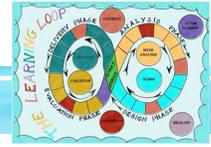




The Learning Loop Approach



I often speak with L&D professionals and hear these common problems:

- **Budget and staff cuts**
- **Poor retention of information**
- **Not enough time for trainers to prep**
- **Lack of stakeholder support and buy-in**
- **Lack of belief in the L&D contribution**

Using accelerated learning principles, as well as the Learning Loop approach, these could be a distant memory. Here are the simple principles:

1. **Everyone(in L&D) understands the whole of the learning cycle**

I might even take the brackets out and change this to "**Everyone understands the whole of the learning cycle**". If the whole organisation understands:

- What it means to do a needs analysis (not just an LNA)
- How stakeholders need to be engaged for learning to imbed (and for meaningful evaluation)
- How to write strong performance objectives and great learning objectives
- How evaluation is everybody's business
- How line managers should play a big part in the learning process

....then.....could we then see a time where L&D would be seen as a change agent rather than a cost? Would we then see the business, truly partnering with L&D to imbed the learning into the organisation? Could we then justify our spend on learning, knowing that we could deliver a return on investment (ROI)?

2. **Stakeholder engagement and management skills are developed**

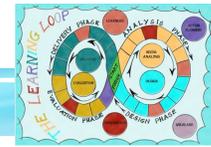
As an L&D professional, I should be able to:

- Recognise who my stakeholders are
- Know how to nurture the influential and supportive ones
- Know how to stop the unsupportive ones from getting me down
- Speak their language
- Ask the right questions to engage the stakeholders and extract the real issues
- Demonstrate value to the stakeholders
- Justify budgets

Am I right?

3. **L&D use a consultancy approach when asked to design and deliver learning**

So often stakeholders come to L&D with a ready thought-through solution with timescales and delivery methods. L&D do not always get to do an un-biased needs analysis, which may uncover organisational, process or resourcing issues that mask themselves as learning needs. This leads to solutions, not quite hitting the mark and therefore a lack trust in the L&D



contribution. Good consultancy skills with strong questioning skills, can help to uncover some deep seated issues, that may be masked by other symptoms.

4. A good needs analysis leads to a solid(meaningful) evaluation and appropriate design.

Given the opportunity to use a triangulation approach to needs analysis (using 3 methods to find agreement on the real issues), L&D can at the same time, visualise the possible outcomes and the benefits to the organisation. With this "end" in mind, the learning can be focused on what is **actually** needed rather than what we **think** (or others think) is required.

5. There is an explicit and practical objective setting process.

"By the end of the workshop, the learners will be able to understand the 5 principles of customer engagement".

Not an atypical objective, but can it be measured? Do line managers ever sit down with the learners to set performance objectives before a workshop? If not, then how is the impact of the learning measured? If the organisation, as a whole does not have an explicit method for setting objectives, then how does change (in line with strategy) become a reality? How do we turn organisational goals into real outputs from our staff?

6. Learning interventions are underpinned by accelerated learning principles.

Accelerated learning has been show to improve learning retention by as much as 300%* and cut trainer preparation down by as much as 30%** . Who would not want to incorporate principles, which have the learner at the centre and retention as a priority?

I would love to hear your thoughts on the "Learning Loop Approach"..... am open to discussions, debates and anyone who disagrees!

**Elliot Masie in a study on IT training*

***Debbie Meddins, L&D Manager from ATOS*