A new future for learning
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What if everything you thought you knew about technology and learning was up in the air?

The excitement of the next new technology, system or idea often gets in the way of our real challenge: delivering results in line with business strategy.

The good news is that at LEO, we know how to make learning technologies work. We understand how to make sense of the new opportunities as well as the tried and tested. Our team is committed to innovation and creating global solutions that work. We know how to transform learning.
As experts in learning technologies, we hear a lot of statements like:

- “It’s not about courses anymore, it’s about resources”
- “We’re moving on from e-learning’
- “It’s all about social learning now”
- “It’s not about PCs anymore, it’s about mobile”
- “It’s not about formal learning anymore, it’s 70:20:10”
- “It’s all about games”
- “The future of learning is wearable”

The truth is, none of these statements is entirely correct. In fact, the future learning technologies space sees all of these things, and more, working together.

Effective next-generation learning will combine many different elements and channels in engaging learning architectures. It isn’t just about a single channel, platform or device. By drawing together new technologies and powerful content, combined with new ways of working, we can kick-start the learning transformation in your organisation. This ebook will show you how.
The ability of an organisation to equip its workforce with the skills and knowledge to remain agile, resilient and effective is business critical. From a learning perspective, this poses a huge challenge. With business needs and technology changing all the time, how can anyone be expected to keep up? To deliver results in the face of changing requirements, it is vital that you find a way to enable scalable and flexible learning strategies.
The Towards Maturity Benchmark Report 2014-15 shows that in many organisations, the performance gap is growing – more of us than ever know what we should be doing, but many of us still aren’t taking the right practical steps to get there.

- 91% of L&D leaders want to respond faster to change
- 93% want to speed up the application of learning at work
- 93% want to improve talent and performance management
- 90% want to boost on-the-job productivity

... but just 31% of organisations think they are realising the benefits they seek.

With cost, set-up time and a lack of both employee and L&D skills being among the key blockers, LEO is here to help. We will enable you to overcome these barriers and realise the potential of your people, processes, content and technology for a future-proof learning strategy.
So what’s driving the need for learning transformation?

In the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world in which we operate we need to start by identifying the specific business challenges we face, and responding to them with the profound knowledge of every solution at our disposal.

**WHAT CHALLENGES ARE TODAY’S BUSINESSES FACING?**

- Skills shortages in changing markets?
- Leadership at breaking point?
- Challenging productivity and performance targets?
- Increased industry regulation?
- Rapidly shifting workforce demographics?
- A plethora of new technologies and platforms to review and assess?
- The drive for an increasingly globalised, yet localised, business space?

Each challenge brings an added dimension to the way new learning can revolutionise your business. These are challenges our consulting experts respond to every day. But the ground we stand on is shifting all the time, and to define the best way technology can help, we need to understand where the real opportunities are.
The speed of technological change is the disruptive force in business today, but by the same token, it is the catalyst for revolution in the learning space.

Over the last 30 years, we have moved from trainer-led learning, supported by printed collateral through stand-alone interactive courseware, desktop-based e-learning and mobile learning. ‘Training’ has become ‘learning’ and the classroom has flipped. And once again we are engaging with a new wave of learning technologies.

The next generation of technologies will be more dynamic than ever. We are seeing a surge of wearable, scannable, drivable, location-specific and, ultimately, highly personalised technologies which will almost certainly change the way we think about and implement workplace learning.

But rather than lurching from trend to trend, we need to take stock of what we have and use it where it works best. At the same time, we must continue to embrace new technologies and methodologies in the right business context. Combining these tried and tested methods and channels with new, innovative and creative solutions is the ideal way. This is agile learning built on real results.

The adoption of new technologies into learning is not optional. Just a few years ago, IT departments were initially uncertain of how personalised access to information and communication would affect their businesses. Many had to learn to embrace a BYOD strategy. Today’s learners wouldn’t understand any other way. Organisations need to ride the wave of new learner behaviours as technology becomes ever more pervasive, ever more personalised, and ever more locked into our working lives.
The way technology is integrating into our everyday lives is now having a profound effect on the workplace. We have moved into a world where social, commercial, entertainment and information networks are a huge part of our existence outside the workplace – so why should it be any different in the workplace?

It’s not what you know, it’s who you know

For one thing, our personal and social networks are now far larger, and stretch far beyond the boundaries of our organisations. This means less control from the top and more autonomy for learners themselves. It also means massive opportunities for sharing information and knowledge with our peers through open connections both in and out of the workplace.

Organisations that recognise the powers of their networks are seeing the advantages in the speed of change, evolving working culture and real performance benefits.

