can then encourage and support the new behaviors on the job."*

This, of course, is a very important point, and Phil explains how this might be done

> *"Key to this is the manager's ability to coach, as individuals are often willing to apply new skills but are not always sure how to do so in every situation. We are all comfortable with the approach that is traditionally taken, but when given new skills or behaviors, applying them in real-world situations is not always as straightforward as it seemed in the classroom."*

Measurement

Referring back to the success metrics you identified in Step 3, you will now need to decide who will check whether these have been achieved within an adequate timeframe.

This is normally the manager's job. If some training is undertaken the measurement of success will not be that it has been completed, but that it has brought about the defined performance change identified in Steps 2 and 3.

After this check, If there is still a performance issue, you will then be able to identify which of the pieces of the solution have failed, in terms of who has not done what was required of them.

This is important, because at the end of the day, you (in L&D) are just one part of the performance jigsaw; an effective solution will require commitment from both the individuals and their manager.

TASK 9

What notes about the implementation of the solution you have designed have you made with respect to the individual's role, the manager's role and your (L&D) role in it?

D: Help with team building and learning

10 – Support in-person team building

Having an effective team is very important for a manager, so you might have a part to play in helping with team building as well as team learning activities. In this Task we look at team building.

In What is team building? Susan Heathfield explains

> *"Team building is the process of turning a group of individual contributing employees into a cohesive team. A team is a group of people organized to work together interdependently and cooperatively to meet the needs of their customers by accomplishing their purpose and goals."*

When it comes to team building, this is something that L&D often gets involved with, but it will be important to work closely with the manager and the team members on this to get it right, as Liz Ryan writes in Is it still considered 'team building' if they force you to participate?

> *"HR people are often unsure about how to build a great culture. They don't understand that the first step in creating a terrific culture is to listen to your employees — not to force your ideas and schemes on them. Team-building activities are only useful when everybody who participates wants to be there. There's no such thing as effective, forced team-building!"*

Here are some different examples of in-person team building which you might explore with a manager and his/her team.

Outdoor Events & Activity Days

Many team building activities take place off-site, and offer significant physical challenges, eg in Outward Bound centres, on High Ropes courses and other places. Get an idea of whether people would really be invested in something like this, and if so what they would like to do, and then do some research – otherwise this could end up being a classic example of forced team building!

Team building Games

These could be done at an off-site Team Building Day, or perhaps during a Team Building Hour in the office. There are plenty of examples of team building games on the Web. The following comes from 32 team building games your whole team will love.

> ***1. What Makes You Tick***
>
> *You could think of this as "what makes you ticked off", as this is an exercise in learning about each other's personalities and seeing what kind of personalities will clash. As a group, take a personality test together. Bring in a speaker, if time allows, to expound on the different personality traits, their strengths, their weaknesses, and a plan on how potential clashes can be alleviated.*
>
> *Choose a personality test that isn't excessively complicated. The DISC personality test is a good choice, as is the True Colors personality test. These tests simplify things and create easily remembered results. During future teamwork efforts, when conflicts arise, a team member can say "remember, I am orange" and the others will know exactly what she means.*
>
> *Purpose: Knowing what motivates and what demotivates other team members is powerful. By establishing how each team member works best, and how they react in different situations, they can learn how to approach each other differently to succeed in work and personal interaction*

Structured activities and exercises

These require a bit more preparation, in which case team members might like to take responsibility for them. Once again there are plenty of examples to be found on the Web. Here's one from the The ultimate list of team building activities.

> ***Scavenger Hunt***
>
> *Is there a better way to break up the workday? A scavenger hunt is a great way to get your employees moving and collaborating. Depending on the available space, you can choose to do this indoors or outdoors. Split everyone into smaller teams of three to five people. Hide miscellaneous objects around the facility and have the different groups find them. The first group to find all or at least a certain number of objects wins.*

Daily Team Building

Team building doesn't just have to involve activities that are far remote from the daily work, on the contrary why not build them around the daily interaction that employees engage in when working together to carry out their jobs. In other words, think about the team building potential of routine workplace activities. Here's an example from 10 office team building activities (using only pens and paper).

> ***A Negative Meeting***
>
> *More often than not, teams get together for various different meetings, and rather than coming out feeling uplifted and ready for the working day ahead, they actually feel the complete opposite effect. *Sigh* Which is where the "Negative Meeting" method comes in to effect.*
>
> *Instructions:*
>
> *1) Make a list of negative phrases on some poster paper.*
>
> *2) During the meeting, if anybody uses these phrases, they must place 10p in the centre of the table.*
>
> *If you continue to use this team building method for meetings, it will eliminate negative conversation and once the money jar gets fuller, this could go towards a team lunch time, outing for additional out of office team building.*

TASK 10

Which of the team building examples above might you suggest to a manager you are working with?

11 – Support virtual team building

As teams are working more and more remotely, what can you do to support virtual – or even hybrid – team building?

In 5 easy remote team building activities, Garima Sharma writes

> *"Social distancing and working remotely are not easy transitions for humans. We are social beings after all. Prolonged work from home can make people feel isolated, depressed, lonely, and low on morale. Now, when we look at the present times, we have a few extra challenges:*
>
> - *Concern for safety of family and friends*
> - *Limited access to basic amenities*
> - *Higher stress levels*
> - *Lack of physical activity*
>
> *This is why team building activities and initiatives for remote workers are important, now more than ever. Leaders need to focus on taking up appropriate measures to keep up employees' spirits and boost employee morale."*

One of the activities Garima suggests would be quite simple to set up.

> ***Quiz Time!***
>
> *Quizzes are among the simplest ways to get people together. You can manage the process on a videoconferencing tool or a focused quiz tool like Mentimeter, depending on your goal and company size. How do you run the quiz? There are two ways you can go:*
>
> ***Quiz 1****: A fun fact guessing game with colleagues. Who has bungee jumped above a pool of alligators? Who has completed the Antarctic Marathon twice? Personal quizzes are a great way to learn more about your team and foster a closer connection*
>
> ***Quiz 2****: A trivia challenge. Check out the general awareness levels of your people (in a fun way, of course). You can prepare questions around various topics related to business, technology, culture, geography, current events and pop culture.*

It is possible that some of the in-person team building ideas on the previous page may transfer to the online world, although in 55 fun virtual team building activities for remote teams, Jesse Susan writes:

> *"As a remote team, we geek out over virtual team building. We're always looking for ways to bring our team closer together. But over the years, we've learned that online team building is much different than in-person team building. With virtual teams, you have to take a different approach to building your company culture and employee engagement.:*

Here's just one team activity from the giant list she has produced.

