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I. Executive Summary

The rapidly evolving landscape that businesses find themselves competing in today, inevitably lead to changes in their strategies, business and operating models and culture. Learning & Development functions play a pivotal role in supporting people at all levels to continue to survive and thrive in this context.

It is in this context that the Agile Learning SIG was formed. Its aim was to explore the broader shifts that Learning & Development needs to address in support of transformation and growth.

Four areas were explored. Firstly, the SIG focused on new skills and capabilities that are required for people to succeed today and in the future. Agility and adaptability to differing situations and challenges, a growth mindset and the ability to remain resilient were among the most cited. A second area related to the need to create and embed a learning culture within organisations and to empower and enable employees to learn and develop when, where and on what they need most. While most organisations were operating halfway between self-directed and guided learning, there was consensus that there should be a further shift to more self-directed learning. To achieve this, the topics of learning enablement and encouragement were explored. The third area focused on how to leverage agile methodologies within a Learning & Development function. While the pandemic forced agility upon all Learning & Development functions that chose to continue to support their people by transitioning their learning online, several SIG members had significant experience with setting up and applying agile methodologies with their functions. The group heard from these members, discussing advantages and disadvantages, and gaining insights into this faster, iterative approach to developing learning solutions. Lastly, the group reflected on the broader, more strategic question related to how the Learning & Development model should evolve and adapt to the changes in skills and capabilities, to employee behaviours and to fully harness the power of digital. The Group debated whether the Learning & Development function of the future should be thought of as a learning ‘enabler’ rather than a learning ‘provider’.

All areas were led by the Group’s members in a series of virtual, synchronous sessions, with content and insights provided by London Business School faculty and industry experts.

The SIG’s journey culminated in a Corporate Advisory Seminar where input from a wider EFMD corporate audience was captured.

The Agile Learning Special Interest Group’s journey was an unconventional one from multiple perspectives. Disrupted by a pandemic that directly impacted learning and development and facilitated by two different organisations, initially PA Consulting and then, after a relaunch, London Business School, the journey lasted over a year with the group exploring the four focus areas referenced above and inevitably spending time on discussing the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of learning to people.

Given the SIG’s disruption by the pandemic and its later relaunch, this report is somehow of a fragmentary nature. It provides most interesting insights though in how the pandemic challenged L&D functions and accelerated learning transformation.
II. Introduction

EFMD Special Interest Groups

About each year EFMD Global initiates a Special Interest Group (SIG), inviting members to join with likeminded peers from other organisations to embark on a research and discovery journey in a topic area of current significance. Previous topic areas include Digital Age Learning, Innovation in Leadership and An Engaging Place to Work.

In 2020, the topic area selected was **Agile Learning**.

“What are the skills that your organisation will need in the future, and how will you develop these in your people? How has the Covid pandemic affected the way you deliver learning, and the way learners engage with learning experiences? Have you adapted your learning practices? How do you plan to operate your L&D function in the future? Will you need to adapt learning practices to stay relevant – and how do you help learners to adapt too? Do you think there is more of a role or less of a role for learning and development in future?

As L&D practitioners, we are facing questions that are much broader than simply the role of technology in learning, reflecting rapid shifts in the nature of our organisations, our employees and how we work together – whether this is a shift from management to leadership or a desire to be more innovative.

‘Agile learning’ describes the shifts that Learning & Development will have to make in order to respond to these changes. With the Covid pandemic, this is more relevant now than it has ever been.”

*From the EFMD website.*

This paper charts the Agile Learning Special Interest Group journey, an unusual one as it was taken during the Covid-19 pandemic, reporting on initial experiments, expert input, group collaboration and the group’s conclusions about the relevance and application of agile learning in our organisations.

**Background**

The Agile Learning SIG started before the Covid-19 pandemic. The emphasis of the SIG’s focus and exploration changed as members of the group and their organisations navigated the pandemic. The initial focus of agile learning as a concept within a world with few boundaries, changed to a different reality where the world was forced into lockdown, where restrictions imposed meant that options for learning were reduced, and where forced innovation created new options and strengthened the capabilities and confidence of L&D functions.

At that point, the aim of the SIG became to enable learning specialists from across organisations to reflect, explore, share and debate together the changing landscape of learning and the place that agile learning would have in this.
Purpose and aim
The purpose of the Special Interest group (SIG) in Agile Learning was to:

- Consider the future of learning in the context of learning agility
- Undertake and report on agile learning experiments
- Share best practice with other organisations represented in the group
- Gain insights from top thought leaders in the fields of work, leadership and learning
- Reflect on the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the way organisations define and deliver on their learning strategy

The members of the SIG aimed to use the opportunity of working in a group of like-minded professionals, in similar roles globally, to focus on and explore their learning challenges – drawing on the expertise and experience of peers to gain valuable insights and learnings that they could take back to their own organisations.

Group members and contributors
The Agile Learning Special Interest Group consisted of representative members from global organisations;

AB Inbev
AIA
Bank Indonesia
Capgemini
EDF
Erste Group
LafargeHolcim
NLMK
Repsol
Richemont
Sber
Siemens
Steelcase
SwissRe

The group was initiated by EFMD Global, led by Martin Moehrle and Shanshan Ge of EFMD and Helen Kerkentzes and Sarah Gillis of London Business School.
From September 2020 onwards, the SIG met on a monthly basis. The Group benefited from faculty input, industry speakers and group self-facilitated sessions. All sessions were held synchronously online.

The EFMD Special Interest Group on Agile Learning completed their journey by hosting a Corporate Advisory Seminar (CAS) on 9th July 2021 to share findings and reflections from the group’s journey and invite input from attendees. The CAS included a World Café to consider each of the 4 focus areas to be described in depth in section IV.

### III. Special Interest Group Journey

**Timeline January 2020 – August 2021**

The SIG was launched in January 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic led to a pause of the group’s activities for several months. It was revived in September 2020. The 18-month journey is shown below.