Taking back control

Learning is now about interaction and autonomy. Effective learners are those that feel more empowered to take control of their learning, whether they are looking for skill change or performance support. They are realising they can find answers for themselves rather than waiting for something to happen.

Mobile learning, connectedness and personalisation should put the power in learners’ hands, allowing them to seek out what they need when they need it. This means a more efficient use of their precious time and resources.

Justifying just-in-case

All of this adds up to a profound change: we are now at a point where we need to be able to justify the case for formal, just-in-case learning programmes against ‘natural’ informal learning within a business. Are learners going to get the right learning elsewhere anyway? What’s the risk to the business if they do? How do you create a business case for the investment to support this type of learning? How will you show that the investment has paid off?

Asking the right questions will help you make the right decisions. In any event, you need to be able to harness your learners’ informal learning networks and behaviours to your business advantage – the case for isolated learning programmes is simply not there any more.

What are the social drivers?

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So – what’s the answer?

We believe that there are a number of key things to think about when you consider strategic learning today. Each will help you get closer to a transformational strategy for your business.

The right learning approach for the right learning

There are now channels and tools available to deliver highly effective and engaging just-in-case learning at the same time as immediate and ubiquitous just-in-time learning and performance support.

But putting the tools in place, for the right need, is surprisingly difficult. It requires a strategic view from both the top-down business drivers and from the bottom-up, learners’ perspective. It requires a shift in the way L&D, communications, IT and business leaders think.

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Context
In a world where information and learning is always on and always available, how can learners expect to find the best for their specific operational needs? And how can businesses control learner journeys to meet their business needs?

The focus is now shifting from the content itself to driving the relevance and context of smaller learning assets. Many businesses already have massive resources at their disposal, but learners are no longer sure what is appropriate and how it fits in with their changing horizons.

Exploring strategies for context allows us to take the best of what’s there and work it into new and effective programmes and learner journeys. Evolving portals, gateways, virtual campuses and VLEs are now providing the frameworks for this, and all agree that where large amounts of content is concerned, context is king.

Alignment
So we have the perfect learning architecture in place, our learning content is relevant and useful, but our learners aren’t engaging. No learning programme can be successful without learners. From our experience, the likelihood is that the learners are not yet aware of the value that the learning can offer them, and don’t yet have the motivation to engage.

Sustainability
We believe strongly that driving the marketing and business messages behind a learning programme will drive its success. Social media, mobile and learner communities have also unlocked a massively important tool for making this work.

So - what’s the answer?
We’ve known for a long time that retention drops off fast for anything which isn’t regularly practiced. Unless you apply a behaviour or use a knowledge network or tool, you will begin to lose it from your personal business toolkit. The answer is to look closely at how you sustain your learning programmes.

New techniques inspired by what we know about the brain can help strengthen long-term retention and the new world of just-in-case and performance support goes some way to address this. Taking a long-term view and adopting a campaign approach is also important.
This is an exciting time to be involved with learning technologies. Organisations have more choice than ever when it comes to building a tailored learning programme. Taking some time to work with experts to decipher the huge range of options out there will help you make an informed decision that will benefit your business.

The key is to make sure all the elements of your programme join up in a way that makes sense to learners and cements the context of the learning. This can include everything from best-practice platforms, to rich media scenarios, to powerful learning games.

It’s also about making sure the structure you put in place meets your most important business needs. This may involve creating the environment, systems and processes that can deliver your learning material at speed and be quickly updated.

Above all, however, it’s about ensuring the design of your programme is cohesive. Learning can be facilitated and enhanced by coaching, mentoring, sharing and any number of other methods or modes. Whether it’s workshops and nuggets of e-learning or MOOCs and portals, take the time to align the tools you use with your specific business objectives at front of mind.

Opening targeted channels will enable learning far more effectively than simply pushing content out to learners, and will create a healthy learning environment for your learners. Match the medium to the channels, and the solution to the business objectives. This is the time to be bold, confident and pioneering, and to take control of your learning strategy.

So, as we move on from a course paradigm, where does that put e-learning as we knew it? What we might call traditional e-learning is definitely here to stay – but as a part of the new learning mix. Rethinking learning doesn’t mean throwing anything out. It means using the best medium for each challenge, and bringing the full power of the new learning mix to play in the form of a learning architecture.
We believe a common missing ingredient is user experience, or UX. Too often, organisations deliver technology-enabled learning at the expense of ease of use. Everyone loves one-click shopping on Amazon because it’s simple and it works. However, what many people don’t realise is that it took years of work to achieve this level of simplicity.

