

Jocelyn Consulting Ltd

20 resources to help L&D leaders to see a new way forward

Introduction

Jocelyn Consulting helps corporate Learning and Development teams to play a more strategic, collaborative and future-looking role:

Our **vision** - is impactful and and influential L&D leaders

Our **purpose** - to help L&D leaders to contribute to more adaptable, human and future ready businesses

Our **mission** - to provide critical insight, tools and partnership to equip L&D leaders to succeed

We hope this collection of resources challenges you to see your work as an L&D leader differently - and engage with your organisation in a new way.

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L&D leaders - How have you defined your measures of success for 2020?

Do they go beyond “delivering the agreed plan”?

How are you changing the culture and capability of the organisation as a whole?

Here are some more success measure ideas for the L&D team in 2020:

Business goals and work performance expectations are more closely aligned across the organisation

The L&D team is embedded across the organisation

The L&D team are actively progressing the business strategy

The L&D team is contributing to cultural and operational change

There is a decrease in 'training focus' across the whole organisation

The number and strength of valued L&D relationships has increased by ...

The level of trust in the work of L&D has increased due to ...

The ideas and approaches of exemplary performers are now easily shared and connected

Information and ideas moves more easily across teams

There is evidence of shrinking silos across the organisation

The willingness of the organisation to look outside for new ideas and inspiration has increased

Positioning the changing role and focus of the L&D team within the organisation is key for successful L&D leaders

Helping leaders to see the work of L&D as directly enabling and accelerating better work and work culture is a new challenge.

Here are some example 're-positioning statements' from L&D strategy projects I've supported - which might help your re-thinking and re-planning:

'L&D is an enabler and accelerator of the business strategy'

'We are increasing the capacity and capability to solve customer problems'

'We are here to help people to connect, participate and take responsibility'

'We make the work of our best people more visible and accessible to everyone to create more value for customers'

'Improving connections and participation is at the heart of everything we do'

'We understand 'great performance' better than anyone'

'We are moving us on from being just a training organisation'

'We help build capacity for innovation, change and performance improvement'

'We provide context and enable people to take control of their career'

'We help develop the new thinking required by a global business'

'We help to develop future competitive advantage'

Some common reflections from L&D leaders who are struggling to gain traction for their plans:

"There's a lack of role models for new attitudes when it comes to continuous learning"

"Our traditional technical skill sets need to be updated more dynamically - but leaders still default to training"

"It's difficult to become more goal and strategy driven; (beyond 'order taking' and reacting to 'emergencies')"

"It's difficult to gain more insight and understanding of the whole organisation and its challenges - for today and looking ahead"

We can choose to flip these reflections - into a new narrative that might engage (busy) leaders, based on where they are today:

"It's clear that compared to our competitors, we lack the new technical skills required to create value and grow our business"

"We have evidence that our leadership teams are overly focused on process management and lack the confidence to lead through complexity and ambiguity"

"We aren't effectively connecting our customer strategy to our talent and learning strategy - which is a risk to our future growth"

"We see operational and financial risks from our current, siloed approach to team structures, learning and communication"

L&D leaders need to re-position the focus & priorities of their teams

Helping senior leaders to understand how the work of L&D enables & accelerates what will differentiate the organisation - for it's customers & it's employees is now a critical part of the role.

Of course, this re-positioning of 'L&D' needs to be supported with strategies that enable the change in practice!

Here are examples of successful L&D strategies from organisation's I've worked with - which might help your re-thinking and re-planning:

'Move from a focus on events, to supporting work and results'

'Enable every employee to become a better self-directed 'learner''

'Identify & share the approaches of 'exemplary performers' from across the organisation'

'Enable people in work teams & communities of practice to narrate their work'

'Help managers to lead & role model a 'learning through working' culture'

'Improve transparency & connections by making information & ideas more accessible to everyone'

'Encourage engagement in external learning networks'

'Move from learning apart from real work, to learning embedded in work'

'Move from pushing training & courses, to workers pulling learning as required'

'Move from creating training programs to building platforms for learning'

Learning is *change* - and change is *leadership work*.

Is the L&D team *actively influencing* the organisation?