#### From September 2020 onwards, the SIG met on a monthly basis. The Group benefited from faculty input, industry speakers and group self-facilitated sessions. All sessions were held synchronously online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 2020</th>
<th>March 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>SIG initiated</td>
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<td>SIG re-launched with LBS supporting</td>
<td>Focus areas defined</td>
<td>Full year timeline shown below</td>
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From September 2020 onwards, the SIG met on a monthly basis. The Group benefited from faculty input, industry speakers and group self-facilitated sessions. All sessions were held synchronously online.


| 16 Dec Speaker session: Julian Birkinshaw, LBS Agile Learning | 4 Feb Speaker session: Lynda Gratton, LBS Future of work | Group focus session 1 Apr Learning Culture | 20 May Speaker session: Nicolas Barea-Vilas, Unilever Talent marketplace | 10 June Speaker session: Simon Brown, Novartis Curiosity | W/C 5 Jul SIG session: Bringing it all together | W/C 12 Jul Corporate Advisory Seminar | SIG Report Published |
| Reflections on Julian’s session | Reflections on Lynda’s session | Focus group updates | Reflections on Nicolas’ session | Focus group research | | | Final input collated |
| Experimentation template | Focus group update | | Focus group update | | | | White paper produced |
| Project plan review | | | | | | | |
| Focus groups | | | | | | | |

**EXPLORATION OF FOCUS AREAS FINDINGS PRESENTATIONS FINAL PAPER**

The EFMD Special Interest Group on Agile Learning completed their journey by hosting a Corporate Advisory Seminar (CAS) on 9th July 2021 to share findings and reflections from the group’s journey and invite input from attendees. The CAS included a World Café to consider each of the 4 focus areas to be described in depth in section IV.
Pre-SIG EFMD member survey and interviews on Agile Learning

Prior to the SIG formally commencing, a survey was undertaken to establish what members would like to achieve from the Special Interest Group, as well as document the current challenges being faced by their organisation, and their views on new technologies with the most impact on learning in the future.

The key outcomes from these initial interviews (undertaken pre-pandemic) are summarised below.

**Views on the mission of a corporation's learning function**

- For employees and managers to access and receive the right learning in the best format, to develop the right skills and competencies
- To implement an Agile Learning Manifesto - Learning about agile and completing learning in an agile way
- To optimise resource and platforms
- To break down silos – moving from a traditional ladder development path model to a lattice model
- To differentiate around people & culture
- To empower people to grow their talent every day, turning their potential into value.

**The main learning challenges faced by member organisations were:**

- Positioning L&D within the organisation
- Leveraging learning innovation
- Shifting the learning culture to one of an agile and growth mindset
- Use of new feedback tools and new learning experience platforms
- Having the correct systems in place
- Enabling self-directed learning
- Creating a culture where learning is an enabler, not a discrete activity
- Retaining talent
- Staying close to people and their daily challenges
- Making agile development work in a global team
- Building networks outside of L&D, so that solutions are integrated into the workplace
- Leadership development in a new era - how to equip Senior Leaders and CEOs for transformation
- How to remain a hub of expertise
- Upskilling the L&D team
- Ensuring the quality of content
- Developing an engaging learning ecosystem
- Creating safe spaces for collaborative and unstructured learning
- Changing mindsets to embrace future trends
- Transformation for learning teams/HR to accelerate their own learning and adapt to new practices triggered by technology
- Evaluation of learning and how to select and measure KPIs
- How to connect learning and culture development
- Understanding how automation and AI will change the landscape of learning
- How to change learning culture
- How to improve RoI
- How to be more impactful
**Significant changes to activity in the future**

- Helping people develop a growth mindset
- Moving from courses to talent management programmes
- Using social learning and stimulating knowledge sharing
- Personalising learning so it is relevant and adaptive
- Working with middle managers to change organisational culture

**Where learning teams should focus on in order to have more business impact in the future**

- Performance consulting skills for all L&D teams
- Business performance - L&D will need to look at the specific challenges the business faces, help diagnose the problem and then find the most effective and quickest way to resolve it
- Individualisation of almost all learning activities will be key
- On demand and self-driven learning
- Collaboration with people in agile communities to include their ways of learning
- Learning nuggets available when the learner wants and needs it
- Learning experiences
- Curation of learning
- Increasing the speed to market with learning solutions
- Enabling the business to self-help by creating the spaces and environments for learning (increasingly digital)
- Use data skills to understand trends and what has impact, how and when
- Focus on real business needs and capture future trends at the same time
- Become agile in design and delivery
- Focus on collaborative and experiential learning offerings
- Develop a thriving learning ecosystem
- Engage and inspire learners
- Develop strong business acumen to ensure business impact
- Cognitive skills: strategic thinking, critical thinking, inclusive leadership
- Learning teams will enable changes with business co-creation. They are facilitators and driving new experiences and ways of learning
- Focus on holistically integrating L&D opportunities throughout the entire employee experience
- Connect learning closely with everyday business
- Use new technologies and innovative formats
- Focus on understanding business needs and co-developing learning interventions based on these needs
New technologies/methodologies most likely to impact learning activity in the future

- Learning being available everywhere free of charge
- LXP to moderate and curate
- Access to micro-learning
- Learning and marketing and communication mindset
- Curation of format and content
- Learning adaptability
- Connecting analytics with learning strategy
- Mobility, social learning, AI
- The greatest needs for L&D capability improvement
- Agility, leadership, growth mindset were the most frequently referenced
- Pace of change (agile)
- Inclusiveness
- Digitisation
- Personalisation
- Networking
- Integrating learning into the flow of work
- Ideation and design; lean tools
- Design thinking methodology
- Developing the customer aspect
- Meta-competencies
- Move from push to pull
- Learner-centricity - thinking about the freedom of the learner, shift to a learner-centric mindset
- Data-driven decision-making
- Agile
- People analytics
- Experimentation
- Digital marketing
On a scale from 1 to 10, please rate the following with regard to how important you believe they will be in future:

Views on the relative importance of technology and trends in learning in the future

The survey results also provided the figures in the previous bar chart when respondents were asked about the importance of specific approaches to learning. In summary, the most important trends in technology and learning were personalised, real time learning, enablement of more self-directed learning and the introduction of agile ways of design and delivering learning.

The figure below presents a summary of responses to the question ‘How might the day in the life of a learner be different in 5-10 years’ time?’
Lastly, a few interesting views from SIG members about what learners in 5 to 10 years’ time will be doing:

“Employees may not even realise they are learning - they are just finding help in the flow of their work. They will learn more like we do in our home lives, socially, digitally. Systems work out what learning will help each employee. Systems may analyse how we work, how we influence, how effective we are and make appropriate prompts. Life skills and personal skills will become more important for success, and what we know a little less important as knowledge becomes more of a commodity easily accessed.”

