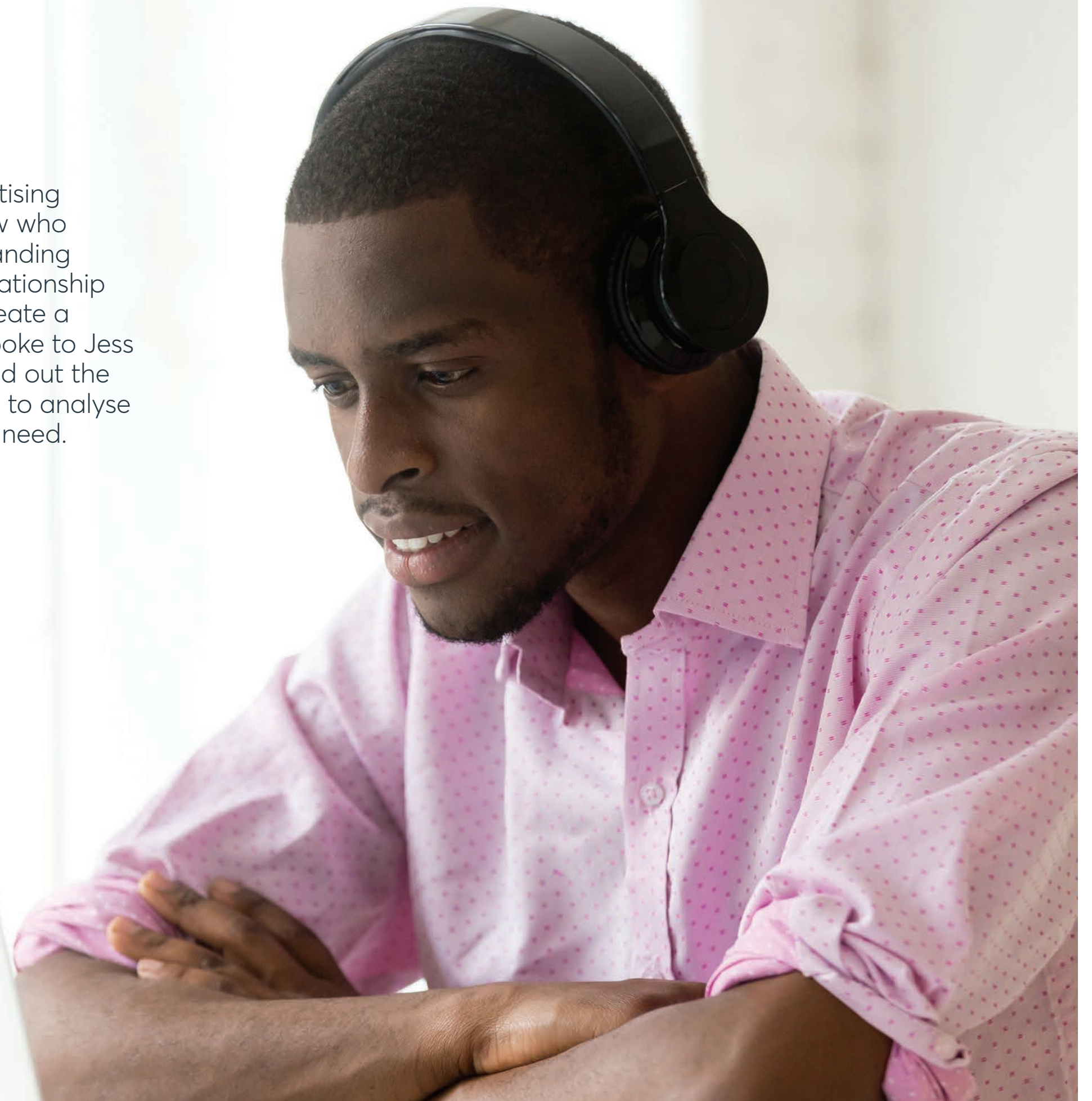


## Four questions to ask when analysing your learners' needs



Before you start the process of digitising a qualification, it's essential to know who your learners are. Without understanding their aims, ways of learning and relationship to education, you're less likely to create a successful e-learning course. We spoke to Jess Marshall in our Content team to find out the key questions you should be asking to analyse and appreciate what your learners need.





### What are your learners trying to learn?

'The objective of your qualification or e-learning course directly affects how your learners learn,' says Jess.

'Your desired final outcome will change the way you need to share information with them to have the best chance of success. This seems obvious, but lots of organisations forget this and get disappointing results. For example, if the result of the training needs to be behavioural change, your learners will need and want opportunities to practise these new skills in a safe environment during the learning process.'

Jess also points out the difference between what you are telling your learners they need to know and what they want to get out of the learning. 'You and the organisation will have learning objectives – but so will individual learners, on a much more personal basis. Understanding these and designing e-learning to satisfy all these aims means it's much more likely to work.'

### What do your learners expect?

Jess argues that, according to recent research, traditional learning styles are no longer very useful in categorising your learners. 'Instead, you can investigate what your learners expect from an educational experience. Are they used to finding information themselves? What about their tech-savviness? Do they expect to receive feedback immediately, and how do they feel about reflecting on their learning?'

Some learners in your organisation may not have had formal education since they left school, while others may be constantly 'learning' through their online activities. 'Although it doesn't seem like it,' says Jess, 'even a Google search for something your learner is intrigued by is a learning process which then sets up their expectations for gathering and absorbing information.' Knowing these expectations means you can create an e-learning component that doesn't disappoint learners, giving you a greater likelihood of engagement.







### What's your learners' relationship to work and learning?

'You'll be able to articulate very clearly the culture of learning within your organisation,' explains Jess, 'so the next step is to consider how this affects your learners and their attitude towards learning. This attitude can make or break the success of an online learning project, so it must be taken into account.'

Jess points out the importance of looking at this on a personal level too: 'Find out whether your individual learners appreciate the value of education. If they had a difficult time at school or college, they might be resistant to learning – so your new project also needs to encourage them to see the personal benefit in workplace education.'

Your learners' jobs and workload also need to be considered. 'On a practical level,' says Jess, 'the way your learner works will also affect their relationship to learning: if they're always on the road, they'll need mobile-friendly access. If they're pushed for time, they'll need bite-sized information. And if they often work independently, they might need online community support to help them through the course.'

### What can I provide – and what isn't in my remit?

'Understandably, every organisation wants to give their learners as much as possible to help them achieve a qualification,' notes Jess, 'but an important question to ask yourself is how much you can realistically give. Your role is to support learners, which means recognising where the 'formal' education ends and where signposting them to further resources begins.'

Jess identifies that all teams in your organisation are faced with multiple pressures, from long-term business objectives to day-to-day demands of learners. 'With this in mind, consider what you can provide that is most helpful to learners. You want to avoid a 'poor quality everything' and instead focus on something that is very high quality and effectively targeted. Think about what extra resources your learners can explore independently to supplement their learning, from real-life peer group discussions to downloadable PDFs.'



"Your role is to support learners, which means recognising where the 'formal' education ends and where signposting them to further resources begins."

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