Here are some characteristics of L&D teams who I see proactively leading new capability & a resulting culture shift:

They actively help leaders at all levels understand & engage with the features and benefits of 'continuously learning from work'

They have collaborated to define the role & the priority of 'learning' for the organisation (beyond the 'training catalogue')

They are collaborating to agree the capabilities and connections required to accelerate the business strategy; (not just focused on skills for individual jobs)

They actively facilitate new & better connections within & across business teams & functions

They create new opportunities for the organisation to look outside itself - to grow its networks & to find new ideas

They enable & accelerate new ways for individuals & teams to share their own learning - to benefit themselves & others

They measure their success by the quality of their partnerships

They lead & operate well beyond a "business support team" mindset

They are deliberately and slowly changing the culture of the organisation - and the thinking of the people in it...

Are the goals for learning clear & compelling for everyone in your business?

Are these learning goals critical to the success of the organisation?

Is there a connected learning strategy that enables you to achieve your goals?

This is key because technologies, interventions, programmes & content are not your goals & strategy

Here are some questions to help you agree where learning goals and strategy could focus in your business:

How does our business uniquely create value in its chosen market? Will this change looking forward?

Which capabilities enable our organisation to do what it does better than anyone?

What's the current context for "learning" in our organisation? What do we measure? Why?

What are the current problems for employees & managers? How do we know?

How much of the value created by our organisation is from known, stable work? Will this change?

Are the big challenges for our organisation:

Technical ? (we need better processes)

or

Adaptive? ('we need the capability to deal with new problems as they emerge)

or

Both?

What kind of learning *environments* best support the development of these capabilities?

L&D leaders - There are two 'axis' around which the work of L&D can align

Developing individuals vs. developing the organisation as a whole

+

'Productive' learning (for the 'now') vs. 'Generative' learning (developing a new future)

In most organisations L&D focuses on individual, productive learning. The priority here is maintaining centralised control through standardisation & consistency.

This is a hangover from the old 'industrial' mindset - when businesses created value through consistent execution of individual roles & individual skills.

The limitations of this approach will become more apparent as the 'remote-working' business world begins to adapt with & beyond the pandemic.

A more balanced, contextual & influential set of L&D goals could now include:

Individual, Productive learning:

Helping people to improve performance in a current role

+

Organisational, Productive learning:

Enabling teams to connect, reflect & work together to increase effectiveness in the current business

+

Individual, Generative learning:

Supporting people to learn new skills & make new connections that generate new ideas & strategies

+

Organisational, Generative learning:

Accelerating the collective wisdom of the organisation - to identify new opportunities & challenge existing assumptions

Is a 'digital' mindset key for your business?

A common goal for L&D is to 'digitise' its tools & tactics - but this is different to enabling a more 'digital' approach that supports people to work & think differently in order to create more value.

L&D supporting the organisation to adopt a more 'digital' mindset in practice could include these ideas:

Constant change is now inescapable - so it's curiosity & adaptability that create value in work teams

New possibilities & solutions come from connecting many sources of information

People can take responsibility for solving their work problems

Failing fast can be helpful

Creating wide & diverse networks of expertise & experience is crucial

Customer centricity keeps everyone better aligned

Silos don't (often) help when there are complex challenges

Less hierarchical teams often move ideas & solutions faster

'Digital technologies' can help to enable the features listed above - but only if we've agreed on 'the human stuff' first.

10 questions for learning technology vendor discussions

If you're considering investing in a new 'learning technology', my list of 10 questions below might be helpful to understand how a tool will actively contribute to your learning goals and strategy:

1. What is the big change your learning technology business is seeking to help make / facilitate / accelerate in the world of work?
2. What is your 'worldview' on the role & priority for 'learning' in business settings today?
3. Who is your technology not for?
4. How does your organisation interpret the terms "training", "learning", "learning culture" & "digital transformation"?
5. What is the biggest current challenge for leaders of teams from your perspective?
6. What would your prospective clients have to do if you didn't exist?
7. Is there an attribute that is absolutely unique to your proposition?
8. What do you think are the key "success measures" for an L&D team?
9. Which individual & team behaviours does your solution help to enable / facilitate / accelerate?
10. Where have you seen these changes impact for your clients - as a result of your partnership?

