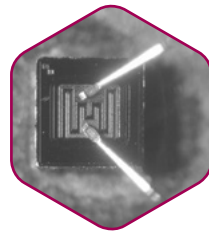
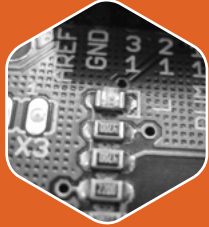


7 STEPS TO BECOMING A

# DIGITAL LEARNING PIONEER

A WHITE PAPER





## 7 steps to becoming a Digital Learning Pioneer

“Never before has the world been marked by such turbulence, complexity, ambiguity, and relentless speed. An insatiable pursuit of technology is propelling a new era of globalization, economic value creation, innovation, and discovery. This pace of change demands an accelerated need for innovation and business agility.”

*Talent Management, Disrupted*, ATD, September 2015,  
Anmarie Neal, Daniel Sonsino

A clamour for more social, agile and digital Learning & Development, alongside recent challenges to the effectiveness of classroom training and eLearning in business, have stirred a mix of emotions and responses from those practitioners who are both drawn to traditional approaches and highly skilled in them. However, the business world has changed irreversibly and it is only going to become more digital and even faster paced. Today’s employees expect on-demand support and development comparable to their experience online, outside of the corporate infrastructure. In much the same way as the music and publishing industries have had to respond to the changing needs of consumers, L&D also needs to adapt in order to meet the changing demands of organisations and employees.

### About this white paper

If L&D needs to change, then what does that practically mean for you and your team? With the anxiety in the profession right now, the aim of this paper is to equip L&D with the know-how and tools to propel any business forward with an approach that can potentially support and inspire every employee, every day. The ability to engage employees in the strategic objectives of the organisation, provide contextually relevant support when they need it to perform, and a clear focus on building capability for the future will differentiate successful businesses from the rest. By updating your L&D skillset and practices, there is the opportunity to replace anxiety with excitement and play the lead role in your organisation’s success both today and tomorrow. This paper looks at 7 steps to transforming yourself into a pioneer of modern Learning & Development and provides practical guidance on getting started in your organisation.

# 1

## IT'S ABOUT PERFORMANCE, NOT LEARNING

The transformation of Learning & Development must start with how the function sees itself. Firstly, it means shifting thinking from 'learning' outcomes to 'optimum working' outcomes. This 'performance mindset' is one that looks at how things are working in relation to how they could (or should) be working for optimum results and then working with internal clients to achieve the desired performance. In contrast, the traditional 'learning needs analysis' looks for 'learning needs' to deliver 'learning solutions' quite often leading to a 'course'.

This is what **Charles Jennings** calls the 'course mindset'. Jennings points out that "the default solution (a course or programme) to address human performance problems is deeply embedded in most HR and learning professionals' psyche and also our own development experiences."



*Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends 2016 Deloitte, 2016*

Nearly every CEO and CHRO reports that their companies are not developing skills fast enough.

The 'course' has been the linchpin of traditional L&D since The Industrial Age and in recent years, both eLearning and webinars have brought the classroom to our desks. But business requires a more dynamic approach to supporting performance and employees are looking for immediate support to real work challenges, either from colleagues or by **looking outside the organisation (websearch)**.

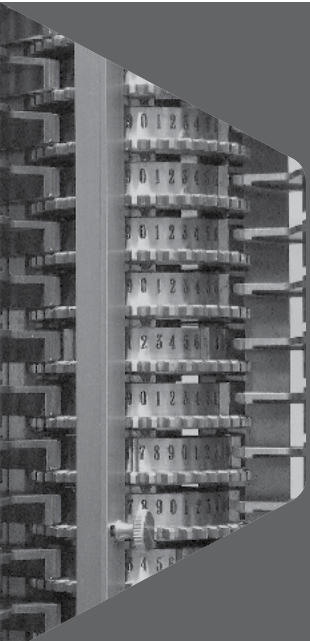
It is only very recently, with constant connectivity and workers' access to limitless resources online, that far more effective ways of impacting business performance are being seen. The opportunity now is to help people be better at their jobs and improve their prospects with on-demand support and immediate access to created and curated 'resources' that link to the work they are doing and the goals of the company.