“I could imagine a recurrent conversation between a chatbot and a learner to review the individual development path and be directed to the right platform(s) at the right time (let’s say daily frequency) where he/she will have access to some micro contents, a coaching meeting, a peer meeting for exchange, an activity to contribute to growth, as examples. Depending on where the learner stands in his/her career, he/she could receive also recommendations to enrol to a more formal and certified career development path. A learner will be comfortable to use digital means in his/her learning journey and find the right contact for support. The learning teams might facilitate the content design, learning activities like coaching, group facilitation, be experts in analysing data, acting as “augmented” humans and ensure that there is consistency between the individual learning and development paths and the organisation’s strategy.”
Organisational Agility

When the SIG came first together, it got exposed to research by PA Consulting that concluded that it is time for organisational agility because organisations are not run in a Smart Way today, the future doesn’t seem as bright as the past and the way for talent is intensifying with the speed of business increasing.

3/4 of leaders of our largest corporations are now more concerned about the ‘Amazonification’ of their sector than they are about their traditional sector rivals.

2/3 say their business model needs a fundamental rethink - a new business design for agility.

1 in 6 organizations will fail in the next five years because they can’t keep pace with change.

72% of business leaders say that improving organizational agility is a top strategic priority.
Learning Agility Challenges

Following the concept of organisational agility, each SIG member presented a Pecha Kucha to summarise their own organisation’s learning challenges, priorities, strategy, initiatives, and interventions in striving to achieve greater agility in learning.

Key themes presented were:

- The 70-20-10 model remains applicable
- The ‘explosion’ of micro-learning
- Enabling learning to be self-directed by learners – pull over push
- User-centric learning design
- Offering an ecosystem of learning suppliers
- Learning is a social experience – peer-based learning, action-based learning
- Ease of knowledge sharing
- Learning platform – curated?
- Lifelong learning
- Learning anywhere, anytime
- Need to promote an agile mindset to learning
- Agile values as well as agile methods
- Exploratory, experimental, curious mindset
- Cross-functional collaboration – teaching each other, cascades of learning
- Learning integrated into everyday work
- Importance of digital readiness
Experiments and Organisational Research

Experiments
SIG members committed to undertake organisational experiments as a way of testing hypotheses to address some of their learning challenges.

The experiment template used is shown in appendix 1. The topics of the experiments launched by the members were, e.g.:

- Attractive learning design for officer candidates through a pull learning approach & digital learning
- Employee experience driven technology adoption
- Future fluency – co-creating a story of what the future looks like
- Applying the learning model generation to “New Ways of Working” awareness learning
- Re-imagining soft skills development.

Outcomes
The experiments were launched just before the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the impact of the pandemic, many of these experiments were either put on hold or re-worked, so their readiness for publication in this paper is limited. Thanks to Erste Group and SwissRe for sharing their experimentation with Agile Learning (see appendix 2).

From the feedback and learnings provided, the insights from the experiments were:

- Organisations that already had flexible learning in place were able to pivot quickly and adapt efficiently when the pandemic hit
- Curated learning often provided a better learning experience; however, external suppliers could not always be relied on to curate relevant content for given learner journeys
- Virtual learning offers a levelled playing field in terms of accessibility of learning
- Face to face learning cannot automatically be transferred to online learning experiences
- Participants undertaking virtual learning expressed interest in staying connected, but did not follow through via learning platforms
- Unfacilitated social learning didn’t organically develop soft skills.

Impact of the Pandemic on Learning
With the shift in the SIG’s emphasis in light of the pandemic, members were asked to report on their experiences of how the pandemic, almost overnight, changed both the learning options available to individuals e.g., complete removal of face to face learning programmes, and the types of learning required by individuals e.g., how to work remotely, managing a remote team or an increased need for technical skills to deliver on both of these rapidly.

SIG members reported back to the group on their challenges and wins in this unprecedented environment. Thanks to SwissRe and Erste Group for their feedback which is shown in full in appendix 2, and summarised below:
Outcomes

THE PANDEMIC’S IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF LEARNING

➤ A positive and a negative “overnight” impact:

➤ **Positive:** the strategic importance of a learning function has become clearer as employees, and managers, embraced any learning opportunity that helped them navigate the new situation

➤ **Negative:** the networking value coming with learning and esp. leadership programs was difficult to replicate in an online environment

➤ Raised the importance of virtual learning

➤ Levelling the playing field and making learning available to all, across the globe: any time, any place and anywhere – leading to improved inclusion

➤ Increased value of blended learning approaches.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON LEARNING PRIORITIES / AGENDA

➤ A short-term shift from strategic learning topics, toward the tactical “how to” of remote working

➤ Later, emphasis moved from remote work/leadership toward building resilience and work-life balance.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON DIGITAL LEARNING DELIVERY

➤ Pilot implementation of a cloud-based Learning Experience Platform enjoyed extra momentum in the first weeks of the pandemic

➤ Gradually most programs have moved online – initial hunger dropped off as employees felt overwhelmed by offerings

➤ Immediate focus on making all learning virtual.

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT ON YOUR ORGANISATION’S LEARNING PRACTICES AND YOUR LEARNING FUNCTION’S OPERATING MODEL

➤ Digital learning is here to stay

➤ The pandemic has accelerated the demand for online content, as well as the process of digital upskilling

➤ Envisage long-term impact in the form of an increased ratio of digital content and a much higher readiness to curate and consume it

➤ An accelerated shift towards higher personalisation and democratisation of learning

➤ Increased sense of personal ownership of learning

➤ Adoption of a hybrid approach to learning

➤ Focus on knowledge-based learning on-line, also including elements of social learning

➤ In person learning focused on practicing skills and applying the learning

➤ Less classroom events- only for topics with most impact from doing the learning in person

➤ Aim to build more community-based learning opportunities.

➤ More informal mechanisms to learn in the flow of work / on the job.
IV. Focus Areas

During the SIG’s relaunch in August 2020, participants identified four discussion areas that covered the most relevant elements of agile learning, to focus on for the duration of the journey. Within each area, questions of interest and exploration were defined (see picture below).

LBS faculty members and talent development practitioners were identified who could enrich the understanding of the four areas with input on e.g., 70-20-10 revisited, the future of work, talent marketplaces, or curiosity. The SIG journey comprised focus area sessions run by self-nominated champions for each of the four areas and interspersed with guest speakers.

Outcomes from the Focus areas were shared with a wider audience from the EFMD corporate network at the Corporate Advisory Seminar (CAS) which took place at the end of the SIG journey.

- **New Capabilities and Skills**
  What new capabilities and skills do our people need now and into the future? How will we equip them for success

- **Learning Culture**
  How do we create and instill a learning culture? How do we establish learning agility?

- **Agile Methods in L&D**
  How do we implement agile methods in L&D? What agile methods are successful?