Is your L&D team positioned as a tactical cost centre?

Is this deliberate?

Here are some common signs of tactical, 'cost centre' positioning from my experiences of working alongside corporate L&D teams:

A lack of understanding of business goals / strategy / brand strategy / commercial differentiation

No compelling vision for the role of learning in the context of achieving the business goals

No aligned L&D strategy & success measures which enable the business goals

'Traditional' expectations from senior leaders of the work of 'L&D'

A focus on 'learning' rather than 'work performance'

Received L&D priorities centre on:

'Increasing productivity'

'Meeting statutory obligations'

'Closing technical skills gaps'

'Ensuring delivery of existing processes'

'Identifying efficiencies'

A focus on controlling 'learning content', 'delivery' & 'administration'

Tracking of 'hours of training delivered' & 'clicks and visits'

Evaluating the 'satisfaction' of those who participate in L&D initiatives

Lack of 'senior level' understanding, practical commitment or buy in

L&D plans constantly under pressure from 'other critical business priorities'

L&D budgets managed annually & 'top down'

Could this change?

What are the new opportunities?

Where next?

Are you prioritising what is DIFFICULT and VALUABLE for your organisation?

The new opportunity for L&D teams is to identify and accelerate the most VALUABLE and DIFFERENTIATING capabilities in the organisation - for now and looking forward.

Here are some examples of what is DIFFICULT in many businesses today from my experience:

Developing new mindsets and social structures that enable the business to adapt and thrive in uncertainty

Identifying and investing in new ways to approach customer challenges and opportunities

Balancing focus on managing existing processes with the space and time to look further ahead

Creating psychological safety

Creating the conditions that enable people to continually learn through from their daily work together

And some examples of what is VALUABLE for a business today:

Better connections

More diverse networks

Leaders who can give up the need for control

The space to question and reflect

Trust in decision makers who are closest to the customer

Enrolment of engaged, purposeful workers and teams who want to find new answers to solve problems; (not simply comply)

What could be the *new* goals for your corporate induction?

Is the priority to initiate 'compliance', 'speed to competence' & 'higher productivity'?

Here are some questions which might help you to reflect differently on the opportunity to use an induction to enable new thinking & permission:

Does the induction set out the context of the organisation the new colleague has joined - 'where it has come from & where it needs to head to & why'?

Does the induction describe the key challenges for the organisation & the new contributions needed to solve these together?

Is the induction practically demonstrating the organisations' commitment as a continuously learning organisation?

Does the induction enable & accelerate new connections for the participants?

Does the induction help the participants to form a new network(s)?

Does the induction encourage the participants to ask more & better questions?

Are the aims of the inductions focused beyond broadcasting "policies" & "logistics"?

Does the induction keep promises made in the recruitment process?

Does the induction reflect the future behaviours and values the organisation needs to grow?

Evolving the role of the L&D leader

L&D leaders - How might the COVID-19 crisis inspire and enable a fundamental reset of your L&D goals?

'Learning gatekeeper' > Amplifier and conduit

'Own and manage' > Serve and enable

'Take orders and deliver' > Facilitate and build principles

'Remove uncertainty' > Embrace and exploit complexity

'Protect our team from business' > Connect team across business

'Keep the team busy' > Keep the team inspired and informed

'Specifications and requirements' > Discovery and learning

'Manage agreed outputs' > Influence outcomes

'Manage and track projects' > Lead through goals and themes

'Solutions' > Experiences, exposure, connections

'Static catalogues' > Evolving platforms

'Closed systems' > Open systems

8 elements L&D teams need to succeed in a complex world

An L&D team, like any business function, is a complex system that exists in a complex business world.

To succeed in creating value with and for the organisation you need:

1. The right goals
2. The right value proposition aligned to the right strategy and business model
3. The right leader(s)
4. The right team culture
5. The right processes
6. The right tools
7. The right team structure
8. And of course: the right people

It's not easy.

And it's important to recognise that any one without the others won't be enough...

L&D leaders - How will you move from the "react" and "respond" phase?

