

Performance Support The Key to Elevating L&D to a Strategic Partner

Learning and Development (L&D) teams are finding themselves increasingly in a tight spot—productivity and budgets are on the decrease, all while the pace of business change continues to accelerate. Their job is made even more difficult by the fact that many leaders don’t consider L&D to be mission critical or to have strategic value.

The employees that L&D support are frustrated too. They are overwhelmed with new information and the need for new skills, yet struggle to get the kind of learning that they can retain and apply when needed. Discouraged, they lose motivation which impacts productivity, reflecting poorly on the effectiveness of L&D.

The Current Environment

L&D STRUGGLES TO JUSTIFY BUDGET

L&D budgets continue to remain flat or even shrink. Because the ax often falls on what are considered “non-essential” initiatives, the budget ax often falls on L&D. It’s no secret; L&D teams are constantly watching their backs as learning is often considered a “nice to have” and not a strategic value-add.

A Bersin and Associates study published in 2010 reports learning budgets have fallen for two years in a row, for the years 2008 and 2009, totaling a combined 21%. Their new 2011 report provides a glimmer of hope, showing learning budgets rising 2% in 2010 but given that IT budgets rose 5.4% in that same timeframe, it shows that L&D efforts are still not seen as strategic in the way that IT is.

Doing “more with less” has become the motto for L&D teams. Not only are they being asked to provide more training with less budget, they are also being asked to train “harder” in less time and provide more business value. Unfortunately, most learning efforts today aren’t improving on-the-job productivity. Leaders, not seeing a return on their investment, are less willing to allow employees to spend time away from their jobs to do more training.

EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY ON THE DECREASE

Employees without adequate training and support are both less motivated and less able to do their job. This dilemma is impacting worker performance and overall productivity. In fact, the most recent figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show productivity is actually decreasing.

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The Key to Making L&D a Strategic Partner

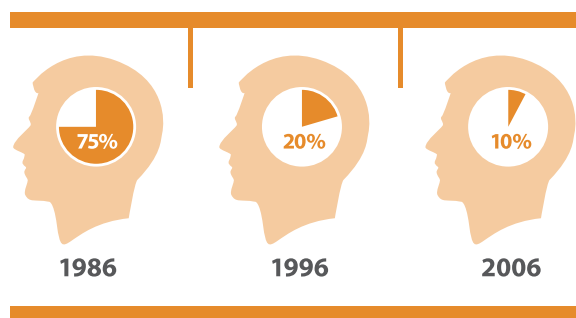
While there can be a number of factors contributing to this decrease, one is employee satisfaction. A Gallup poll reports highly-satisfied employees show a 50% higher level of productivity. It stands to reason that decreasing productivity statistics imply a level of employee dissatisfaction.

Psychologist Fritz Heider was the first to link personal performance to motivation and ability. In the workplace, this translates to productive employees are happy employees that have both the skills needed to do the job and the motivation to do it well. The reduced learning opportunities contribute to a vicious cycle where employees who need new skills but aren't supported with effective learning, underperform in their jobs. As a result, executive leadership does not see value in supporting further learning and continues to cut the L&D budget, or at best, lets it remain flat.

Increased Business Pace Compounds the Problem

Compounding the decreasing productivity and shrinking budgets is the problem that the workplace continues to change underfoot. A hyper-competitive marketplace is driving a dizzying pace of business change. Organizations are making process improvements and adding new or updated applications and systems, often several times every year. In order to fully realize the intended benefits of these changes, employees need to successfully adopt and apply new knowledge and skills to these new tasks, processes, systems, and policies.