- **New L&D Operating Model**
  How will L&D operate in the future? How will we effectively adapt our L&D model?
Focus Area 1 - New Capabilities & Skills

Topics considered were:

- To what extent do organisations forecast future capability and skills requirements?
- Where do we expect the biggest changes in capabilities and skills to occur in the future?
- To what extent do organisations upskill their managers to identify learning gaps and establish development plans accordingly?

A survey was administered among the members of the group which was subsequently discussed during the focus session.

Survey Results

Q1. Do you forecast future capability and skills requirements and, if so, how?

[Graph showing 70% ongoingly and 30% sometimes]

Tell us more:

Agile, data and digital skills have ongoing focus. Some soft skills begin to gain importance such as creativity and innovation, collaboration, resilience, and growth mindset, but these have not yet got strong traction in the business as it manages a tough economic situation.

From time to time, we run surveys and/or workshops with managers around future skill needs. We also investigate external research findings and combine the two. In addition, role descriptions get updated regularly, facilitated by HRBPs, to serve as a decentralized, ongoing skill pulse check.

There is an ongoing need in developing skills and, most importantly, transform the mindset of our industrial leaders when it comes to championing cost leadership and leveraging new technologies to achieve efficiency gains. Besides, we are active in revisiting the success profile and skills of our plant engineers tasked with automation, attempting to bring them up to speed with digital and cyber security topics.

Through three main sources: (1) company strategy, where the company is moving to, and what skills we sense are required or are explicitly mentioned to getting there; (2) competency assessment, and main gaps identified; (3) experience and knowledge of managers.
Q2. Where will the biggest changes to capabilities and skills occur in the future?

There are already changes ongoing especially with our customer-facing roles such as sales and logistics but we expect an exponential pace of change across our entire industrial workforce.

In collaboration, agility, technology, intrapreneurship, empathy, emotional intelligence.

Besides digital & data, we see collaboration and cross-silo/lateral learning as more and more important. Also, agile skills and customer experience skills / human-centric design come out strong.

Mindset in Agile / DevOps / Ecosystems need to change.

A need for a new level of integration of digital skills with existing business models and customer experience design in various industries - a need in reskilling mass specialties subject to automation.

The fact that there is constant change in the skills needed leads to the challenge that by the time you may have created/curated some learning content on a skill, it will soon become outdated and possibly even obsolete.

Some of the soft skill areas mentioned above. Plus, different approaches to leading in a post-covid world where it is likely that working from home will become much more significant.

Q3. Are you openly communicating about these future requirements throughout your organisation?

Tell us more:

We put in place some specific eLearnings and webinars to animate these subjects.

Our approach (referring to L&D) is to communicate those in a more “organic” way as part of our ongoing and upcoming initiatives. In the opposite case, open communication without orchestrated actions, can lead to increased levels of uncertainty and fear.

In the context of the deployment of high-impact training programs.

There are initiatives ranging from mere information to active workshops and online collaboration/discussion groups around the future skills topic.

There are corporate initiatives like “Siemens Development System” or leadership programs like “leading in business ecosystems” or “lean for leaders”.

We know that digital and data are key areas for upskilling for us, and so we plan to communicate on this and the need to upskill. But it is sporadic, and we could certainly do a lot better on this.

Regular updates are led via the business leaders, deliberately less heavy from HR.
Q4. Do you conduct a systematic gap analysis at organisational and individual level?

Tell us more:

We run an annual global competency assessment campaign at country level that is an established core HR process.

It depends on the area or business. However, more and more often.

On the one hand, this is done on an org-unit basis according to business need. On the other hand, all talent pool members across all levels have an individual gap analysis done as part of their assessment.

For Agile on company level.

We do this annual review, but I would not say it is systematic or that thorough and it is not at an individual level i.e., not great overall.

We have done so for parts of the business, but not for the whole enterprise. We have proposed a strategic people planning approach to our GEC and, whilst nominally supported, it is not seen as a priority against other core business challenges.

Q5. Are your managers trained in helping their teams to establish a personal development plan, and to follow through on this?

Tell us more:

Managers are trained for establishing a personal development plan, however, not how to follow up on this plan.

The actual challenge is the demonstration of discipline in creating meaningful, high-quality PDPs linked to specific business outcomes and the follow up on those.

The company offers training for this, which is different from them having the right skills.

This is a part of the performance appraisal cycle.

We have training programs and a lot of learning content to cover this, but I would not say that our managers are all skilled and actually doing it. If they need training it is there for them, but we do not make it mandatory for all line managers to undertake respective training.

Lots of learning content around this topic. Some use it, some don’t.
Focus Area 1 - World Café Outcomes from the Corporate Advisory Seminar

This framework got used as a discussion starter at the World Café session.

Source: McKinsey: Defining the skills citizens will need in the future world of work, 2021

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<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Digital</th>
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<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Energy, passion, and optimism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage and risk-taking</td>
<td>Breaking orthodoxies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Driving change and innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals achievement</td>
<td>Grit and persistence</td>
<td>Understanding digital systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership and decisiveness</td>
<td>Coping with uncertainty</td>
<td>Data literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement orientation</td>
<td>Self-development</td>
<td>Smart systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cybersecurity literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tech translation and enablement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What new capabilities and skills do you see as critical to be successful in the future?

→ Adaptation
→ Open-mindness
→ Curiosity
→ Learning how to learn
→ Ability to transform quickly, move faster, upskill and reskill
→ Digital skills: AI etc
→ Speed of reaction
→ Ability to focus on important things
→ Resilience
→ Collaboration
→ Innovation
→ Growth mindset
→ Agility
→ Problem-solving, decision-making in teams
→ Execution
→ Business acumen
→ Managing self
→ Empathy, EI
→ Critical thinking
→ Cultural and attitude change
→ Managing change and thriving through it
→ Dealing with contradiction
→ Mental health skills / well-being
→ Ability to create inclusive environment

How could you develop these new capabilities and skills in your organisation?

→ Open communications: what and why is needed, WIFM
→ Learning from peers
→ Learning on the job, learning by doing
→ Projects, assignments
→ Micro-learning
→ Hybrid & blended techniques
→ Structured learning journey
→ Role-modelling
→ Reflection / feedback
→ Group learning
→ Supervisors’ involvement
→ Curated content
→ Social learning
→ Personalisation
Focus Area 2: Learning Culture

In this area, the SIG considered:
- How to create and instill a learning culture?
- How to establish learning agility?