Here are some new (old?) challenges and expectations for L&D leaders:

Linking learning and development with organisational development and differentiation

Aligning 'learning' to the business 'purpose' and strategy

Re-positioning 'L&D' as a compelling organisational priority

Being confident in the commercial context and the changing world of work

Playing a more strategic role in the whole 'talent' life-cycle

Developing 'senior level' understanding, commitment and buy in

Role modelling a growth mindset and ability to adapt to change

Contributing to a shift in organisational culture

Developing the capability of senior leaders

Enabling, role modelling and accelerating the features of 'a culture of learning'

Question - How can you create space to reflect and initiate?

Our role is to *proactively* help the organisation to connect to its new environment

Here are some more ideas on stepping forward and 'initiating':

How can we understand the new challenges now being faced by the organisation - and the new capabilities required to move forward?

How can we identify new ways to increase the capacity to solve these new customer challenges?

How are we defining and communicating what the Learning and Development team will stop doing - and why?

How can we find new ways for individuals and teams to connect and share their experience, ideas and opportunities?

How can we facilitate new ways for people's most useful and helpful work to become more visible to everyone?

How can we help to (re) define what the organisation now means by "great performance" and "great performer"?

How can we support team managers to find ways to avoid following every 'standard process' 'remotely'?

How can we accelerate new ways to encourage individual and team reflection?

How can we communicate and role model what the organisation now means by "learning" at this time; (beyond "new training")?

What is DIFFICULT and VALUABLE for organisations and their leaders

Still DIFFICULT:

- Developing leadership and employee mindsets and social structures that can adapt and thrive in uncertainty
- Identifying and investing in new ways to approach customer challenges and opportunities
- Balancing a focus on existing processes with space and time to look further ahead
- Creating psychological safety
- Creating the expectations and conditions that enable people to learn through and reflect on their daily work

More VALUABLE now:

- Better connections
- More diverse networks
- Trust in decision makers who are closest to the customer
- Enrolment of engaged, purposeful workers and teams who want to find new answers; (not simply 'comply')

Question for L&D leaders -

How will your team re-align to focus on what is DIFFICULT and VALUABLE?

How can the role of L&D move beyond 'information delivery function'?

The enforced shifts in workplace routines over the last two months have demonstrated where powerful learning happens:

- New conversations
- New connections
- New environments
- New ideas
- New experiences
- New challenges
- New interactions
- New questions
- New assignments
- New reflections
- New contexts
- New collaborations
- New situations
- New spaces
- New support
- New priorities
- New goals
- New perspectives
- New focus
- New routines
- New vulnerabilities

What can L&D leaders learn from this reality?

Will you now choose to refocus your efforts towards enabling conditions and connections over managing courses and content?

How will you play a more influential role in shaping the new ways teams will have to work and think together?

Here are some ideas for new questions you might now pose with your leadership team:

What kind of teams do we now need to develop - to become the business we say we want to be?

How different are the features and capabilities of these teams - compared to what we have today?

How important is it now to expand the ability of our people to change the way we did things before?

How important is it now to change our employees' understanding of how they contribute to our business model - Why?

How important is it now to help change the way our employees think about teamwork? - Why?

How important is it now to help to change the way our employees think about learning? - Why?

How important is it now to be a more connected organisation? - Why?

How much control does the leadership group now want to hold over ideas and plans? - Why?

L&D leaders can start to grow their impact and influence - by starting with better questions

There is an opportunity to *choose* to re-prioritise 'leading' over 'managing'

The L&D team is '*leading*' when it:

Helps define the new role and priority for 'learning' in the organisation

Collaborates to agree the new capabilities required to support the business strategy

Help managers to lead and role model a new learning through work culture

Facilitates new connections within and across business teams

Creates new opportunities for the organisation to look outside itself, grow new networks and find new ideas and new opportunities

Enables and accelerates new ways for individuals and teams to share their thinking and learning

Measures success by the quality of its partnerships

Leads beyond a "business support team" mindset

Deliberately seeks to change the culture of the organisation - and the thinking of the people in it.

L&D is focused on '*managing*' when it:

Creates plans only based on what the organisation does today

Enjoys its own language

Believes that technology is the centrepiece

Administrates "solutions"

Celebrates "visits" and "completions"

Employs "marketing" to seek attention - without enrolment

Serves requests

Moves learning away from leaders and their plans