By looking past 'learning', refocussing on 'performance' and throwing off the shackles of the 'course mindset', L&D can focus on activities and outcomes that impact the work itself, embed learning in the workflow and help employees grow in line with the organisation's strategic goals. This will not be done one class at a time but by having the potential to influence everybody, every day.

Agile responses to performance problems and opportunities for growth can impact people today, rather than in several months from now when a programme has been designed, launched and finally attended.

## Resources before Courses

### EXAMPLE FOR PRESENTATION SKILLS



By providing digital *resources* where you would previously have run courses, employees access the appropriate support they need, when they need it. If an employee wants to know how they should prepare for an upcoming presentation, they would search for and find a range of relevant resources that show them, step-by-step, how they should prepare, some top tips from 'experts' and a series of video clips from people who are experienced at delivering presentations at their company. They share tips with other learners as well as the creators (and curators) of those resources and are recommended further resources for designing engaging presentations at the company. When the time comes to design their presentation, they search for and find top tips, a framework to follow, as well as advice from the best presenters at the company.

They engage with other learners and the creators (and curators) of those resources and are then recommended further resources for delivering engaging presentations. Just before they are due to deliver their presentation, they find top tips and video clips of experienced presenters in the company. They deliver their presentation with confidence having benefited from the experience that resides within their company in addition to tips and frameworks that helped them when they were faced with the challenge.

At each stage, they rate the resources on usefulness and provide feedback for improvements. L&D also survey them on 'how much better they can now present as a result of their entire learning journey' and how they would like to be supported further.

# 2

## MAKE DECISIONS WITH DATA

More agile approaches to Learning & Development can help you truly understand performance and capability gaps by working closely with employees to gain meaningful data, test assumptions, and build prototype solutions that can be improved (collaboratively with employees) over time. This means skillfully and attentively collecting data about your business, its priorities, the wider context in which it operates, where employees are at, and what needs to happen for the business to achieve its goals. To reiterate, this is in stark contrast to creating courses to meet learning needs.

Collecting data will better inform how L&D positively impacts business performance, the capability of its people and their confidence to deliver. Google took this approach to **assess the merits of good management**, looking at existing data, testing their assumptions and building contextually relevant solutions designed to impact management in a way that resonated with its people.



### IN ACTION: THOMAS ROVEKAMP AT SANOMA

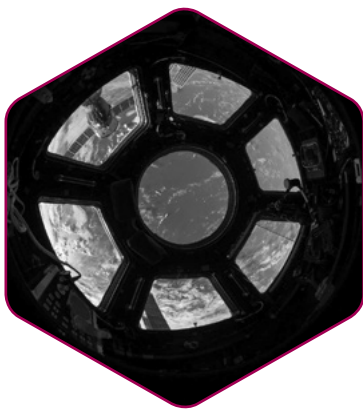
“From the Employee Engagement survey, I discovered that respondents wanted more development on ‘digital’ because they felt the need to invest in their own future. This was a common theme across the board. So, I made the assumption that people wanted development opportunities in ‘digital’ and tested what that meant in conversations across the business. I discovered in conversation that whilst the company was going through a digital transformation the employees wanted to know what their role would be in that transformation.

I spoke with employees at all levels: upper, middle, and lower management, on how they see L&D, the broader business landscape, their experience at the company, their role here and what they needed to know. My intention was to tackle the biggest priorities. I want every person to think about what’s best for the company. I’m confident that if they’re learning new things to help them become better and more relevant, whilst being provided with every opportunity to succeed, they will feel better about working at Sanoma.”