Amount of Information Memorized by Employees



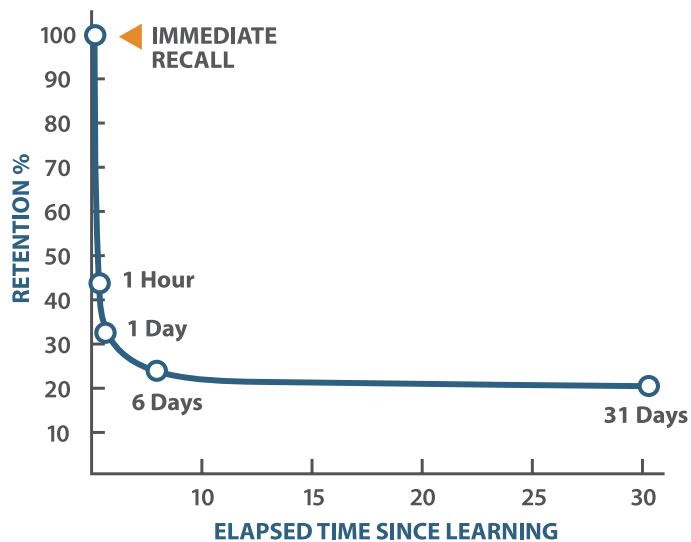
L&D teams have responded to this challenge by adding even more traditional learning. In an attempt to find something that works, they try adding new methods of delivery. They also staff up costly help desks to support end-users and build knowledge databases and information portals to support employee self-service.

Due to the high rate of information change, employees no longer rely on knowledge stored in their heads to do their jobs. The Internet and digital era has changed the way people search for and use information. People now expect they'll be able to find what they need, when they need it. Unfortunately, there is just too much information that changes too quickly for them to find it quickly—at their moment of need.

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KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IS LOW

The predominant focus of most of today's corporate learning strategy is on the training event which, regardless of form (classroom, online virtual classes, or e-learning), is designed to provide all the necessary, task-level detail to the employee. The primary goal of this learning approach is to ensure the user understands all the information presented, resulting in a "we need to teach them everything" mentality. Unfortunately, studies show employees are not able to retain and apply this amount of information over time.



Hermann Ebbinghaus, a German psychologist who pioneered the experimental study of memory, studied the process of learning and forgetting. His studies showed that people usually forget 90% of what they learn in class within 30 days. And, the majority of forgetting occurs within the first few hours after class.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD STIFLES PRODUCTIVITY

Compounding the knowledge retention problem is the ever-increasing volume of information employees create and need to access. IDC reports that in 2011, the amount of information created and replicated will surpass 1.8 zettabytes. That's 1.8 trillion gigabytes and it's expected to grow by a factor of nine in just five years.

On the positive side, more and more information is documented every year, capturing important knowledge. Companies have been quick to get these documents into shared drives, portals, and even formal Knowledge Management Systems (KMS). While the assets now contained in these systems are valuable, they are frequently underutilized by the very people they are meant to support. Employees still need to:

- Remember or recall where to go to get the information
- Login, search, and sift through multiple results to find the correct information
- Read through the document before finding the relevant or desired information

IDC surveys find the time spent searching for information averages 8.8 hours per week, at a cost of

\$14,209 per knowledge worker per year. Analyzing information consumed an additional 8.1 hours, costing organizations \$13,078 annually. Given many organizations have learning systems and knowledge portals available, this number is astounding.

What Worked Before No Longer Does

For the past 10-15 years, L&D organizations have been focused on the delivery of traditional learning programs and as a result, they've lost sight of the ultimate goal of learning, which is to teach the employee to perform more productively and effectively on the job. Most organizations are still focused on the "course" paradigm and continue to explore different delivery methods, including mobile learning.

For example, organizations implementing a new application or business process, such as customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource planning (ERP), or enterprise content management (ECM) systems, across the enterprise would typically develop one of the following learning solutions:

Classroom

Onsite or virtual with student manual as post-class support tool

e-Learning

Develop or outsource the creation of a comprehensive e-learning course

Blended

Classroom (onsite or virtual) with e-learning and a manual as pre/post-class support

These solutions are well designed to enable the user to acquire new knowledge, but poorly suited to provide immediate support when the user returns to the workplace and has to apply this new found knowledge. These tools fail because they are disconnected from the employee's natural workflow. Employees have to leave what they are doing to find the answers. In many cases, users struggle to remember what system and which assets provide the best solution to their question.

