

Taking accountability for learning: what we've discovered

At our latest roundtable we were joined by David James, Chief Learning Officer at Loop and host of the Learning and Development Podcast, who talked us through what taking accountability for learning really means. Following this introduction, we broke out into discussion groups to chat through accountability from three different perspectives: the L&D professional, the stakeholders and the learner. Here are our findings.

Taking accountability for learning

- Accountability is **not** providing a suite of generic courses and resources and leaving the learner to find their way through it
- If we take accountability seriously, we are focusing on much more than the number of attendees and good evaluations
- It needs to be about the learner, not just covering as much of a topic in an allotted timeslot and providing practice time
- We need to meet the learner halfway. To achieve this, we need to analyse how employees actually work and identify their challenges and blockers, then use this information to engage in conversations with them to discover what tools they need and create context-specific content
- It's not about short cuts or finding the 'silver bullet' – they don't actually work!
- Learners will be engaged when they are given what they need when they need it, it isn't necessarily about leader boards and gamification
- When you see the learning is influencing your employees work, and your organisational metrics and results being affected, then you'll understand the value of taking accountability

How can the L&D professional take accountability for learning?

- Creating a supportive environment where learners feel able to ask for help and support
- Giving learners a choice of formats so they can access learning in the most suitable way for them
- Asking better questions - what learning will support people to grow and perform better? What are people struggling with?
- Using language which resonates with the learner, as L&D Language can be a barrier
- Being creative with the evaluation process, and aiming to get qualitative evaluations that focus on the relevance of the learning and how easy it was to engage with, which will help support the mind shift around learning and its purpose within an organisation
- Working with the business to create opportunities for learners to apply their learning and recognise and reward when people 'do things right', which will help drive engagement

What ways can we engage with the stakeholders and encourage them to invest in L&D?

- Apply marketing principles: stakeholders and learners are like consumers and using marketing techniques is a good way to gain buy in and motivate people to get involved
- Use interactive approaches such as collecting user needs and then feeding back in a 'you asked, we did' style
- Invest in a strong communications plan to keep stakeholders engaged and interested in progress and to celebrate successes. If people can see the value in others' stories, they will more likely commit investment

What barriers are there to learners buying into the learner journey?

- Accounting for the time spent learning, as L&D is always seen as an add-on instead of part of the day job
- A lack of learning culture, which impacts motivation levels
- Commanding language such as 'have to spend 20% of time learning' or 'should spend'
- The lack of social interaction – they still like to interact and meet with the other learners
- No guidance and support for navigating large amounts of resources, much of which can be a mixture between verified content and user-generated content
- Lack of support – especially the last 12 months through the pandemic, where they have been encouraged to go online but with support
- An expectation that they manage their own learner journey with no guidance
- A lack of distinction between different learners' needs, which will vary depending on their role
- Access to a vast range of resources to read or watch, but with few opportunities to practice or apply learning
- A lack of curiosity or interest in the learning

