



Building a Culture of Learning

SMART Solutions for Learning

By Cheryl Johnson, Performance Solutions Specialist

Making the transition from an organization that delivers learning to a “learning culture” can be a daunting task, but well worth the effort. This toolkit contains worksheets and exercises that will help you define the landscape of your desired learning culture. One of the most important factors in establishing a successful learning culture is to simultaneously provide support for both structured and informal learning. Structured learning provides an avenue to introduce new concepts. Informal learning provides immediate support for learners throughout your organization, but also provides a means for capturing, retaining, and transferring expert knowledge, as turnover and retirement occurs.



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Welcome

Welcome to this simplified interactive toolkit. It was specially designed, based on learning industry best practices to help you systematically make critical decisions to leverage learning technology and best practices that meet the complexities of today's workplace environment. Many businesses, large and small, are now experiencing the benefits of transitioning from a "traditional training" approach, to a "learning culture" that embraces both structured training courses and at the same time, engage learners in content-rich, informal-learning networks. Learning is no longer a one-time event.... It is a process embedded in to everything we think and do.

The toolkit will walk you through the process to:



1. Define a pedagogical model for learning that works at your organization and aligns with overall organizational goals.
2. Create a learning development team.
3. Choose technology and tools that support your learning ecosystem.
4. Develop/Buy content that matches your pedagogical model.
5. Measure the success of your efforts.
6. Evaluate costs.
7. Garner support for the program.

This toolkit is not designed to teach you how to build engaging content. Rather it is designed to support your organization in *beginning the process* of devising a strategy that ensures that learning is a by-product of engaging interactions rather than a place where you simply go to gain information.

Let's get started.

Define the Landscape

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will do"
-Lewis Carroll

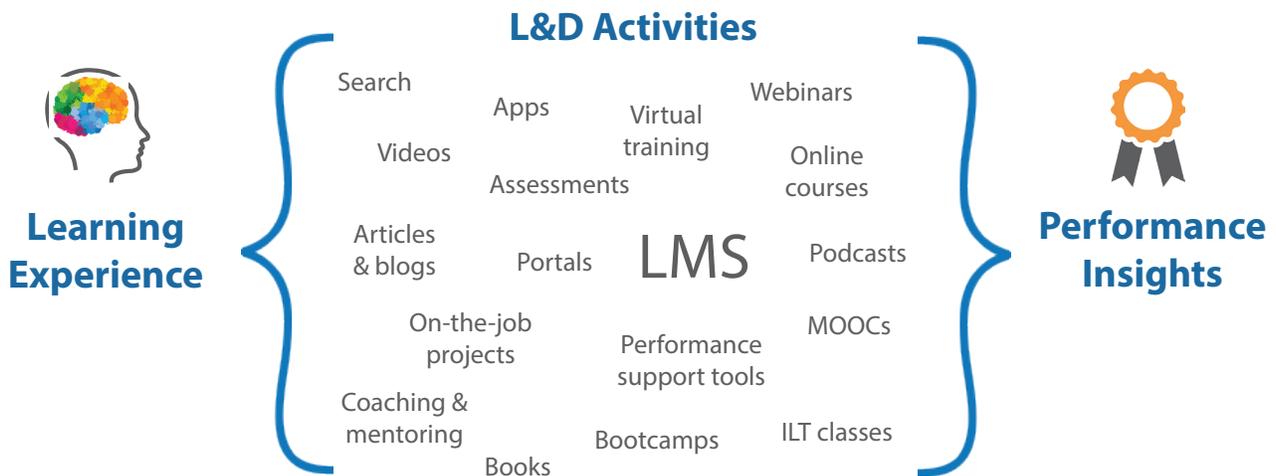
To define the landscape we need to review what is working and what is not working in the workplace today. We begin by analyzing what learning resources are accessed most and measuring its effectiveness. As the demographics of the employee landscape changes, learning needs to adapt to meet those needs. There is lots of talk about the generational gap but experience is indicating that the generational divide is not as deep as once thought and that both groups are learning from each other to create a dynamic and ever changing environment, so hold on to your seats! It does not matter when you were born or how you grew up, learning is learning and we all need to adapt to stay on board the booming information age.