The champion for this focus area led the group through a session where trends in learning were considered and relevant experiences from SIG member organisations solicited.

The exercises and discussion areas initiated were then also taken into the Corporate Advisory Seminar at the end of the SIG for further input from the wider EFMD network and guests.

Trends in learning
The SIG compiled its views on the trends in learning observed. The key themes identified were:

- Learning culture is moving to one of agility – in mindset, tools, methods, vision
- The pandemic has accelerated self-directed learning – online, asynchronous, individual and team-led
- Social learning is a key trend in any future learning strategy
- Learning initiatives planned or taking place right now include:
  - Market places – e.g. expertise and talent marketplaces
  - Digital jams & hackathons
  - Gamification
  - Trend radar
  - The 70-20-10 or equivalent model stands true.

Guided vs self-guided learning
The SIG discussed the pros and cons of guided (directed) learning versus self-guided (self-directed) learning in the context of the trend moving towards individuals taking control of their own development needs and pathways. We undertook an exercise that we then replicated with the wider EFMD network to understand where organisations are right now, and where they would like to be. Most organisations were operating midway between directed and self-directed learning, but the aim was certainly to move toward a more self-directed approach.
Enablement vs encouragement

Finally, the concepts of learning enablement – putting the structure and tools in place to enable self-directed learning in the organisation, and of learning encouragement – driving mindsets and shaping the context to inspire individuals to learn – were considered.

Enablement

Some of the key themes that came from the enablement factors were a top-down approach so there is consistency and commitment from senior teams that ensure budget is available to put initiatives in place. There was also a strong emphasis on peer learning and establishing networks and communities of practice so that self-directed learning is more easily accessible. The concept of talent marketplace was also raised in the discussion, as being an enabler of mobility of skills and expertise and providing the opportunity to learn by being presented with new assignments and projects. Talent marketplaces were explored in more detail and will be discussed later in this paper.

The conclusion from these discussions was that it is important for organisations to consider how they provide an enabling environment and translate the concept of enablement into solid initiatives and actions.

Encouragement

In encouraging individuals to take up continuous learning, we considered what organisations and learning teams could put in place to provide an environment of stimulation and motivation to learn. The areas highlighted as important were role modeling from managers and peers so that a learning culture is instilled into day to day working life, promotion of mobility and advancement, and the opportunity to undertake new tasks (linked to the talent marketplace above). Employees want to feel valued and valuable in the work that they do. By increasing their skillset and demonstrating a willingness to learn and refresh hard and soft skills, and enhance their network in the process, they become more valuable assets in their organisation. As a group, we felt this was an excellent motivator and that we should take away actions to ensure those links are made when reviewing individuals’ development plans and learning paths.

Interestingly, a rewards-based approach to encouragement (i.e., providing ‘carrots’ for learning) was discussed and considered to be potentially helpful in the short-term, but probably not a sustainable solution. There was general agreement that, although gamification and certification encourage some learners (and certification may be a necessity in some technical roles), this doesn’t replace a long-term strategy to making learning an essential and integral element of work.
Focus Area 2 - World Café Outcomes from the Corporate Advisory Seminar

TRENDS IN LEARNING

» Learning culture is about mindset - having an agile /growth mindset

» Mindset shapes agile learning culture

» The pandemic has accelerated self-directed and digital learning

» The 70-20-10 model holds true

Initiatives shared in the CAS

» Use of LXPs

» Experiments, gamification

» Workshops with peers as teachers - peers as experts

» Learning communities

» Market places

» Trend Radar

» Hackathon
Focus Area 3 - Agile Methods in L&D

This area aimed to address the following questions:

- How do we implement agile methods in L&D?
- What agile methods are successful?

In this focus area, participants discussed the uptake of agile ways of working within their learning functions. Interestingly, although members embrace agile concepts and are keen to instill a culture of learning agility, the uptake of the agile concept is quite variable within L&D. The table below shows that, although organisations reported pockets of agility around the business – particularly in technical functions, generally the L&D functions are divided into those who have embraced agile thinking, and those who have yet to. No one in our survey judged that the L&D function is integrated into an agile structure.

We therefore considered the questions of whether there are benefits of Agile in L&D, whether there are risks in bringing in Agile as a mindset and framework, and what elements of Agile members would like to adopt within their function (see collaboration board below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our company is not agile (yet)</th>
<th>Parts of our company are agile but not L&amp;D (yet)</th>
<th>L&amp;D uses some agile tools (e.g. personas, journey mapping, design thinking, kanban)</th>
<th>L&amp;D specialists are integrated into an agile structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits of Agile for the L&D Function

By far the greatest benefit identified by the group was that agility equated to speed of reaction – the ability to act and adapt quickly, with group members able to report examples of how their teams were forced to react rapidly when the pandemic hit, and that they would like to maintain this flexible and adaptable mindset beyond the pandemic.

It was especially interesting to hear that agility also equates to customer and learnercentricity where the focus is on the learner experience. During the pandemic, when face-to-face learning needed to be flipped to virtual, the learner experience was central to redesigning learning journeys and experiences.

Networking also featured as a benefit of Agile ways of working – with links between L&D and the rest of the organisation being crucial in the future L&D operating model. Achieving the balance between being a traditional learning service ‘provider’ and an ‘enabling’ learning function was debated at length within the group, especially in the fourth focus area. The SIG concluded that the Agile concept of fail fast, test and iterate should be fully embraced and applied by the L&D function.
**Barriers and risks of implementing Agile**

Some of the barriers to embracing Agile seem to be around the lack of knowledge and understanding of what this means and how it is different, as well as lack of support from the top. Organisations that have successfully used Agile in L&D either have direct support from the top or have entrusted the L&D function to implement their own policy, structure, and workflow.

It was also felt that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding around the term ‘agile’ – with it meaning different things to different people and with mixed experiences depending on the sector and function.

The group agreed that breaking down the barriers and leveraging the benefits of agile should be driven by L&D functions – promoting a clear understanding of an agile approach, demonstrating benefits and enabling a common and shared foundation from which to launch agile methodologies. Some of the group committed to revisiting agile thinking in their teams, taking actions to raise or re-invigorate its profile.

**Elements of Agile recommended**

Within the group, there was a range of expertise in the field of Agile. We spent some time discussing the tools and techniques shown on the canvas below, with members providing examples of when and how they use these in day to day operations, and when initiating new programmes or projects.

We concluded that, to be truly agile, an agile mindset is key. It also requires a company culture that encourages experimentation, testing, failure, iterating, selecting, and scaling.