Look first at the data at hand that already exists in your organisation, for example previous Employee Engagement surveys. Find out what people think of the development opportunities that are available to them and their concerns about their own development. Make assumptions and test those assumptions in conversations.

Make it your business to know how people are developing themselves already. If you do not already support the Marketing function in developing their technical expertise and staying abreast of innovations, how are they doing so for themselves? If you see Senior Executives only once a year in programmes, how are they developing themselves in all manner of different topics throughout the year?

Strike up a conversation with as many people as you can about their business, their priorities and their development. For others, this will be the most obvious conversation to be having with L&D. However, this need not be an exhaustive exercise that holds you back from beginning your L&D transformation but instead a new 'business as usual': collecting data, testing assumptions, and finding new ways to uncover valuable data to inform and challenge your assumptions, whilst uncovering advocates and collaborators across the business.



# 3

## INFLUENCE THE PERFORMANCE OF EVERYBODY, EVERY DAY

### By refocusing away from the 'course'

as the default solution, you will open up the opportunity to potentially influence the performance of everybody every day by exposing employees to resources that are designed to help them access what successful people already know and do as well as carefully curated resources with content from outside the organisation.

### Workers today already use the internet

to find the answers, knowledge and know-how they need in order to perform. Line Managers, Salespeople, and even New Starters are **web-searching for support** in their moments of need. On top of this, **learning from peers** is largely recognised as the preferred and most effective method of development within an organisation.

### Providing contextually relevant digital 'resources'

will help workers to learn from their colleagues and perform with confidence, in a way (and at a time) that makes sense to them. The opportunity with digital resources is to connect knowledge and know-how to the work itself in a way that traditional training cannot because it is generally too far removed (in terms of context, content and timing). Your ideal situation is that an employee finds the resource they need, when they need it and immediately applies it to their work. This challenges the very essence of 'Learning & Development' because learning does not have to take place before application but during and after. This, again, is all about performance' and 'capability' rather than 'learning'.

### Creating and curating digital resources

can be quick and iterative as well as hugely impactful. An exciting and relevant new consultative and digital skillset will help L&D to extract know-how from 'experts'; plan 'learning journeys'; get to grips with the basics of digital video production; as well as digital curation. Each of these skills will add reach, impact and credibility to any L&D function.

# 4

## RESOURCES FIRST, SUPPLEMENTED BY FORMAL EVENTS



In a **recent study**, it was found that more than 70% of workers had sought their own professional development in the last 24 hours. On average, these respondents invested more than 14 hours a month to learning on their own (with resources they had sought outside of their company), and just over two hours on employer-provided training.

If employees are finding their own resources and developing themselves online, how can L&D help them to do this better whilst growing internal awareness and capability that will positively impact performance?

To help workers to do what they want to do, but better, do not consider 'resources' a supplementary activity but place it at the core of what you do, where courses or eLearning may currently sit.

This is where you can start to influence performance and build capability every day. Especially during periods of transition for new starters, new managers, and anybody else changing roles, people are in desperate need of support and guidance. Resources can help them to perform from Day One, whereas courses can only supplement their experiences and are usually too late to shape the way somebody grows in their new role.

Curation is also a high-value, low-touch set of activities that can potentially impact all employees within an organisation and help to focus them in the direction the business is going. By bringing the 'best of web' into the lives of workers, with added context and suggestions for application, L&D can play an integral role in turning an overwhelming amount of information into credible, relevant and actionable resources. Taking this the next level, resources that are created or curated by influential figures and technical experts within an organisation can help everybody else learn from what they know, do and experience in a way that can truly impact the way an organisation learns and performs.

Once you provide people with the digital tools that help them to overcome challenges when they arise, formal learning events take on a different role. Rather than attempting to transfer (or overload) delegates with 'knowledge', you can focus formal events to do much more worthwhile activities, such as peer interaction, debate, questioning, challenge and practice.