To begin, we need to evaluate how the current learning ecosystem functions and what we can do to evolve and meet the demands of a growing workforce. In the past an LMS was at the center of most learning within organizations. We could track 'completion' of learning. Employers are now demanding actionable insights into how learning is impacting performance. This can be a daunting task and certainly it is not a task that traditional LMS functionality supports.

So how do we create a learning ecosystem that engages employees, motivates them to self-direct their learning and perform at higher levels?

Several models exist out there for building a culture of learning. Let's explore a couple of them.

This one is pretty simple. The learner has an experience. Those activities are captured in some electronic form and the data is aggregated and exported to various types of performance reports that provide the type of insight the employer outlined in their report criteria. This model focuses on technology and delivery techniques that provide data on performance.



This model outlines several pillars (foundational elements) that an organization can put in place to support learning and performance. This model focuses on the people and pedagogical elements that make up great learning.

Learning Environment Components				
Resources	People	Training and Education	Development Practices	Learning by Doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance support • Personal knowledge management • RSS feeds and other filtered information feeds • Shared documents and wiki spaces • Online databases and knowledge management systems • Books, articles, internet resources • Job aids • Podcasts, video-casts • Briefings (communication; content delivery without activities) • Procedure manuals and technical manuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer support systems • Social media connections (blog, microblogs, social bookmarking, etc.) • Group forums or discussion boards • Expert directories • Communities of practice • Mentor relationships and developmental networks • Coaching • Professional networks (live and online), e.g. professional organizations, user groups • Conferences and professional meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courseware and seminars, internal or external, in any delivery format • Formal coaching after training • On-the-job training • Academic courses and degree programs; MOOCs (massive open online courses) • Certificate, certification, and licensing programs • Follow up activities and exercises designed to support learning and application (e.g. enrichment activities, reflection activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action learning programs • Stretch assignment management • Rotation and other experiential learning programs based in workplace activities • After action review practices • Supervisor support, feedback and coaching • Communication activities to influence learning readiness and application • Career coaching and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by doing • Engaging in critical reflection • Experimenting • Collaborating • Self-monitoring and analysis of outcomes and feedback • Creating personal notes, job aids • Teaching and creating resources for others
<p>Inspiration and Motivation Desire to learn • Belief in link between learning and performance • Confidence in ability to learn • Self-directedness</p>				
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How do we enable them to come together and work seamlessly?

Survey

A significant amount of information needs to be gathered in order to ensure that this effort results in the desired outcomes. By gathering this information we can formulate a plan that will meet your needs now and in the future. You do not need to answer these questions now, but by thinking about them, you will be better prepared to engage in the **Creating and Culture of Learning program**.

What is your organization's mission statement?

What are your learning goals?

- Increase participation in learning
- Introduce learning to organization
- Expand offerings
- Other

How does learning affect (support) your organizational goals?

How would you rate the effectiveness of the learning programs you currently provide?

- Our employees and staff love them-what do they love about them?
- They align well with organizational goals
- Employees and staff complete the required training but do no more than that
- Employees and staff do not know where to locate training
- We are just starting
- Other

How well does leadership support learning in your organization?

- It is not required so they provide minimal resources to make it happen
- They see the value but it is not a priority so often times funding is slow to get approved
- They see the value and make sure the budget is adequate to ensure a quality learning program
- Other

Define Learner Engagement: _____

Based on these results we will evaluate to determine if your organization is ready to make the adjustments (not just financial) to your culture needed to invest in learning as a culture?

Areas of Improvement:

What areas within your learning program efforts are being challenged?



Learning Pedagogy

You now have a basic profile of what your learning goals look like and supporting evidence as to how it will benefit your organization. The next step is to create a pedagogical learning strategy and determine the technology needed to support your learning needs.