The pandemic has been very productive for Agile thinking in the workplace providing a unique set of circumstances in which the Agile methodology has been used and applied because of necessity. The SIG believes that, for many, this forced application should continue to be intentionally embraced and applied as we navigate beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Please use the stickies (double click on them) to share your (multiple) thoughts on the questions below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you see as clear benefits of Agile for the L&amp;D function?</th>
<th>What are some barriers / risks to bringing Agile to L&amp;D or to a company as a whole?</th>
<th>Which elements of Agile would you like to try out / would recommend others try out?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New methods and tools</td>
<td>Doing it only because it is trendy</td>
<td>Personas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid upskilling</td>
<td>Lack of relevant experience</td>
<td>Customer journey mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New communities of practice</td>
<td>Lacking top mgmt support</td>
<td>Iterative design of L&amp;D programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test and fail fast, iterate quickly</td>
<td>A wall between change and run activities</td>
<td>Co-creation of solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking one size fits all</td>
<td>Existing organization and processes for L&amp;D</td>
<td>Start with MVP and scale up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of Agile</td>
<td>Traditional culture</td>
<td>Kanban board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to act/adapt quickly</td>
<td>Lack of time/ resources</td>
<td>Design Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on customer and participants</td>
<td>No common understanding of Agile</td>
<td>Sprints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong focus on employee experience</td>
<td>Restrictive IT tools</td>
<td>Building teams through skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder value</td>
<td>Mistakes seen as a chance</td>
<td>Mistakes vs mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating more impact</td>
<td>Personas</td>
<td>Fear of making mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-owned, pulled learning</td>
<td>Co-creation of solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Area 4 - New L&D Operating Model

In this focus area, the SIG considered agile learning at a more strategic level, in terms of the role of Learning & Development functions, specifically:

- How will L&D operate in the future?
- How will we effectively adapt our L&D model?

As a Group, we completed a business model canvas to focus our thoughts on this topic, reviewing the L&D function as both a learning provider, and a learning enabler, and considering who our partners are and should be, what key activities we should undertake to be more effective and what resources we need to make that happen. We also explored the key propositions of our L&D functions, who our customers are, how we interact with them and how we convey our propositions to them.

At the point of completing these canvases, in the midst of the pandemic, the SIG was mindful of the new challenges being faced, such as the acceleration of remote and digital learning, alongside some of new skills and expertise domains that needed to be rapidly developed as a direct result of the pandemic.

**Strategic partners**

When considering future L&D operating models, the group concluded that we will increasingly need to build our networks with internal and external strategic partners (see canvases below): to build expertise within the business, learn about best practise, trends, initiatives and technologies that help shape and support future strategies.

**Activities**

L&D should be undertaking activities in a future operating model where it becomes a central hub of expertise that can be drawn on and fed by partners and customers. The learning function of a business would continue to provide knowledge and expertise, acting as a ‘consultancy’ where appropriate. Another key activity would be in the area of skills gap analysis, customisation of programmes and consequently evaluation and impact measurement, also linking through to ROI objectives. The challenge for L&D functions will be to remain up to date, prepare for the next trends and recognise skills and capability needs, so that the necessary support is provided in a timely manner to the business.

**Customers**

Customers in future operating models are likely to become more diverse as individuals and business teams take more control of their own learning and L&D develops wider networks and greater numbers of stakeholders. These are likely to be across functions, segments and at all levels of the business – see canvases below for the range of customers identified. Activities such as stakeholder mapping, customer journey mapping and collaboration events will help to ensure the learning function remains relevant and focused.

Th SIG’s conclusion on the L&D operating model of the future is that it needs to be flexible, open to new ideas and forward thinking. It is seen as an enabler for learning effectiveness across the business and leading the way in the application of agile learning methodologies.
V. SIG Speakers and Contributors

To stimulate the SIG discussion, distinguished thought leaders were invited to present their research and points of view over a series of guest speaker sessions. The group had input from two LBS professors and two industry experts, gaining fresh and up to date assessment and outlooks from academic and business perspectives.

Below, a summary consisting of each speaker, the main points presented and the SIG’s response.

Professor Julian Birkinshaw

*Faculty Expert on Learning Agility: Julian Birkinshaw, Professor of Strategy & Entrepreneurship, London Business School*

Our first guest speaker was Julian Birkinshaw, Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at London Business School. Julian is a globally acclaimed thought leader in the area of innovation, strategic agility, experimentation and the future of work, and has recently published research around hybrid working and what work will look like in the future.

Julian presented on the theory of learning, challenging the 70-20-10 principle, that 70% of our development occurs when undertaking our day-to-day work, 20% through learning from interaction with peers, and only 10% through formal learning like attending training programmes. He puts forward the notion that this is too simplistic in the context of executive development, and largely unproven (Executive development How does it really work? Beyond the 70/20/10 Principle).

Julian proposes an ‘integrative framework’ of three activities that people undertake and combine to contribute to an executive’s development:

**The process of executive development involves three activities**

- **Understanding:** A cognitive process of building knowledge about the world of work; a point of view on what sorts of behaviours, attitudes and actions are effective. It is a largely rational perspective.

- **Identity:** A socially-constructed view of how I relate to others and how they view me. Identity is a sense of self, the meaning that I construct in my work context. It builds on affect and emotion.

- **Action:** What I do in the workplace, my day-to-day behaviour, the challenges I confront, the initiative I take. It is a pragmatic perspective, with an emphasis on doing, rather than thinking or feeling.
Julian presented the pros and cons of each activity, and concluded that the interplay between the activities determines the process of becoming more effective as a leader.

By recognising these pathways or ‘tensions’, one can gain a greater understanding of executive development.

In support of this theory, interviews and surveys of more than 500 executives were carried out to ascertain how the pathways are demonstrated in the real world, how commonly they are displayed in relation to the three development activities, and which pathways are most effective for successful development.

His research concluded that one of the findings is consistent to an extent with 70-20-10, in that people who focus on action taking deliver better business outcomes. The other key finding, however, is that identity focused work and the self-discovery pathway is just as important. Therefore, Julian suggests we consider something closer to a 40-40-20 ratio (although he is clear this is not accurate either).

SIG Perspective
The SIG enjoyed Julian’s session and it promoted good discussion around what makes for an effective and agile learning environment. We had an interesting discussion around the 70-20-10 concept and its relevance in learning today against the new ideas proposed from Julian, concluding that the overall principle is that learning should definitely not be about going on a training course or gaining a certificate.