# 5

## EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND TO CONTRIBUTE

“*In many hierarchical organizations, workers are more connected when they go home than when they’re at work. This is a sure sign of the obsolescence of our older management control systems.*”

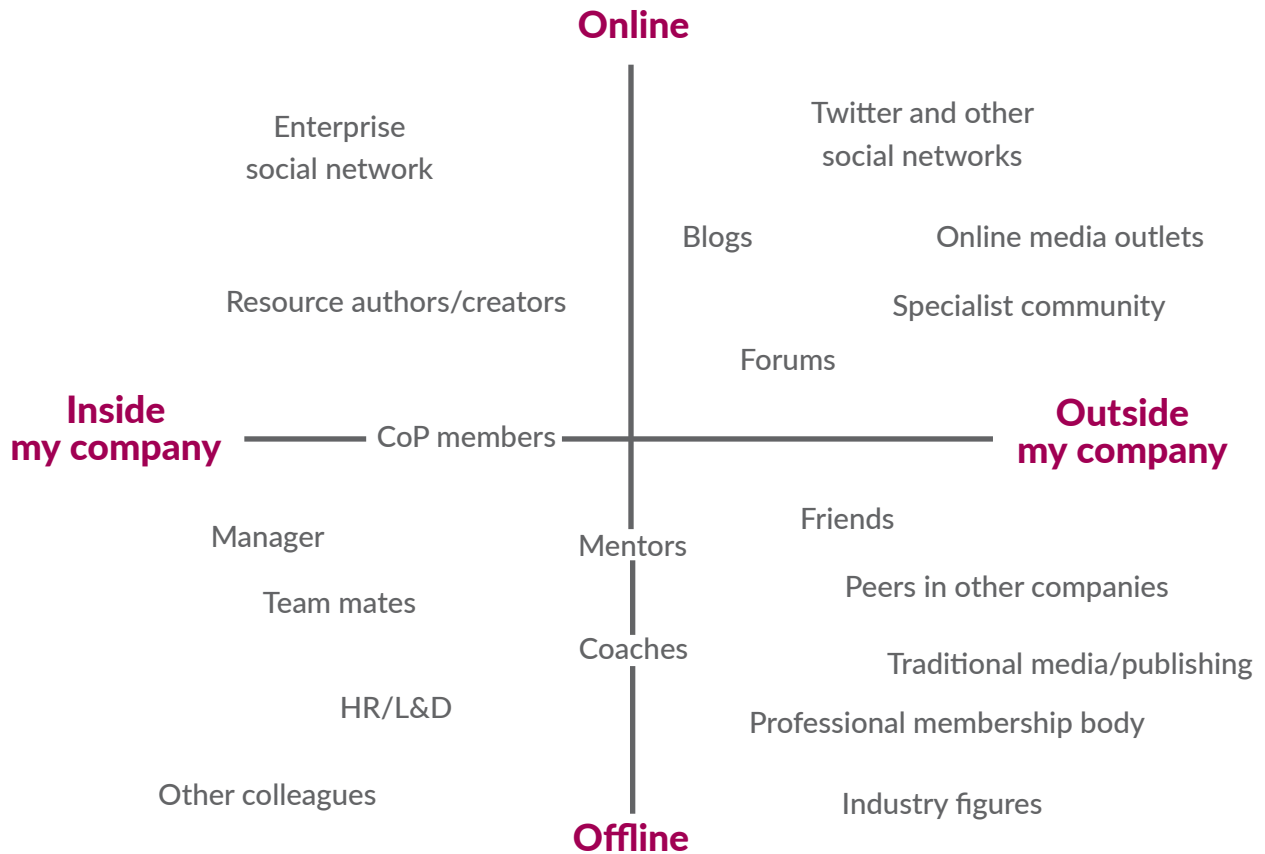
*Work is learning and learning is the work*, Harold Jarche 2012

The internet has made it easy for any of us to access celebrities, experts, thought leaders, journalists, feature writers, and bloggers. Each one of these people can be influencing thoughts and actions. Perhaps without considering it as such, ‘following’ these people helps to form a PLN (Personal Learning Network) informing not only an individual’s work but opinions, shopping habits, health, fitness, travel plans, and many many other things.