> ***4. Tea vs Coffee: Live Virtual Coffee + Tea Tasting Class***
>
> *Built specifically for remote teams, Tea vs Coffee facilitates an exotic coffee and tea tasting experience with real beverages. A week or so before your event, the company sends each of your employees a care pack with a mix of four specialty teas, coffees and infusions. Each envelope is marked as "do not open" to save the big surprise for the day of the event.*
>
> *On tasting day, your team logs into a virtual video-cafe, where the friendly barista will share stories, run virtual team building games/activities and lead a tasting ceremony for the tea and coffee. The event is fun, educational, and global minded. All teas and coffees are sustainably sourced from farms with Fair Trade practices.*
>
> *Learn more about Tea vs Coffee.*

In 12 road-tested team building activities that work for real-life remote teams, Sarah Goff Dupont Atlassian writing in Fast Company says

> *"But strong teams aren't built in a day-long offsite. The teams who perform best and enjoy a high sense of well-being weave team building into the fabric of their daily work and take time out to have fun together on a regular basis. Trouble is, you can't do trust falls from 2,000 miles away. Also, nobody likes trust falls anyway.*

She categorises her list in a number of useful ways:

> ***Real-time vs. asynchronous:*** *Do you need to do this simultaneously, or can each person participate at whatever time works best for them?*
>
> ***Practical vs. just for fun:*** *Is the activity intentionally unproductive, or does it serve the dual purpose of building social bonds and improving the way you work in a more tangible way?*
>
> ***One-hit wonder vs. on the regular****: Is the activity something you do daily or weekly, or is it something you'd do once (and maybe again when new team members join)?*

Here's one example from her list, which might easily be achieved by a team:

> ***VIRTUAL LUNCH***
>
> *Type: real-time, just for fun, on the regular*
>
> *Time: 60 minutes*
>
> *Tools required: videoconferencing*
>
> *This one comes from the engineering team that builds the Trello app for Android. Once a month, the team links up via videoconferencing over lunchtime. Team members can even expense up to $25 so they can join from their favorite cafe, order delivery, or cook up a little something special at home (because real talk: heating up leftovers gets old).*
>
> *Only have 15-30 minutes to spare? No worries. Virtual coffee chats and virtual happy hours are fun variations on this activity.*

TASK 11

What has been your experience of virtual team building? Would any of the examples above be of interest for you and the managers you are working with?

12 – Support team learning

In Develop your staff through team-building and team-learning opportunities, Paul Kuologeorge writes.

> *"We often think of team building as an excuse to get everyone to have fun, but we ignore the team-learning opportunity. The key is to start with a competency the team needs to develop and then plan a group activity that focuses on that competency. Ideally done, you can achieve both team learning and team building at the same time."*

Whilst team learning activities might be done in-person or virtually (using Zoom or Teams), another way of organising a team learning session is to set up an asynchronous group learning activity on the team's collaboration platform (like Teams or Slack). There are a number of other advantages for doing it in this way

- Individuals can participate from remote locations – so they don't have to be present in the workplace or even have to participate synchronously.
- It provides more flexibility for individuals to engage as they desire, and something they can fit it around their work – rather than they have to fit around it.
- The team learning activity can take place over a longer period of time than a traditional team building event (days, weeks – or even longer)
- The fact that it is hosted in the team collaboration platform means it is close to the workflow – so won't be perceived as a separate "training" event.

A team learning experience like this is a particularly useful way to kick-start social learning and collaboration in a team – since it encourages sharing of knowledge and experiences, and therefore it is very useful for a discussion of more complex topics like building a growth mindset, developing reflective practices, etc.

Here are 5 tips for designing and facilitating an asynchronous team learning experience:

1 – Plan

The first decision to make is how long the experience should be. I have found that team events of up to 4 weeks work best – that gives you the opportunity to say cover 1 small topic a week.

2 - Design

This involves scaffolding a framework where both learning can take place through the sharing of ideas and knowledge. In other words, you need to provide just enough structure without constraining personal and social learning. This means creating a series of short (preferably work-based) activities as well as encourage conversation, knowledge sharing, or collaboration.

Examples of activities might be

- **Individual tasks/activities**
  - Reflect on some content – and share thoughts
  - Find out something/work on a challenge – and share findings
  - Create something – and share it

- **Collaborative tasks/activities**
  - Group brainstorm – have a group think about something and produce a collective outcome
  - Co-create something – individually, as part of a collaborative resource
  - Collaborate – work together collaboratively in some other way
  - Converse/discuss synchronously

The type of tasks/activities that you choose to use will depend on a number of factors, in particular

- to what extent you would like participants to work collaboratively or simply share their thinking with one another
- to what extent the participants are able to work synchronously – bearing in mind location and time zones, and
- what tools you want to use to support them.

Any content should be then used to support the activities. Depending on the activity that has been designed, the content might be given:

- **upfront** – to provide some context for the activity, to get participants thinking, conversing and or doing
- **after the fact – t**o provide some thoughts once the activity has been completed**.**

3 – Promote autonomy

Supporting participant autonomy is key. Individuals should be able to make their own decisions about their participation in the activity rather than be directed to participate in a prescribed way. In other words, individuals should also be able to choose how and when they carry out the tasks or activities.

It is more important to give the team the flexibility to engage as they wish rather than force them to do every activity that has been provided. On the other hand, of course, the more people that contribute the more valuable the experience will be for all, and hence that is why the role of the facilitator (or guide) is important.

4 – Guide

The facilitator encourages and supports participants rather than forces or enforces interactions, so this role needs to be taken on by someone who can model the desired social behaviours in the participants. The facilitator therefore focuses on making sharing and participating an easy and positive experience.

5 – Set expectations

Participants and managers may still have a traditional view on what a "learning intervention" looks like – particular if they are used to an instructivist training approach – so it will be important to prepare them for the experience that you have in store for them; i.e. one that is more active, interactive and participative.

It may even be better to refer to this as a team building activity rather than a team learning activity!

TASK 12

Could you design a 4-week asynchronous team learning event that includes individual tasks as well as knowledge sharing around a topic of interest.