Several participants were able to give examples of how learning agility in their organisations is encouraged by the pathways Julian describes in his model. For example, experimentation at individual and team levels is encouraged in many of the members’ organisations, and increasingly applied to reinforce learning undertaken by other pathways.
Professor Lynda Gratton

Faculty Expert on Future of Work: Lynda Gratton, Professor of Management Practice in Organisational Behaviour, London Business School

With the impact of the pandemic affecting all organisations, the SIG was keen to explore what skills employees will need in the future, and how work will be undertaken. We were delighted to welcome Lynda Gratton, Professor of Management Practice in Organisational Behaviour at London Business School, to speak with us on The Future of Work. Lynda is a leading researcher in this field and has published numerous papers and books on the subject.

Lynda presented the group with some interesting and stark facts around shifts in the workplace and how, globally, automation – including robotics and AI – are becoming central to the way we do business. However, alongside this, foundational skills have been overlooked in preference for technical skills, and it is the foundational skills that are vital in elevating individuals in the workplace to be successful.

Lynda also talked about population demographics and, referring to her book ‘The 100-Year Life’, the fact that the population is aging – life expectancy is increasing, and people are having fewer children. We therefore will have a multistage life, and lifelong learning is becoming more important than ever as many of us will be working until we are 70 and will have multiple careers in that time.

On top of these trends that were happening anyway, we reviewed her thoughts on hybrid working and its impact on corporate learning agendas.

SIG Perspective

SIG members were keen to ask Lynda about her thoughts on individual motivation to learn, and how to match individual skills with jobs in the workplace. The group agreed that a major motivator to learn, especially in lower paid work at risk of automation, is linking it to a sense of achievement such as a salary increase, promotion or elevation in the workplace. We are motivated to learn if there is some benefit for us – we gain skills to gain reward. Learning professionals therefore should provide learning opportunities to gain skills to transition to a new job, to again develop there further skills.

Examples from the group included chatbots to match individuals with skills to jobs suitable for them via job boards. Further discussion uncovered examples of organisations that have already recognised the importance of soft or foundational skills as described by Lynda – soft skills such as creativity, empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence. They are now looking to credentialise such skills so they are recognised and given higher value, and considering options for this such as external recognition.

The group also provided examples of how the pandemic impacted foundational skills learning, and of how individuals in an organisation are taking control of their own learning, and shared the observation that learning platforms are growing. One organisation reported that their digital learning strategy, which was previously set out over three years, was realized in three months as a result of the pandemic – there was no longer a choice, so individuals embraced the change.
It was reported by SIG members that the learning agenda is increasingly driven by the demand for skills such as creativity, empathy and emotional intelligence – and that there are more requirements for these skills whatever the demographic or business segment. For some organisations, the pandemic has shifted the agenda from technical and manufacturing activity to a much greater emphasis on learning. This has been demonstrated in a demand for social learning, cross-border, and cross-functional learning where there is a captive audience. In a reflection of Julian’s model of executive development above, experimentation has also been implemented both formally and informally within businesses. In Executive Education at London Business School, we are currently running around 100 experiments across the business that are recorded and evaluated and from which we have measurable impact and outcomes.
Nicolas Barea-Vilas

Industry Expert on Talent Marketplaces: Nicolas Barea-Vilas, Global Talent & Organisation HR VP at Unilever

SIG members were particularly interested in the concept of talent marketplaces, so we reached out to secure Nicolas Barea-Vilas as a presenter. Nicolas has successfully initiated and implemented a talent marketplace at Unilever in collaboration with his own line manager Jeroen Wels, Executive Vice President HR at Unilever, who is a great advocate of the concept. Talent marketplace fits in neatly with the concept of learning agility because the talent marketplace allows individuals to be proactive in selecting and undertaking roles, secondments, and projects within and across businesses. It also allows line managers within an organisation to recruit and select individuals from a large pool without going through a formal recruitment process. Nicholas brought huge energy and passion for his subject area and was able to provide many examples of how the talent marketplace works within Unilever.

The talent marketplace challenges the traditional view of an employee being part of a structured hierarchy where you have a line manager, department manager and peers at the same level. There may be cross functional work undertaken, but generally everyone knows their ‘place’ in the hierarchy. The talent marketplace is based around the idea of each person having a portfolio of skills and expertise that can be deployed where and when required. A talent management tool (Unilever uses Gloat) matches personal profiles and skillsets with projects and roles that are available, providing employees with the opportunity to try out project work in areas they may wish to become more familiar with or to learn new skills. In Unilever there are already over 30,000 people using the system, and Nicolas explained how the pandemic had absolutely reinforced the benefits of this approach. When ice cream sales fell through the floor because of lockdowns and limited socialising, many employees redeployed to areas of the business that saw huge growth – sanitising and handwash products. Rapid re-deployment was possible because of the profile matching that was already in place.

SIG Perspective

SIG members were interested in Nicolas’ passion and advocacy of the talent marketplace, and no one within the group had such a comprehensive approach in place, although a couple of organisations had done some initial experimentation on this topic. There was eagerness to implement this approach within their own businesses. SIG members asked questions around how the system prevents valuable talent being lost from teams because employees choose to move somewhere else when teams might need them. Alongside this, we discussed the practicality of managing individuals when they potentially report to multiple managers over a period of time, and how to ensure attrition rates don’t increase in some teams more than others. This is partly down to a culture and mindset shift from ‘holding on to your good people’ to enabling learning opportunities for all. Nicolas reinforced this by explaining that Unilever has a solid foundation in place to enable the talent marketplace to operate freely.

The SIG concluded that, if we wish to foster a culture of learning agility, talent marketplaces in a formal or informal format should be embraced and implemented. To allow individuals to develop, they need to be able to pursue and secure roles and assignments that enable them to expand their skills and indeed their profile within the business. Ultimately, this leads to a
more rounded and future-proof workforce that feels stretched, challenged, and valued, and can also help with attrition rates because instead of having to find opportunities outside a business, people can find new opportunities within. The SIG was certain this concept will expand and evolve.
Simon Brown

*Industry Expert on Curiosity: Simon Brown, Chief Learning Officer, Novartis*

As a special interest group studying the concept of agile learning we often looked back to the idea of curiosity in self-directed learning. As an organisation we want our people to take charge of their learning and to do this we need an agile mindset and a curiosity to learn.

Simon Brown is Chief Learning Officer at Novartis and co-author of 'The Curious Advantage' (by Paul Ashcroft, Simon Brown, and Garrick Jones), a book about how to foster and leverage curiosity in the workplace.