This happens in organisations too, not only online but also in meetings and general exposure to others. At present, managers, team mates and mentors provide formal and informal PLNs at work. But in ever more complex environments, to have the ability to access influential business figures and other professionals in a field of expertise could have great professional benefit and also impact the work that is done.

Helping employees to cultivate a PLN that supports their professional development goals can be as easy as plotting options on the map below and turning those suggestions into real people, i.e. bloggers, writers, peers, colleagues, etc.

## The Personal Learning Network (PLN)



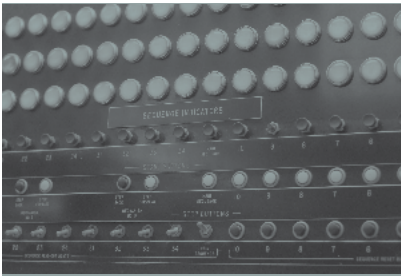
Many workers will be doing this already to varying degrees of sophistication. The opportunity for L&D is to help people learn from each other, to build and engage in an optimal PLN both offline and online and to gain heightened exposure, insights from the wider world, improved performance and focused development.

# 6

## MEASURE EFFICACY, NOT LEARNING

In traditional L&D, significant investment of money and time requires Return on Investment (ROI). The time workers spend away from work and the financial commitment of a 'solution' are subtracted from the quantified 'result'. This quest for ROI arises because outcomes are difficult to equate to results and are often not directly linked at all. For example, it could be reasoned that investing in a training programme is unlikely to deliver the return it was conceived for, because:

- It is not possible for learners to retain all that was 'delivered' **unless it is all immediately applied**
- The learning context is too far removed from the work context
- The event was not timely for those who attended
- The challenges practiced in assessment were neither pressing concerns or realistic enough for deep learning to take place.



### *Dear Kirkpatrick's: You Still Don't Get It*

“The single largest flaw with the Kirkpatrick Four Levels model is the fact its basic premise is that learning starts with a [training] event.”

In addition to ROI, traditional measures of L&D have mainly been: attendance, completion, assessment, and satisfaction. These assume that 'learning solutions' (and more often 'formal learning solutions') are the answer, to which there will be a cost to the company but rarely a linear value that relates to a 'return'. It is easy to measure attendance, completion, assessment, and satisfaction. However, none of these logically equate to 'learning' or 'performance improvement'.

A data-driven Learning & Development function, has the opportunity to measure improvements on the data collected (see Section 2). These can include:

- Employee Engagement survey responses
- The gaps identified in knowledge and skills audits
- More capable individuals and better performing teams
- The achievement of milestones towards what needs to happen for the business to achieve its longer-term goals

Assessing and measuring improvements in performance and increased capability to do the work required are steps towards efficacy: achieving the desired results. This is in stark contrast to measuring whether 'learning' has occurred.