E: Support Communities of Practice

13 – Understand Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

The term "Community of Practice" (or CoP) is often used to refer to any kind of community in the workplace, but it does have a distinct meaning.

It's actually a term that pre-dates the Web and an early authority on Communities of Practice. Etienne Wenger-Traynor defined communities of practice as …

> *"groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."*

In other words, the purpose of a community of practice is to improve practice (or performance), but as Etienne Wenger points out …

> *"Note that this definition allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions."*

In some cases then, Communities of Practice are often referred to as Learning Communities.

The differences between work teams and CoPs

In the workplace people might belong to a variety of work teams and communities of practice. Harold Jarche explains the difference between work teams and communities of practice as follows:

> *"A major difference between communities of practice and work teams is that the former are voluntary. People want to join communities of practice. People feel affinity for their communities of practice. If the groups are mandated by management, they are work teams, or project teams, etc, but not communities of practice."*

Communities of Practice are therefore generally set up by individuals or groups themselves – that is people who want to create a place where they can support one another in their own practices, and in doing so learn from one other at work. However, L&D might have a role

(a) in setting up a community for a learning-oriented purpose (ie a learning community) and/or

(b) supporting those who would like to set up and run a community for themselves – but don't know how to do it.

TASK 13

Are you a member of a Community of Practice in your organisation?

What have been the benefits for you? What have been any downsides?

14 – Setting up a Community

Setting up a Community of Practice should not be undertaken lightly. Communities not only require a significant time investment but also a new set of community management skills. It's not just about setting up the community space and then getting on with another task!

In this Task you will find 5 key pieces of advice about setting up a community of practice, and in the next Task five further pieces of advice about facilitating the community.

1 – Be clear about the purpose of the community

The community needs to have a clearly defined purpose. Just saying you want to set up a community of practice is not enough; you need to be very clear about what the reasons are for doing so. You will need to be clear about:

- what **value** it is going to bring to the members and to the organisation – what business goals it addresses or what problems it will help to solve.
- **what it will offer members** – people are unlikely to want to join a group or community, unless they know what the value or benefit will be to them in participating.

Note, that communities that have been set up in response to a specific need are much more likely to thrive than those that are imposed upon a group just because someone thought they ought to have one!

The purpose or reason for the community will also be important in order to determine its **success** measures. These are often specified in terms of numbers of members, community activity, but more important metrics are performance outcomes.

Some success metrics may be more easily determined than others. But bear in mind, sometimes, it is just as important to value the fact that people **know** if it has helped them, and can give you examples of how and why this is the case. As Harold Jarche says:

> *"I've been told that you know you're in a real community of practice when it changes your practice. It's a good measuring stick."*

Success metrics are therefore likely to be a subtle mix, as the Yammer Team sums up neatly.

> *"Ultimately a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures will probably be most appropriate, but it is important to understand the differences between these measures and the information about your network that they reveal."*

2 – Use the most appropriate platform to host the community

The most appropriate platform will depend on

- what **functionality** is required – based on what people will do in the community, e.g. have conversations, share files, co-create content, message one another privately – and how the technology will need to support them, and
- whether the community is a **training-led or work-led** initiative – whereas a learning platform might be appropriate for a training-based community, it's not ideal for a work-based community of practice, and in any case, if you are trying to create a seamless working and learning environment, then even if your community is training-related it is best to host it on the same collaboration platform that is used for actual work, like Teams or Slack.

3 – Be clear about who owns the community

This might seem a strange thing to say, but it is an important factor in how the community is perceived by its members.

- If it is a training initiative then L&D will undoubtedly **own** the community.
- But if L&D is helping to set something up for another group, it may well be better that they own it (or be seen to "own" it) and that L&D is seen as supporting it.

Unfortunately, the very fact that such an initiative might be perceived as "training" and/or as being imposed upon a group, means it is less likely to thrive than if it is seen as being a group's own initiative.

4 – Invite some friendly early users to test out the community

Depending on the purpose of the community, it may be a good idea to get some early test users in place. These people will need to be willing to work in a fairly empty community space. But their purpose is to:

- test out the functionality of the community space
- provide suggestions on guidelines that might need to be provided to users who are not familiar with communities and social tools
- offer feedback on other aspects of the community as required.

A testing phase will also give a community manager the opportunity to practise their new skills, e.g.

- welcoming members, and helping them to connect with others
- writing some early messages or posts
- creating community FAQ and tips.

5 – Consider how you want to launch the community

There are a number of ways of launching a community: using a viral launch or a hard launch approach.

- A **viral launch** means gradually introducing more members into the community by using viral marketing techniques. This means encouraging existing members to pass on information about it by "word of mouth". In other words, letting other people talk about it, and encouraging them to get involved.

  Most launches of enterprise initiatives are **not** generally done this way. People are usually trained first how to use the software or become involved in an activity. But this often leads to resentment before they even start. So this isn't the best way to get people enthused about a community.
- A **hard launch** means taking more of a "big bang" approach and rolling out the community with some sort of official launch. This might be useful for a major enterprise initiative. In which case it is often done in a kick-off session.

TASK 14

In Task 1 it was suggested you might set up a Community of Practice for managers in order to promote thinking around how they can support learning from the daily work. How might you do that in your organisation

Work through the 5 points of guidance above and consider how you would apply them in your organisation.

15 – Facilitating a Community

The following 5 pieces of advice focus on running the community:

1 – Help people understand how participating in the community can become part of their daily routine

An important part of any community launch will include explaining the value and benefit of the community, and showing the members how participation needs to become part of their daily routine and part of their workflow. If something is not a natural part of one's daily workflow, it is easy to forget about it, which is another reason why hosting a community on a platform that people already use for their work makes good sense. Anything that is more than one-click away from the daily workflow is likely to be seen as an "extra" activity and quietly forgotten. So, helping people to work out a way of integrating it into their daily work will be important. Furthermore it is important to help them get this in place from the outset – so that it becomes a natural part of the members' working life.

2 – Keep the community alive and vibrant

It is the role of the Community Manager "to seed and feed" the community. But this will be especially important after the first flush of enthusiasm wears off. This will mean feeding the community with a flow of new posts (or updates) with new ideas, questions, polls, etc. It will also mean involving the community members in a number of other ways described in other sections of this resource

- Encouraging them to share useful links to resources themselves
- Encouraging them to work out loud

Other ways to keep the community vibrant might include

- Collecting and share stories about how people are using the community and their successes
- Celebrating community milestones and successes

3 – Understand that not everyone will contribute to the community

There are many reasons why people don't participate or contribute to a community – both personal and organisational. You can't expect 100% engagement, and forcing people to be social and contribute will only be counter-productive. All you can do is try to gradually increase your participation rates, by understanding the people in your community – what interests and motivates them and what might trigger a response in them. At the end of the day, an active community is a sign of a healthy community, but not necessarily a successful community.