Structured vs. Informal Learning

Corporate learning today looks pretty much like learning has for decades in the traditional academic school model. Basically, information is dispensed to the learner who then in turn communicates that information back to the provider in some form to demonstrate that they understand what was being presented. In more advanced assessments they demonstrated that they can translate that in to some useful form of knowledge transfer. The problem with this model is that it doesn't match how businesses operate. We need information, on demand, to do our jobs well. At times, information is over abundant and comes in a wide variety of forms, as opposed to formal, structured, training events. How we access and utilize information will ultimately determine our effectiveness in the workplace.

Organizations and information are evolving rapidly. People are retiring from the workforce and taking valuable knowledge with them. To remain competitive we need to transition from an organization that dispenses information in the form of training courses to a learning organization where employees have greater stewardship for their own learning and where information is easily accessed on demand. Rather than "test" our employees in the traditional sense, the real assessment may come when staff are challenged to use their new found learning to perform more effectively.

The best way to meet this need is to create a learning environment comprised of both structured and unstructured learning (informal learning) drawing on a number of delivery formats including classroom-based learning, self-paced e-learning, virtual classrooms, knowledge management repositories, and simulations, on the job training and more.

Blended Learning

Blended learning has been around for a long time. Its newest interpretation is typically comprised of classroom and online learning resources. We want to expand that definition to include ALL types of learning experiences in the new learning ecosystem.

In this toolkit you will be asked to define all the delivery mechanisms used to disseminate information and make it useful in your organization. The goal will be to map current delivery formats to specific topics in the curriculum. From there we will make adjustments to those mapping to ensure maximum effectiveness. This activity will need occur every time new learning content is created.

In order to move forward, we need to look back and see where your organization is at in order to identify gaps for moving forward.

Listed below are some questions you may want to consider in developing a strategy for creating a culture of learning at your organization.



Learning Technology

Let's look at your learning technology infrastructure as it exists today. Respond to the questions below and estimate the current level of use.

Current Technology Usage

User Experience	Response
User Experience: How many LMS (ILP – Independent Learning Platform)'s do you currently have?	
User Experience: Are they all accessed from one central login and page?	
User Experience: How many learners does your system(s) reach? (i.e., internal staff, partners/resellers, customers)	
User Experience: What resources are in place to support your learning program? (e.g. dedicated staff, technologies, policy & procedure, support from administration, etc.)	

System Utilization	Response
System Utilization: How do you currently use your ILP? Examples: content repository, certification, on-the-job training, leadership, etc.	
System Utilization: How many users log in to your current system per day/week/month/year?	
System Utilization: How do you train your staff to utilize your ILP?	
Other:	



Current features and functionality

Features and Functionality	Response
Secure access and login	
Launch and track online learning experiences	
Launch and track third party content	
Learner Surveys (Kirkpatrick's Levels)	
Learner Assessments Beginning – Advanced	
Instructor Led (Classroom Management) Course Scheduling, notification, Courses, Resource Management	
Certification Management	
Learning Repository (with version control)	
Multi-Lingual	
Manage Multiple Portals	
Skill Gap Analysis (Competencies)	
Deep back office integration with other HRIS systems	
Ecommerce	
Integration with Talent Management	
Track activities outside the ILP (at what level)	



Features and Functionality	Now	Future
<i>Select the types of learning activities you currently develop and/or support or want to support:</i>		
Passive		
Wikis/Blogs		
Presentations		
Discussion Boards		
Books/eBooks/Articles/White Papers		
Podcasts		
Knowledge Management/Job Aids		
MOOCS/Online Courses		
Knowledge Management		
Videos/DVDs		
Active		
Webinars/Virtual Classrooms		
Gaming		
Seminars/Workshops		
Briefings		
ILT		
OJT		



Learning Outcomes

Let's look at your current content and your development methods. That will help define the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

How do you current build/buy content?