# 7

## LEADING SO THAT OTHERS WILL FOLLOW

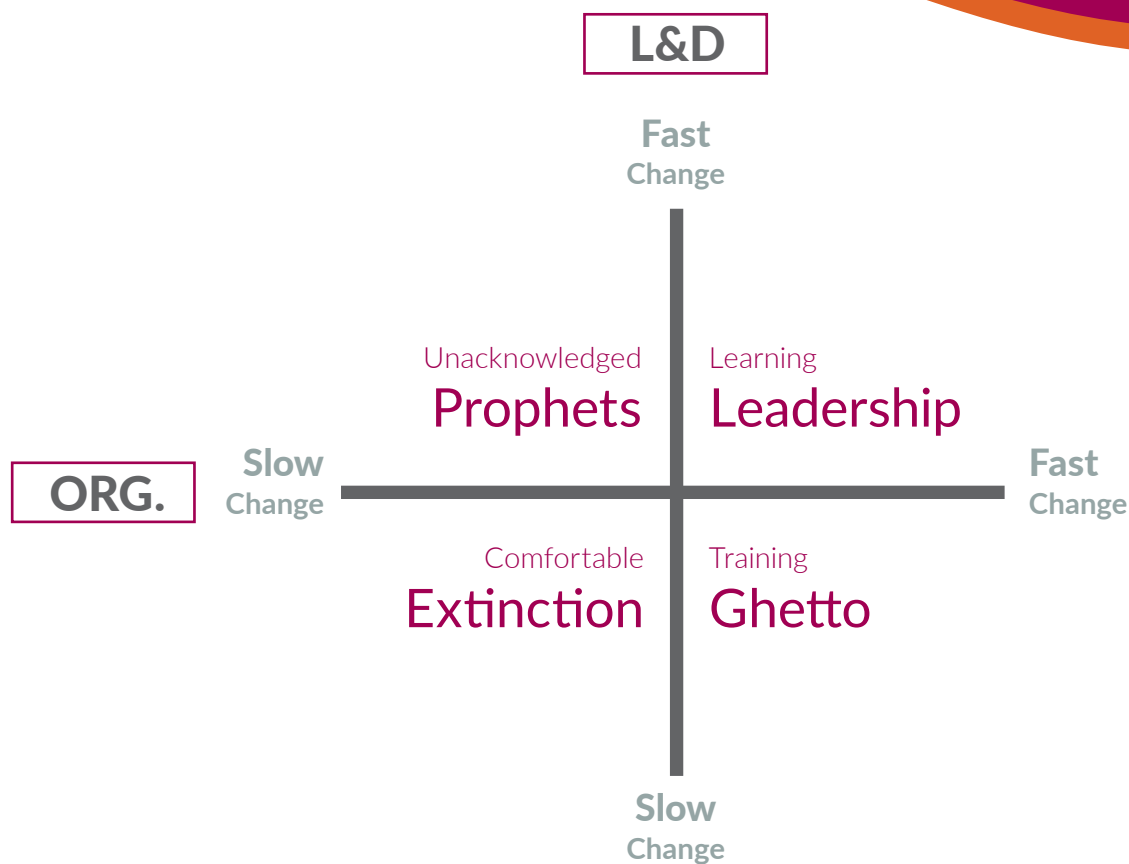
The 'course mindset' is pervasive and likely to be deeply ingrained in the development experiences of key stakeholders, including your managers, peers, clients, and anybody who asks for 'courses' for themselves or for others. The majority of people have invested a part of themselves and / or their reputation in 'training'.

You need to be both skillful and sensitive to this and share a compelling vision that leads your organisation and its people to a far more effective L&D experience. In this respect, remember to protect and yet inspire them as you lead.

Whilst a potential minefield, politically, this L&D transformation is a journey worth initiating. It is one thing to express the case for change and to share the vision of how L&D can play a more critical role in modern business and yet another to lead the transformation required.

The reality many of us face is that despite being ready to operate within a modern L&D function, the setup is governed by traditional expectations, often from others with significant influence. In many cases, cultural factors may determine that traditional L&D is served with a blind disregard for what actually works. Remember, you're leading people on a journey and there will be pitfalls along the way. However, you will find advocates and it will be important to leverage their influence and involvement.

Any approach to change should be qualified by the readiness both across the company and in the L&D / HR function. The axis below is a useful guide to determining readiness of both the business and L&D. This model was developed by **Donald Taylor**, who recognised the dynamics at play maintaining the status quo or accelerating the need for change. Taylor asks: "***What's next for L&D, innovation or obsolescence? We can become innovative and core to the business, an essential part of it. Or we may become obsolete. It depends on what we choose to do...***"



The only logical place to be on this axis is in Learning Leadership, where the pace of the business requires a progressive and highly impactful approach to L&D. Here, the business is integrally supported in its own progressiveness by the Learning & Development function.