4 – Be as much a participant as a Community Manager

Being social is not something you make other people do, so whereas a community manager might feed the community with new ideas, etc, he or she will also need to take on the role of participant too, and share his/her own thoughts and ideas.

5 – Do not underestimate the time it takes to manage a community

Maintaining a community takes time. It requires regular input – supporting and encouraging the community, as well as a routine to carry out some of the more mundane tasks to help the community grow and thrive. So it is important to repeat: Don't take on the role of Community Manager unless you are prepared to commit the time required to help to make the community successful!

TASK 15

Thinking about the Community of Practice for managers that you set up in Task 14, how might you facilitate that group to ensure it remains vibrant and brings value to the members concerned?

Work through the 5 points of guidance above and consider how you would apply them in your organisation.

PART TWO: CONTINUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

F: Kick-start continuous self-learning in your organisation

16 – Kick-start self-learning

Once you have a number of managers on board with the concept of individual self-development, you are ready to kick-start your initiative throughout the organisation with all employees. But first a word of warning!

Although it is important to recognise that some people are very curious, inquisitive individuals who value their own professional self-development, there will be others who will be resistant to doing this.

Many will think it is the organisation's role to provide them with everything they need to stay current in their jobs, so, they will need more than just encouragement to do so. They will need to see the value and purpose in it for them. In other words, they will want to understand the WIIFM (What's In It For Me).

Although the rationale (or necessity) for every individual to a become continuous lifelong learner was presented in **Task 1** of **A Guide for Individuals,** John Hegel makes a very important point in The threat and opportunity of lifelong learning.

> *"we can try to motivate people through fear with the message that, if they don't sustain their learning efforts, they'll be increasingly marginalized. Good luck with that. They might invest some effort out of fear, but they'll never invest the level of effort required to truly excel at learning. Lifelong learning becomes a threat and they'll be reluctant and resentful.*
>
> *Yes, we all will need to embrace lifelong learning as a prerequisite for sustained success in a world of mounting performance pressure. But, we're going to need to embrace it as an exciting opportunity rather than as a burden or threat. To do that, we're going to need to commit to discover and cultivate the passion of the explorer that resides within all of us and to find ways to integrate that passion into our work."*

So, kick-starting your continuous self-development will need to be an exciting, inspirational, engaging initiative that, as John Hagel puts it above "*cultivates the passion of the explorer that resides within all of us".*

One approach to this that a number of organisations have taken is to run a learning campaign in order to promote the concept of continuous self-development. Learning campaigns are very similar to marketing or fundraising campaigns in that they deliver a message in different ways over the campaign period.

The key features of learning campaigns are that they:

- take place over an **extended period of time** (it could be days, weeks or even months)
- involve providing a **mix of resources,** such as tutorials, videos, blog posts, webinars, as well as other in-person meetings and sessions, together with work-based activities – all of which are sequenced to be released throughout the campaign rather than all at once. In other words, a different resource (or set of resources) is released periodically over the period of the learning campaign.

Learning campaigns also address the fact that traditional learning programmes are ineffective largely because they are time-bound events that focus on learning a lot in very little time.

The focus is therefore on creating different types of content that tap into individuals' motivations so that they are more receptive to the messages in the campaign. Learning campaigns are also very useful device so support behaviour change, so are therefore a good way to help develop new learning mindsets and behaviours.

Harry Cloke has summarized the 12 key benefits of learning campaigns – which are, of course, exactly the things that you want to stimulate.

1 Improves knowledge retention
2 Creates excitement and anticipation
3 Bite-sized learning isn't a chore
4 Creates culture of learning
5 Gets everyone involved
6 Encourages autonomy
7 Encourages knowledge sharing
8 Creates relevant learning assets
9 Helps find experts
10 Takes learning to learners
11 Learning happens in the right environment
12 Adapts to change more easily

Here are some examples of learning campaigns – which as you will see are very different in format and approach:

Citibank's #beMore learning campaign was an (award-winning) internal development programme designed to empower Citi's employees to take control of their own development. It comprised of a number of daily tasks to be undertaken in the ESN.

CPPE's learning campaign on acute kidney injury contained a distance learning programme, a campaign leaflet containing six challenges and a Think Kidneys leaflet.

Couch to 5K a running plan for beginners from the NHS. It is essentially an example of a learning campaign that takes place over 9 weeks. It provides a week-by-week description of the 9-week set of Couch to 5K podcasts. Each week involves 3 runs. You can also download each week as a podcast: The One You Couch to 5K app gives you a choice of coaches and helps you track your progress.

TASK 16

Thinking about the examples of learning campaigns provided above, what do you think are the advantages for your organisation of running a learning campaign – rather than offering a traditional training programme?

17 – Design and run a 30-day learning challenge

One form of a learning campaign is a 30-day learning challenge, that delivers a new task or challenge every day for 30 days.

As it is said that it takes 30 days to build a new habit, this is a good way to get a new behaviour started.

Here is some guidance on designing and running a 30-day learning challenge

1 – Decide the topic for the learning campaign: For example it might be:

- Establishing a new mindset of continuous self-learning
- Develop the explorer in everyone
- Building a daily self- learning habit
- Developing modern learning skills
- Getting the most out of daily work

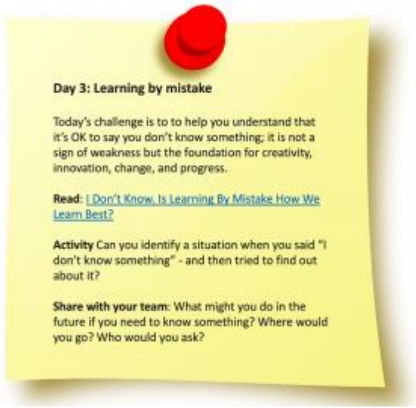
Try not to pack too much into one learning challenge – you can always run another one later if it is successful.

2 – Create a schedule of 30 unique tasks: Each task should be achievable in 20-30 minutes. There should also (ideally) be a logical sequence through the daily tasks in your learning campaign.

