

## How to Help People to Learn

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Effective individual learning is critical if employees are to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to support organisational business objectives and delivery targets.

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In his book *The Changing World of the Trainer*, Martyn Sloman asserts that effective individual learning is critical if employees are to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to support the organisations' business objectives and delivery targets. However, a CIPD poll conducted in 2007 which explored the role of LTD in a global context reported that only 48 per cent of respondents felt that the individuals in their organisations were good at taking ownership of their learning and development.

The shift from trainer-centred to more learner-led methods might give the impression that the learner must take all of the responsibility for their learning, however Sloman argues that LTD practitioners need to go beyond this viewpoint, to identifying a wide-range of interventions based on the paradigm of learner-focus and create a climate which supports effective learning.

In the analysis of current and emerging trends in LTD practice, CIPD's 2007 learning and development survey brings to light a number of such strategies:

### **1. Support Your Line Managers**

Line managers are taking on more responsibility for decisions relating to LTD activities for their people, however there is concern that line managers are not as effective in supporting learning as they could be. They are strategically positioned in such a way to ensure that, if going into it with the correct mindset, LTD outcomes can impact their organisation's competitive advantage through broad strategies designed to help people to learn. Line managers therefore, need assistance and development to support learning activities effectively and to understand the value and impact of learning and development.

## **2. Build a Coaching Capability**

Coaching has been recognised as an individual development strategy for some time and the majority of coaching activity in organisations is now being carried out by either internal coaches or line managers. However, only a minority of line managers are being trained to coach and there is a need for organisations to recognise and reward those involved in coaching activities internally.

## **3. Use Competencies Effectively**

Increasingly organisations are using competency frameworks to underpin individual and organisational effectiveness. With the use of technology, these frameworks are frequently being made available electronically, providing both employees and their line managers with common understanding of the essential skills and learning required to support their organisations to be successful.

## **4. Encourage Workplace Learning**

There has been an on-going shift towards a greater use of work-based methods that encourage and support individuals to learn, with the more traditional forms of learning such as on the job training being seen as the most effective. The issue of protected time away from the job for development is seen as a barrier for learning and needs to be addressed. Employees want to understand that their organisation takes learning and development seriously.

## **5. Create a Learning Culture**

The development of a learning and development culture that underpins the shift from training to learning is a highly ranked consideration for LTD practitioners. To support this shift, some organisations have reported introducing new programmes to develop the role of line managers and there is a prediction that the use of action learning sets, job rotations, secondments and knowledge-sharing events will increase. Through such methods, a climate which supports effective learning and encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning can be established.

## **6. Link LTD Strategy to Business Strategy**

LTD strategy is increasingly being driven by organisational objectives and organisations where this is occurring are more likely to have a structured process in place for reviewing the delivery of learning and development. As a result LTD practitioners are more likely to feel satisfactorily involved in the strategic development process with their organisation. LTD needs to continue to seek out ways to improve their standing and influence within the organisation and to be seen as a significant stakeholder in delivering value for their organisation.

## **7. Empower Committed Employees**

In this modern era of business, committed employees with the requisite skills create a powerful competitive advantage for organisations. HR and LTD professionals therefore need to create the conditions under which these committed individuals, who understand their organisations objectives, have the opportunity to acquire and maintain the skills required to contribute to their organisation's success.

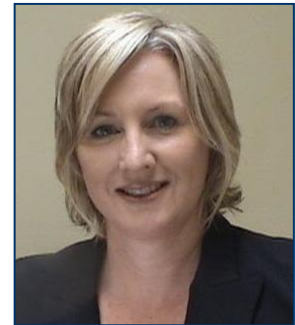
Learning is a discretionary activity, firmly in the domain of the individual – but it is those responsible for LTD who can create the environment and structures to empower committed learners to flourish.

## Key Points

- Line Managers need development in the value and impact of learning in organisations to support their increasing responsibilities for making decisions relating to their people's learning and development.
- Those involved in coaching individuals need to be trained in coaching skills.
- Internal coaches, such as line managers need to be recognised by the organisation for their coaching effort, such as having this responsibility included in their role description.
- Establish a competencies framework to provide employees and their managers with what is required for individual and organisational effectiveness.
- Create and communicate HR policies that enable protected time for individuals to undertake learning and development.
- Seek out ways to build a culture where committed learners will flourish.
- Identify and act on opportunities to improve standing and influence within the organisation as a key stakeholder in implementing business strategy. ■

## About the Author

**Carmel Kostos** applies her expertise in “how people learn” to facilitate the achievement of individual career goals and organisational development outcomes in her work as learning consultant and leadership coach with Next Talent Development. Her articles on helping people learn have appeared in Human Resource Development journals in Australia and the UK. ■



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