If L&D is moving too fast for the business ( Unacknowledged Prophets ) then there is a lack of leadership recognising that the aim of leading (in this context) is so that others follow, so it may require some 'pacing' at first to convince and reassure people that another way will yield better results. The places that you do not want to be occupying are those of slow-paced or traditional L&D.

Comfortable Extinction means that the organisation is likely to no longer require development because it is not going to be around for too much longer, or the Training Ghetto , where the organisation is likely to be allocating resources to bypass L&D and serve its own needs, leading to questions as to why you are there at all. You will find out where you are from an honest self-assessment and the data you collect (see Section 2). Then, and only then, can you plot your path, leading so that others follow.

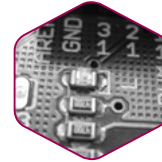
Comfortable Extinction is a difficult position to move from because it indicates that the organisation is stagnating, if not declining. But anywhere else, our simple mantra '*help people to do what they want to do, better*' will help you to move towards Learning Leadership.

# Summary



## **LIBERATION FROM THE 'COURSE MINDSET'**

Liberation from the 'course mindset' can begin to refocus the L&D function on helping the business to achieve its strategic goals, supporting everyday working, and growing capability so that employees can achieve their potential in your organisation. This is a much bigger and more important role for L&D and has the opportunity to impact everybody, every day rather than very few people, not very often. L&D and employees themselves have been misled by the limitations of corporate learning technology to this point. However, the opportunity with technology lies on an adjacent path, one that employees recognise the value of because it helps them to do what they want to do, better.



## **PROVISION OF ON-DEMAND RESOURCES**

By providing resources when and where employees are facing work challenges, by unpacking what an organisation knows and needs to know in order to perform, and recognising that employees can be motivated to develop themselves with the right tools, then L&D can be integral rather than peripheral. This requires refocus, bold leadership and an agile and collaborative approach. And it requires a new digital skillset. Moving beyond learning and exploring this critical new role should be exciting, if not a little daunting...

But you are not alone.

**We can help you implement the 7 steps discussed in this white paper.**

**BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY**

Contact us today at [info@thelpi.org](mailto:info@thelpi.org) or call +44 (0) 2476 496210

Visit [www.thelpi.org/digital-learning-pioneer/](http://www.thelpi.org/digital-learning-pioneer/) for webinars, videos, infographics

**ABOUT THE LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE** Established in 1995 as the Institute for IT Training, the Learning and Performance Institute (LPI) has grown on an annual basis to become the leading authority on Learning & Development.

With a comprehensive range of membership, certification, accreditation, events, awards, networks and consulting, our mission is to promote the skills and professional status of individuals and organisations engaged in learning activities, and assess the quality of learning services.

Membership of the LPI demonstrates your commitment to both your own and the industry's professional development. LPI membership sets you apart from other learning professionals and gives you industry recognition of your skills, experience, professionalism and quality.

Join the thousands of individual members and hundreds of accredited organisations who are passionate about workplace learning.

[www.thelpi.org](http://www.thelpi.org)



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR, DAVID JAMES** As a consultant for the Learning and Performance Institute and as Chief Learning Strategist at Looop, David helps clients build and implement their digital and social learning strategies. With almost 20 years of experience in L&D, David was most notably Disney's Director of Talent, Learning & OD for Europe, Middle East & Africa.

#### Produced in the UK, June 2016

This document is current as of the initial date of publication and may be changed by Learning & Performance Institute (LPI) at any time. Not all offerings are available in every country in which LPI operates.

The client examples cited are presented for illustrative purposes only. Actual performance results may vary depending on specific configurations and operating conditions.

THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED "AS IS" WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT ANY WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND ANY WARRANTY OR CONDITION OF NON-INFRINGEMENT. LPI products and services are warranted according to the terms and conditions of the agreements under which they are provided.

Statements regarding future direction and intent are subject to change or withdrawal without notice, and represent goals and objectives only.