3 – Design each of the daily tasks: The format of each daily task should (probably) look fairly similar in format – so it will be easy to understand what people have to do. For example, each might have

- a **title**
- a **brief explanation** of what its purpose/aim is
- a relevant **resource** – article, blog post, video, podcast – to view
- an **activity** – something to do (this might be doing something to the reading)
- what the individual should **share** e.g. product, some thoughts, idea, etc.

An example of a daily task appears on the right



4 – Set up the campaign hosting site: If you want to involve participation from others (in terms of discussion, sharing or collaboration on the daily taks) then it would make sense to host it in in your organisation's collaboration platform (like Slack or MS Teams).

5 – Decide who will take responsibility for running and supporting the campaign: Things to consider include: How will they promote the campaign? What will they need to be support the campaign?

Here are two examples of learning challenges (or even longer).

1. Did you learn something new today? Discover the benefits of learning new things and take the 30 Day Challenge. By Christine D'Angelo, Verizon
2. #BeYourBest Self-Optimisation Journey is 100 days of personal growth via essential knowledge on how to do life in an optimal, healthy and fulfilling way.

TASK 17

Draft the outline of a 30 day Learning Campaign on a topic of your choice. List the headlines for the 30 different daily tasks, activities or challenges that each would take 20-30 minutes to complete.

G: Support self-development initiatives

18 – Help managers adopt continuous self-development in their teams

In **A Guide for Managers** we presented the business case for continuous self-development, and also suggested to managers that there were two options for adopting this practice in their team:

The **first** option was to encourage a **daily self-learning habit** – so that their team members spent some time each day learning something new for themselves, and the **second** option was for their team to use a **formal self-development process**, whereby they each set up a Professional Development Plan which recorded their professional goals, the activities they would undertake to achieve their goals, and how they would evidence their achievements, and then manage the whole process themselves.

Although these two options were clearly explained, it may well be that some managers need help in adopting one or other of these options as a learning strategy within their teams. Many managers have been so used to passing off anything to do with learning and development to the L&D team, that they may be unsure (and therefore reticent) to do so themselves. And even if they do decide to adopt a particular self-development strategy, they will need still help with supporting their team.

Some managers may want to adopt an organisational approach to continuous self-development with respect to time offered and strategic option, so it will be important to emphasise that a successful self-development strategy will only work if it is aligned with the team members' working lives and practices. In which case, you may well need to talk managers through the two options, to help them come to a decision about what would work best for them and their teams. This will of course, give you an opportunity to work out where you could add most value in terms of supporting the manager and their teams to ensure that all goes well.

With some managers you may need to provide little or no support – they intuitively understand that this is an effective approach to growing and developing their team members. Whilst others, who are less confident or less in tune with the realities of the modern workplace, may need a lot more help and guidance.

When it comes to **(1) establishing a daily self-learning habit** – their teams may struggle to identify useful resources – so you might need to expose them to the wide range of possibilities on the Web – perhaps through running a learning campaign or learning challenge on that particular topic (as described in **Task 17**), or perhaps by curating some self-learning resources for them to getting them up and running (we'll look at **curation** in **Tasks 20-23** of this Guide).

When it comes to a more **(2) formal self-development process** – individuals may struggle to complete their professional self-development plans (i.e. identifying their professional goals, the ways to evidence their achievements, and the most appropriate resources to help them achieve, as well as how to set up a learning log and digital portfolio) – in which case you may want to offer a **learning concierge** service to provide personal advice to individuals (see **Task 24** for more on this.).

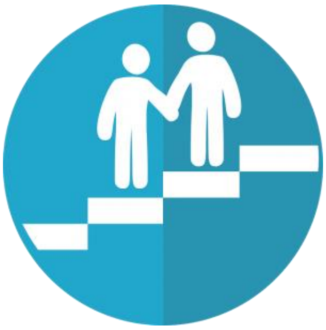
Individuals may also want help in locating traditional learning opportunities (like relevant online courses, webinars, and conferences) so once again providing a **curation** service may well be of value. And when it comes to people-focused self-development opportunities like mentors and job shadowing, you may need to **coordinate people-focused activities across the organisation** (see **Task 19** for more on this).

As you can see, supporting continuous self-development activities in the organisation does open up the role of L&D into a much broader area of work – but it also means that you can add much more value to individuals in terms of supporting their personal needs – rather than just providing a one-size-fits-all course-approach to training.

TASK 18

Is your team ready, willing and willing to support continuous self-learning and self-development in your organisation? Does your team have the experience to support managers with this new approach? Are they able to provide personal support to individuals with their bespoke needs? What more does your team need to do in order ready themselves for this new approach to L&D in your organisation?

19 - Coordinate people-focused self-development initiatives



When it comes to supporting self-development activities, it may be that you can play a part in coordinating activities across the organisation that involve **people** (rather than content) – that is, bringing together people who want to help others grow and develop.

We'll consider two particular people-focused activities here:

(1) coaching and mentoring and
(2) job shadowing.

(1) Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring was considered in **Task 48** of **A Guide for Individuals**. Although many organisations do run formal coaching and mentoring programmes – in as much as they match individuals with coaches or mentors, when it comes to self-development, ideally individuals should find their own coaches or mentors. The trouble is they just don't know how or where to find them.

Of course, they could find an external coach or mentor on the Web, but they might like to have an internal coach or mentor. So, your role might be to facilitate this process.

Perhaps you could run an n-person **networking event**, where individuals can identify someone who is interested and willing to coach or mentor them, or even a **virtual space** (e.g. on your organisation's collaboration platform) where you could do something similar.

With a networking event you might use one of the following approaches to allow people to meet one another, and for those who are looking for a coach or mentor to explain what they are looking for.

Speed networking:

This activity, which derives from speed dating, focuses on accelerating connections between people in the same room. Here people rotate to meet one another within a short amount of time, which is timed and often ended with a bell.

When you set up a speed networking event, you will need to prepare carefully for it. How to run a speed networking event provides a comprehensive look at setting up the room (which would need to be modified for the virtual room – but could creatively involve the use of breakout rooms).