LEO’s highly experienced UX designers understand that these principles play a vital role in the design of learner journeys for the most engaging, user-friendly programmes. Our UX team work closely with our learning designers, writers, technical architects, project managers, graphic designers and software engineers to ensure the most effective learning experience. We have learned that it is this shared understanding, and not just the technology or content alone, which allows us to deliver outstanding results time after time.

The greatest challenge? Simplifying complexity

One of the key challenges you will face when designing and delivering an effective learning architecture is overcoming complexity. Our challenge as learning experts is to find a way to design simplicity into everything we do to make the learning process as quick, engaging and effective as possible.
The personalisation movement is more than just a trend. We believe it is going to shape the future of learning technologies. With wearable technology, Experience API (Tin Can) and Open Badges allowing us to track our learners' every move, we expect that before long we will always be tailoring programmes to individual learners – a far cry from a one-size-fits-all approach.

On a macro level, we can localise learning to help users connect directly with their subject matter. For instance, we can deliver learning in the context of the learner's environment more effectively by taking linguistic and cultural nuances into account. Performance support materials could be fully tailored to specific locations, products or even clients, while technical support could automatically be focused on a particular tool or device.

So what’s the next thing we need to consider in the world of learning technology and innovation? In our decades of industry experience, we have seen a few ideas come and go, but we can confidently say that the next big change will be a focus on personalised learning. In recent years, we have seen the move from just-in-case to just-in-time learning – we are now moving to just-enough and just-for-me.

On a micro level, we could see a surge of mentoring and coaching apps designed to enable learning for individuals with a great deal of precision. These may work similarly to predictive text or search engines, with complex algorithms driving the most relevant material, to deliver a highly personalised package of learning. This approach will make learning tools and programmes more efficient, effective, transparent and user friendly. This also ensures that nobody will waste time accessing unnecessary materials.
We’re not pretending that creating the right blend of learning is easy. It is both an art and a science, and requires expert understanding to get right.

The starting point when designing a learning blend is to first identify the most appropriate learning modes for your purpose, whether this is centred on playing, exploring, applying, watching, sharing or any other behaviour. A well-designed blend will make all the right modes available in an engaging way.

Building a blend is also about the creative process. It’s about being bold and not shying away from experimentation. We should feel confident in our ability to try new things, learn from our mistakes and capitalise on our successes. It is virtually impossible to get a blend exactly right the very first time, but we can get close, and the nature of a blended approach means we don’t have to start from scratch if something isn’t working.
What’s working?

But to make the right changes we need to know what’s working. Being brave enough to experiment must go hand-in-hand with a willingness to measure the impact of your learning. It is only through the rigorous analysis of results and measurement of success that you will have the vision to drive true learning transformation in your organisation. We believe there are three levels of measurement that you need to look at:

1. Has your learning ‘landed’? Has it reached its intended audience?

2. Is the learning effective? Has anyone learned what they needed to in a way that they can apply when they need to?

3. What is the actual business impact? Do you have measurable business results which can be tracked back to your learning?

These messages must then be fed back into your business and, crucially, acted upon. Remember – business is changing, people are changing – you need to keep your learning alive.
Learning transformation is essential for the development of your people and, ultimately, your organisation. The future of learning is now, and LEO is leading the way. When you need the most innovative, pioneering and effective ways to revolutionise your workplace learning, we have the deep experience, capability and reach. We have the tools to deliver learning that lives at the heart of your business strategy, and we have first-hand experience of the transformation that taking learning to the board level can bring.

Is it time to revisit your L&D strategy?
Are your current content and media delivering results?
Is your L&D team thinking transformationally?

We are ready to partner with you to make the change. Our strategy, delivery and content experts will sit alongside you as you set the wheels of learning transformation in motion.

We will help you embrace the perfect mix of new and existing technology, people and resources to deliver what your people need, and to deliver the best results for your business.

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Learning technologies have never looked so exciting, and we want to show you why. Take the first step towards the business results you want by contacting us today.

LEO believes that technology-enabled learning innovation has the power to deliver truly transformational results. LEO’s mission is to deliver transformational results for our clients through learning innovation and the effective use of learning and performance technologies. Backed by more than 30 years of experience and with an unrivalled capability, we design engaging learning architectures that fit seamlessly into businesses and improve performance throughout the entire organisation. LEO has the deep understanding of learning design and technology combined with our pioneering, creative approach to drive learning transformation.

For more information or to talk to one of our learning experts please visit: leolearning.com