Content Development Strategy	Response
Content Development: Are you using any templates or have established minimum standards to offer a consistent online experience for participants?	
Content Development: Do you currently buy off the shelf content or create your own content?	
Content Development: Do you offer professional development to staff around best practices for creating a dynamic learning program, targeted at performance improvement?	
Content Development: Do you have a budget for buying/building content?	
Content Development: How many dedicated staff do you have to development content? See Learning Governance	
Content Development: How many hours of content do you anticipate developing over the next year? See ROI Calculator and Time to Develop Stats	
Content Development: How are most courses currently being delivered? (e.g. classroom, online, virtual webinars, resources)	
Content Development: Do you currently develop learning paths or paths to certification?	
Content Development: Do you drive engagement and productivity by integrating coaching/mentoring, community building and targeted feedback in your learning design?	
Content Development: Do you foster experiential learning through OJT/Action Learning or reflection?	



Learner Analytics	Yes/No
Outcomes: Do you measure your learning programs based on their impact to productivity, performance and engagement?	
Do you evaluate and track test scores?	
Do you evaluate and track enrollment?	
Do you evaluate and track learner progress?	
Do you track individual learner interactions with courses?	
Do you track individual learner engagement with learning experiences?	
Do you tell stories, based on evaluation results (case studies)?	
Do you track test question results?	
Do you track the costs to deliver a course?	
Do you do a skills gap analysis?	
Do you track outcomes from learning?	
Other:	

Learning Governance

To run a successful learning program, you need to have the right level of learning governance in place. A common question is, “How many people does it take to manage a learning platform?” The real answer is that it depends on (1) the number of learners serviced by the platform, (2) the number of courses managed at any given time, and (3) the amount of support required by your team for informal learning.

Centralizing and coordinating learning events, tools, processes and delivery methods will do more to provide the “lean” approach to training and development in your organization than any single strategy. There is nothing more frustrating for learners than to have to use various systems to access learning. Multiple reporting standards, different authoring tools, and separate delivery methods take away any purchasing power you may encounter when pricing systems in addition to making things confusing. One cohesive strategy developed throughout the whole organization, but managed at the local level to ensure applicability, will do a great deal to promote a healthy learning environment and positive attitude toward change. Having the right people, tools and processes in place will facilitate that environment.

As a minimal starting point, there are three main roles that you should address when creating your learning governance model. It should be noted that, depending on the volume of your system, these may NOT have to be full-time employees (FTE's), nor do they even have to be your own employees. If you would prefer you can outsource the functions to your ILP/LMS vendor or to a third-party learning outsourcing vendor.

However, we suggest mapping these functions to individuals as part of your platform strategy. Here are some of the roles and responsibilities:

Executive	Chief Learning Officer
LMS/ILP	System Administrator(s)
	Data Entry
	Instructors/SME's
Content Development	Manager
	Content Writers (Creative and Technical)
	Graphic Artists
	Instructional Designers

The answers to these questions will give you the foundation you need to build a strong culture of learning at your organization!

About RWL, LLC

Cheryl Johnson is a Performance Solution Specialist with more than twenty years of experience in coaching, learning, development and workplace training performance. With her pioneering attitude, Cheryl has made strong contributions in the areas of learning with emphasis on behavioral change. Cheryl has been recognized **as a leader** in the architecture and design of interactive multimedia learning systems and strategies by well known educational psychologist, **Michael Allen in his 2012 e-Learning Annual**. Cheryl has dedicated her life to developing learning solutions that drive performance at work and in one's personal life.

It was while working with partner, VoiceTeach in 2001, that Cheryl assisted in the instructional design strategy for a powerful interactive patented, landmark online training solution for voice recognition technology long before online learning was deemed to be an effective learning solution. Cheryl continues to seek solutions to aid in the learning and development process. In 2011, Cheryl partnered with **Mental Training, Inc.** to develop a revolutionary mobile application, **MentalApp Mobile Mental Trainer**, that supports high performing athletes in tracking mental training progress and connecting their success to their physical and mental training efforts. In her volunteer time Cheryl works with people who have mental health issues to educate them on strategies for managing their health and wellness. Cheryl also works with troubled youth and their parents to find successful strategies for navigating the difficult teen years.

Of Cheryl's many supporters and recommendations, it is common to hear that "Cheryl's unique value is the ability to identify needs and address gaps and then develop long term strategies that **YIELD POSITIVE CHANGE." HIGH PRAISE, INDEED!**

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