Speed geeking:

This is a format that brings together the concept of speed networking and presentations, and gets its name from speed sating. Wikipedia explains:

> *"Speed geeking is a great way to quickly view a number of presentations and demos in a short while. For example, one hour is enough time to view 12 presenters if you spend 5 minutes at each presentation. The 5 minute limit also keeps presentations short and interesting. Also the small table format gives participants an opportunity to connect on a more personal level."*

Take a look at this Speed geeking guide to find out how to use this format

(2) Job shadowing

Job shadowing is where an individual from one area of the organisation has the opportunity to work alongside and gain experience of the role of another individual, and gain an insight into that particular work area. It was considered in **Task 50** of A **Guide for Individuals**.

Although job shadowing typically happens within a particular department, more and more, job-shadowing happens across functions, for example, someone in the IT department might shadow someone in the sales team and vice versa.

The article, How to make a job shadowing program a success at your organization (from the Academy to Innovate HR) provides some very useful guidance on organising job shadowing centrally, including the following snippet:

> ***"Create a framework for job shadowing*** *You need to establish guidelines on who is eligible to participate as a shadow and as a host. Detail what it involves (e.g., specific timeframe, manager's permission) and how potential problems are addressed."*

The whole article is well worth studying in detail if you are considering centralising job shadowing, for it is as the article explains

> *"… one of the most effective on-the-job learning methods. Organizations that implement a job shadowing program have the opportunity to upskill their employees, improve their processes, and innovate."*

TASK 19

Is your team ready and willing to coordinate activities of this kind across the organisation?

You may already have coaching, mentoring and even job-shadowing programme is your organisation – but are they fit for this new purpose? In other words, do **you** control the process or can you now offer a much higher level of individual control?

H: Curate for self-learning

20 – Understand curation

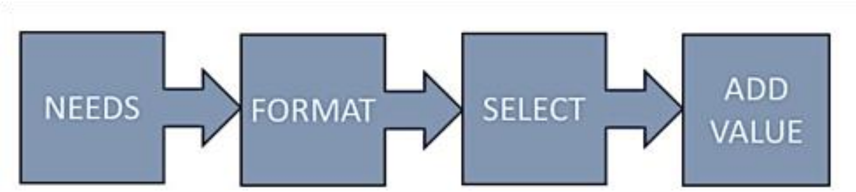
Although some individuals will be very competent and confident in finding their own resources for their daily self-learning, or to help address their professional goals as part of their professional self-development plans, others may still need help to do so.

Some organisations have, in fact, now implemented some form of online course library, e.g. access to the content on *LinkedIn Learning* or *Udemy* or *Coursera*. However, that is not the full answer, of course. First of all, as we have already mentioned, continuous self-development is much, much more than just endlessly accessing courses, and secondly, people still help in locating relevant content on any particular platform – internal or external.

So, one way to support individuals might be to curate a range of content that they could tap into as a first step – whether it be courses, courses, events or any other informal activities.

Content curation, however, is more than aggregation; that is, it is not just about collecting a whole pile of resources on a topic and listing them on a page. Content curation is about selecting – or "cherry picking" – the most relevant resources, organising them in the most appropriate format, and **adding value** to them.

Here's a 4-step curation process to ensure that you curate effectively for a manager and their team.



NEEDS

Begin with a team's **actual** needs; not just what you **think** they might need. In Improve your content curation: 23 tips from the experts, content strategist, Tiffany Monhollon, is quoted as follows:

> *"It's important to start with your audience in mind. What topics and content formats that relate to your business will they find meaningful?" Is it industry trends and statistics, practical tips and how-to posts, case studies or the latest news such as product launches or acquisitions?*
>
> *Relevance is king in curation. Know your audience and curate what they care about."*

FORMAT

Now consider (with the team concerned) the most appropriate format to organise and share what you find with them, for example:

- displaying the links on an internet (eg *SharePoint*) web page,
- integrating the content into another resource – e.g. in a document, or a presentation – so that the curated content is placed in context
- adding resources into an events calendar
- providing the links in the form of a blog post or email newsletter as a regular industry briefing
- providing a continuous flow of resources in the form of some micro-learning: or in an email, in a WhatsApp message or Teams post

SELECT THE CONTENT

You can now decide what method is most appropriate to find and select suitable resources. There are 3 main curation methods that David Kelly describes are:

(1) Manual: This involves trawling the Web and picking out relevant or interesting stuff yourself. It involves Googling as well as keeping up to date with a wide range of resource sites. It can take quite a bit of time to identify the good stuff – the “gems”, but if you are enthusiastic about getting good results, this is valuable time spent.

(2) Automatic: There are now a number of services available to assist with the curation process. These constantly scan the Social Web on the topics you have defined, and then present their results in a newsletter or magazine type publication. An award winning curation platform for the enterprise is Anders Pink. Whilst it is free for one user, there is a cost for its use by teams..

(3) Collaborative: This involves finding content together with others. This might come from simple recommendations from colleagues or from connections in your own professional network, or it might involve asking employees who have relevant domain-specific knowledge to help you curate relevant resources.

ADD VALUE

Finally, you need to think about how you are going to add value to the curated content. This might include any of the following:

- deciding which and **how many** resources should be provided **–** too many might overwhelm the audience; too little might not provide enough choice. If you choose to provide a large number of resources, it will be important to signpost and categorise them carefully so that the user can find what they want or need easily enough.
- ensuring there is a **variety** of resources in different formats in order to offer as much flexibility for the user.
- **labelling and describing** the resource links, so that users know exactly what they will find when they click through.

In the next two tasks we’ll look more closely at curating **content** as well as **events** and some examples of how to present the results.

TASK 20

Do you currently curate content in your organisation? What method do you use – manual, automatic or collaborative?

21 - Curate content for self-learning

Curating content for self-learning involves locating relevant

- online courses
- online resources (e.g. articles and blog posts, videos, podcasts)
- books and book abstracts.

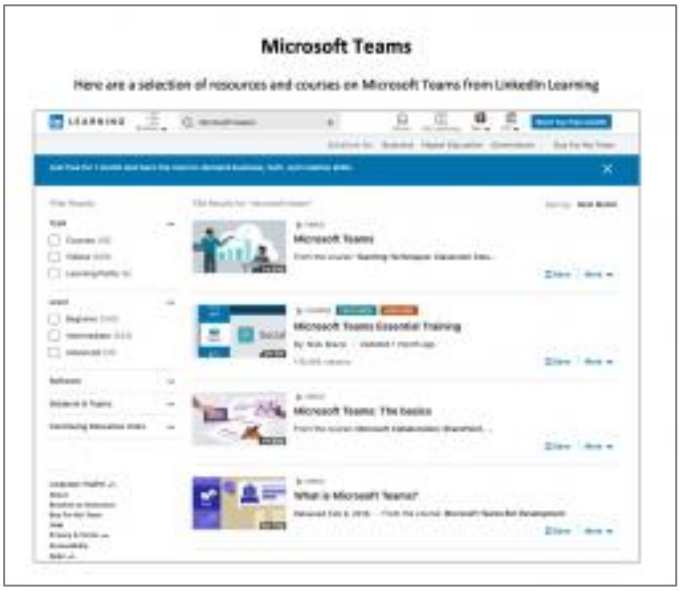
Here are some examples of the use of the content curation process and the presentation of the results.