Simon presented their 7 Cs framework of curiosity and how harnessing these in the workplace helps us to unlock the opportunities of the digital world in which we live and work in. This concept again fits nicely as a piece in the pandemic jigsaw puzzle – where we are making sense of what is happening around us, how we fit into the world and what opportunities the world presents to us. The idea of curiosity – asking questions, sense-making, stretching, and expanding our outlooks, skills, networks and understanding – has been accelerated for many of us in light of the situation with which we have been faced.

Simon was able to put a structured and logical framework around the curiosity concept – and to suggest practical tools and techniques to encourage a curious mind.

**SIG Perspective**

In the context of agility and agile learning, SIG members were positive about the learning from this session and could make a clear link between curiosity and an agile mindset and culture. Members felt motivated to take this topic away for further reflection and to consider how to implement practical initiatives that would further curiosity in their own organisations.

There was a general thought that the pandemic has indeed generated curious thinking as a way of problem solving and re-inventing, although this had not necessarily been labelled as curiosity. The question now, is how to continue and promote this way of thinking into the future.

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**7Cs of Curiosity**

1. **Context**
2. **Community**
3. **Curation**
4. **Criticality**
5. **Construction**
6. **Creativity**
7. **Confidence**
VI. Appendices
Appendix 1 - Experiment Template

Research Experiment Outline

AGILE LEARNING SIG
DECEMBER 2020

WHAT IS THE EXPERIMENT CALLED?

WHO IS IT FOR?
Who’s the target audience? How many will take part in the experiment?

WHAT PROBLEM DOES IT SOLVE?

WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?
How will the experiment involve one or more of the Agile Learning elements below?

- How Technologies
  How can adaptive learning, personalisation, performance guidance and AI make a difference?
- New Ways of Working
  How do we integrate design thinking and agile methods into our learning approach?
- New Ambitions
  How can we bring about improvements in leadership, inclusivity, innovation and culture?

HOW WILL IT WORK?
What activities are required to structure and run the experiment?

WHAT WILL WE PROTOTYPE AND TEST?

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?
What are the milestone activities needed to set up, run, and measure the experiment?

Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6

Thank you! Please post your completed template to MoodlePod or email to sghill@london.edu
Appendix 2 – Summary Reports on the Impact of the Pandemic

Erste Group

WHAT HAS BEEN THE PANDEMIC’S IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF LEARNING?

We have seen both a positive and a negative “overnight” impact:

Positive: the perceived strategic importance of the Learning function has suddenly become clearer as employees, and indeed, managers embraced any learning opportunities that could help them effectively navigate the new situation. Clearly, all of these had to be digital, which created a strong momentum for adopting the online learning habits. Remote formats made learning more accessible, while contributing to the overall cost efficiency.

Negative: given the fact that many of the leadership training programs had been enjoying a great reputation not just for their content but also for their networking value, the leaders’ readiness to switch everything to online took longer that would have been optimal. The hopes for the pandemic to be over in a foreseeable future led many to prefer postponements over transformation.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON YOUR LEARNING PRIORITIES / AGENDA

All in all, there was a short-term shift away from the more strategic learning topics and toward the tactical “how to” of remote working. Later, the emphasis moved from remote work/leadership toward building resilience and balancing work with other activities as the workday boundary was getting increasingly blurred for many working from home.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON YOUR DIGITAL LEARNING DELIVERY

Our pilot implementation project of a cloud-based Learning Experience Platform enjoyed some extra momentum in the first weeks of the pandemic. Gradually, most of the programs have been moved online.

While the hunger for online courses was initially great, a few months later, some employees began to report a sense of being overwhelmed by the constant bombardment with internal, and increasingly external, offerings of free webinars and other learning content.

WHAT WILL BE THE LONG-TERM IMPACT ON YOUR ORGANISATION’S LEARNING PRACTICES AND YOUR LEARNING FUNCTION’S OPERATING MODEL?

Clearly, digital learning is here to stay, and the pandemic only accelerated both the demand for online content, as well as the process of digital upskilling among the learning professionals at Erste. We envisage a long-term impact in the form of a much-increased ratio of digital content and a much higher readiness to curate and consume it. We also expect new forms of external cooperation with regard to both ad-hoc and continuous learning curation. In addition, we see an accelerated shift toward a higher personalisation and democratisation of learning that comes hand-in-hand with an increased sense of personal ownership of learning based on individual pro-activeness.
WHAT HAS BEEN THE PANDEMIC’S IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF LEARNING?

For us the pandemic has significantly raised the importance of virtual learning - accelerated this to a great extent, as we went 100% virtual learning as a result. It has also had many benefits, one being to level the playing field and making learning available to all, across the globe - any time, any place and anywhere. This has improved inclusion aspects and made learning accessible to all – a real plus from an I&D perspective.

It has also led to more spaced and blended learning approaches, making it easier for people to fit learning into their daily work - learning in the flow of work. It has also enabled more learning formats / mediums i.e., videos, podcasts, virtual classrooms, elearnings etc. Therefore, potentially making learning more engaging than a formal classroom only event. The spaced learning has enabled people to practice what they have learnt on the job – before then having another learning session etc.

Negative impact would be the lack of social interaction and learning with peers - at the start, but we have managed to now build these aspects into our learning programs and try to enable more community-based learning activities.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON YOUR LEARNING PRIORITIES / AGENDA

Immediate focus at the time was on making all learning virtual. Which meant converting some classroom trainings into a digital format. Luckily, we has already launched an LXP with on-line learning content libraries, so it was much easier for us to still offer learning content whilst we converted existing classrooms where it made sense to do so.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON YOUR DIGITAL LEARNING DELIVERY

Answered as above

WHAT WILL BE THE LONG-TERM IMPACT ON YOUR ORGANISATION’S LEARNING PRACTICES AND YOUR LEARNING FUNCTION’S OPERATING MODEL?

Longer term we will adopt a hybrid approach to learning - a more blended approach, where there will be on-line content to cover the basics / theoretical elements which need teaching - so focus for knowledge-based learning will be on-line. But then we will also ensure elements of social learning / in person learning which are focused more on practicing skills and applying the learning. We will still use classroom events, but less so and for programs/topics where we would get the most impact from doing the learning in person. We will also aim to build more community-based learning through things like MS Teams / Yammer - more informal mechanisms to learn and learn in the flow of work / on the job. Focusing our time as an L&D function less on the 10% of formal learning and more on the 90% of social / on-the-job based learning.
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