1 – Signpostingresources from an online course library

NEED: A team wanted to find out more about how to use Microsoft Teams, and in doing so wanted to make use of the organisation's access to LinkedIn Learning.

FORMAT: It is agreed that it would be useful if you could curate some relevant courses and resources for them and make them available in one place.

CURATION: A search of LinkedIn Learning was undertaken. The results were reviewed and the best matches identified.



2 – A French Language Resource Centre

FRENCH

Clip Class - learn French with videos: Free online activities: pronunciation (video tutorials), discovering grammar items, interviews.

DailyFrenchPod - It combines free podcasts with a communicative teaching method that enables users to learn French when and where they wish to.

Elinet - learn French online via video conferencing (Skype / MSN Messenger) under the guidance of your personal, certified, university or college educated French language instructor

French Together - teaches you French the way it's spoken by natives: full of nuances, idiomatic expressions and passion so you sound like one of them, not like a dusty grammar book.

Learn French by Podcast - real life French for everyday conversation - audio podcasts for learners of French as a foreign language

London Speaks French A language agency since 2000 and dedicated to French lessons in London that offers its lessons online for free

Paris by Pod one-stop destination for learning French with language resources such as videos, podcasts, exercises, an active community of French students, and much more.

NEED: A team was looking for some links to free external resources on how to learn French. They wanted a variety of different types and formats – not just courses but videos, podcasts and other resources – to suit their differing learning preferences.

FORMAT: It was agreed to create a list of resources, together with brief descriptions to provide some guidance as what each link contained and its format, so that it would be easy for an individual to spot what would work for them.

CURATION: Once a list of relevant resources was curated via a Web search, duplicates were filtered out, and the list was whittled down to a useful number of high quality resources in varying formats.

The list was then updated from time to time with new finds and recommendations from colleagues.

3 – Weekly industry briefings

NEED: A group of managers recognised that they needed help in keeping up with what was happening in their field.

FORMAT: It was agreed that the most effective format would be a weekly email newsletter with selected readings from the week, where each was accompanied by a short summary.

CURATION: Useful resources were curated through an automated search as well as through blog feed subscriptions. These were then reduced to provide a manageable list of 5-6 resources each week.

4 – A featured resource, course or book

NEED: A group of individuals wanted some specific recommendations of books to read or courses to use, or videos to watch.

FORMAT: It was agreed to focus on just one resource each time but also to ensure that all the previous featured resources remained visible. These were tagged and categorised to ensure easy searching and retrieval later.

A blog site was set up to present each featured resource in a new blog post.

CURATION: Existing and new resources were curated.

Detail on each resource was written up in a blog post, which was scheduled in advance to be delivered on a regular point during the week.

TASK 21

Curate some **content** for a defined purpose and target group in your own organisation.

Work through the (4-step) curation process shown in Task 21.

22 – Curate events for self-learning

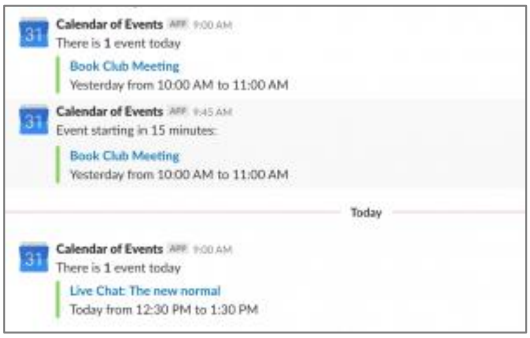
Curating events for self-learning involves locating relevant activities taking place both internally and externally, e.g.

- scheduled training (classroom and virtual) and workshops
- scheduled online courses
- live talks
- book club meetings, lunch and learns
- webinars
- external conferences (in-person and virtual)
- company briefings and conferences

One way to present these events would be to provide a chronological list.

DATE	TIME (GMT)	TYPE	TOPIC	PLACE	COST	NOTES
19 September 2022	10-11 am	Webinar	Cybersecurity	Online	Free	
20 September 2022	all day	Workshop	MS Teams for Beginners	City Hall	£250	Apply to Tim Brown for a free ticket
21 September 2022	12.30-1.30 pm	Book club meeting	Computer Science Distilled	Room 65	Free	Let Jenny Green know if you are attending

But probably a better way would be to set up a calendar of events, perhaps using *Google Calendar* which can be then integrated with a collaboration platforms like Slack. Team members can then see the events in the calendar, as well as get alerts to events happening that day. Microsoft Teams also has a calendar app.



Group members can also add meetings or events to this calendar so that they automatically show up in the calendar for other members.

Individuals can even be added to calendar events or meetings if they're required to attend them!

In the next Task we'll discuss how and where to host all your curated efforts in one place.

TASK 22

Curate some **events** for a defined target group in your own organisation.

Work through the (4-step) curation process shown in Task 21 and then present them in the most appropriate way.

23 – Host your curated content and events on a Digital Learning Hub

A Digital Learning Hub (DLH) is an open online space where you can host all your curated content, and events to ensure they are easily seen and accessed by everyone in the organisation.

The difference between a Digital Learning Hub and a Learning Management System is that no login is required to access the content in a DLH and the user's activities are not tracked or recorded.

A Digital Learning Hub is a web-based platform which means that links can be created to external resources, or in the case of media like videos or podcasts, these can easily be embedded straight into the web pages. Your calendar of internal and external events can even be embedded in a web page in the same way

A Digital Learning Hub might be created in a number of ways:

If you are a **large company** you will probably want to create on your internal (web-based) intranet platform (e.g. *SharePoint*),. SharePoint is a complex platform, it's intended to be a place for teams and groups to have a share workspaces, but a "workspace" can easily be created to become your Digital Learning Hub. You will need to make some adjustments to permissions, and customise the layout but it can be easily turned into a nice looking Digital Learning Hub.

If you are a **smaller company** without an intranet then you might consider setting your learning hub on a separate website. *WordPress* is the most popular tool to create a website and is in fact used to power 30% of the Internet.

So if users don't have to log in to access content, how will you know what is being used on your Digital Learning Hub, and how will you know how valuable it is? There are a number of easy "lite" ways of tracking access and evaluating popularity"

1 – Add a **page counter** to track access to resources. Of course this won't necessarily mean that the content is useful or relevant, but it might give you an indication of the popularity of resources.

2 – Use a **vote up/vote down** (thumb up/down system – to gain a very quick overview of whether the content is of immediate value or not – as in the example below.

3 – Use a **star rating** system – this will give you a more nuanced understanding of how valuable a piece of content is.

4 – Invite **comments** on a page to find out if people found the resource(s) of value. Comments are then stored on the website, and can be seen by other users

5 – Use a **traffic analysis tool** like Google Analytics. This is Google's own web analytics service that tracks and reports website traffic. To ensure that traffic to all web pages is recorded, you will need to add a piece of code to each web page. (Note: In the case of WordPress, all you need to do is put it into a widget and then it automatically appears on each page).

TASK 23

If you don't already have a digital learning hub in your organisation (ie NOT an LMS or LXP), put together a strategy document to explain the benefits of such a system to support learning in much broader ways.

I: Offer a Learning Concierge Service

24 – Offer a Learning Concierge Service

When it comes to supporting continuous self-development, it is not just about curating resources and events; it's also about offering a **personal advice and support** directly to individuals. So one way to do this would be to provide a Learning Concierge service.

This service gets its name from the fact that it operates in a similar fashion to the concierge service for hotel guests. Here's a very brief example of a hotel concierge in action:

> *A guest is looking to do some city sightseeing. She could simply go out exploring herself or first do some research on what to see, but if she wants some advice, she will might talk to the hotel concierge. In order to provide the best help to the guest, the concierge needs to understand what she is interested in visiting, how long she has got, and if she prefers to visit the sites herself or have a guide, and depending on her answer (and her budget) he might simply mark up some major sites on a city map, recommend a walking route, a hire care service, or even a tour bus or personal tour guide. In other words the concierge makes sure he makes recommendations that work for her.*

So, a Learning Concierge service works in the same way, providing **personal** advice directly to individuals on how they can address their own workplace learning and performance problems in the way that works best for them. Here's a very brief example of a learning concierge in action:

> *An individual has identified a problem with her presentation skills in client meetings, so calls on the learning concierge service for some advice. In order to provide the best help, the learning concierge needs to understand exactly where the problem actually lies. He will also need to know if the individual would like to work on the problem by herself or with help and support from others, and then depending on her answers (and what funding she has), he might recommend some resources and articles, or suggest a presentation coach or mentor, or that she takes a masterclass or an online course. In other words the learning concierge makes sure he makes recommendations that work for her.*

Compare this with the normal approach that L&D would take to dealing with this same problem – that is simply pointing the individual towards the online course on Presentation Skills hosted in the LMS library. So, a Learning Concierge service operates very differently to the traditional L&D approach. Here are some further features of a Learning Concierge service which demonstrate this.

- It is a **PULL SERVICE** – so people can **choose** to use it. Individuals are not obliged to use it if they are happy to organise their own self-learning and self-development– unlike most L&D initiatives which are PUSHED down to workers, who have no choice whether to use them or not.
- It is a **PERSONAL** service that recommends options that are **tailored** to the needs, preferences, time and budget of the individual(s) concerned – it does not apply a one-size-fits-all solution.
- The service is **INDEPENDENT** of vendors and platforms – and particularly values the wide range of free or low-cost opportunities available on the open Web that are mostly overlooked by traditional training departments.
- The service is **STAFFED** by experienced learning and performance practitioners who understand the huge range of opportunities afforded by both formal and informal learning, social and networked learning, performance support, as well as collaborative team working. They are therefore able to save an individual hours of web search time as they have answers at their fingertips.
- The service responds **QUICKLY** to requests for help, as it recognises that people often need rapid support for performance problems – and can't wait for weeks to be booked onto external courses or workshops.

- The services **DOES NOT MANAGE OR TRACK** the activity that is chosen or undertaken by the individual(s) – instead it is the managers' responsibility to review the performance improvements and changes in the individual. It does however request feedback from the individuals concerned in order to refine the service to them in the future.
- The service is **EVALUATED** in terms of the quality of the service it provides – rather than on the number of people booked on courses or who have completed courses.

For some organisations, a Learning Concierge service may be seen as an additional service to the traditional training function, for others it might even **replace** the old function. However, since **staffing** is likely to be the main stumbling block to providing an effective internal service, an outsourced service might be a more appropriate way forward. But it is also a good option for small organisations without a L&D function, or for larger organizations whose L&D departments have been drastically reduced in size.

You could offer this service in a number of ways online (like a Help Desk service), e.g. using Zoom or Teams. You might even partly automate the process using a chat bot (as described in **Task 5**).

TASK 24

Draw up a plan for introducing a Learning Concierge service in your organisation. Consider staffing levels, availability, access as well as response speed.

J: Reward success

25 - Showcase success stories across your organisation

Task 25 in **A Guide for Managers** recommends that managers provide opportunities for sharing success stories in their teams. However, L&D can play a role in ensuring that some of the best success stories are shared across the organisation.

Suitable events might be dedicated **Learning Days** or **Learning Showcase** events or more general **Company networking events** or even **Company conferences**.

It is important to remember that the emphasis of these events should be firmly placed on the personal or professional outcomes achieved, rather than solely on the learning, per se.

Useful examples to showcase would therefore be:

- interesting professional **goals** set
- imaginative **approaches** to achieving professional goals
- exciting forms of **evidence** of achievements
- impressive **outcomes** – i.e. results of self-development

Individuals might then be nominated by their managers to appear in a Showcase event, and should, ideally, present their experiences in innovative ways – rather than just through a traditional presentation. You might want to provide some guidance on how they might do this.

Another part of a company showcase event might involve rewarding success in the form of a Top Achiever award This wouldn't necessarily bring any job promotion or monetary award, but rather would be a significant way of recognising improved performance through self-development.

TASK 25

How might you set up an event to showcase and/or reward successful self-development initiatives across your organisation?