If the user does go searching for answers, finding the information can be challenging. A recent study shows the average knowledge worker in the US spends 15-20% of their time looking for answers and only successfully finds the answer 50% of the time. Stated differently, users spend one day a week looking for answers and only find the answers half of the time.

RAPID EARNING IS NOT ENOUGH

Many L&D organizations have turned to the latest delivery method called Rapid Learning, also known as Rapid eLearning. Rapid eLearning typically refers to online training in available smaller modules. Training authors create small courses, often slides in PowerPoint, add narration voiceover, and even add some interactivity like tests or polls. Then, the completed "course" is made available on the company's learning management system or on a website. Rapid eLearning is often promoted as "interval training" with modules that last 6 to 10 minutes.

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The Key to Making L&D a Strategic Partner

However, Rapid eLearning is often wrongly confused with embedded learning or performance support, where performance support presents the learner with information at their moment of need, allowing employees to move forward with their work as quickly as possible.

While Rapid eLearning does bring training to the employee in ways that are easier to access and in smaller bites that may be easier to remember, it still misses the mark of being present at the moment the employee needs it. Yes, it is available most anytime online, but the employee must stop what they're doing, go to the learning management system, search and find the course and module they need, and go through the training again. The training they do find is often not context specific and the employee must sift through the content to find just the bit they need.

When the learner is simply looking for a quick reminder, this can be very frustrating. And, Rapid eLearning takes away valuable productivity time that often does not result in better on-the-job performance.

SIMULATIONS ARE TOUGH TO GET RIGHT

Simulation tools are a popular solution, especially when organizations are adopting large enterprise software packages (CRM, ERP, ECM). These tools claim to reduce the need for traditional classroom training and e-learning by empowering non-technical classroom trainers to easily create and distribute interactive tutorial videos, i.e. simulations. Simulations are very well-suited for someone learning for the first time, however they can become challenging to use when an employee only needs an answer to a simple question.

Simulations must also not be confused with embedded learning or performance support. Simulations can play a role as part of a performance support solution, but only after quick steps and reminders have been presented to the learner first.

Unfortunately for L&D, simulations are time-consuming, complex, and often costly to create. With rapid changes in the business, simulations must be continually revised. It becomes difficult to keep simulations current as systems and processes are upgraded and outdated simulations can be confusing for employees.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Classroom training, eLearning, and knowledge systems are far and away the most common methods to provide employee learning. Yet, when looking at the effectiveness of these efforts and support systems, studies show they don't deliver the desired result of increased on-the-job performance.

OUTCOME	BUSINESS IMPACT
Loss of Productivity	Time Equals Money
Delay in Reaching Full Proficiency	Too Long to Achieve Desired Project ROI
Non-Compliance with Business Process	Inefficiencies & Errors
Costly and Avoidable Errors	Poor Quality & Customer Satisfaction
High Support Costs	Unwanted or Unnecessary Expense
Low Employee & Customer Satisfaction	Low Customer Loyalty
Potential Project Failure	Significant Loss of Time & Money

According to the META Group, 76% of users have a failed or substandard understanding of their mission critical applications. The study goes on to explain that only 11% of users can be identified as highly competent.

When traditional learning approaches aren't working and employees aren't able to do new tasks efficiently and effectively, the impacts are far-reaching and the costs to the organization are significant.

Given the difficulty achieving a return on the investment of time and money, it's no wonder L&D organizations struggle to justify their value to the company.

Performance Support

It's clear that the traditional approaches to learning are not delivering the business impact needed today. It's no longer helpful to continue sharpening the tool if it's not the right tool. The fast pace of the workplace requires a new approach that steps outside the traditional methods of content and delivery and harnesses a more real-time approach with immediate access to knowledge and information. In order to do that, it's necessary to take a fresh look at what users need to be able to learn and perform effectively.

Dr. Conrad Gottfredson, a leading expert on performance support, developed the "Five Moments of Need" theory . Gottfredson suggests there are five primary moments of need employees face in the learning and performance lifecycle.

ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE	
1	When Learning for the First Time TRAINING
2	When Wanting to Learn More TRAINING
APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE	
3	When Trying to Remember and/or Apply PERFORMANCE SUPPORT
4	When Things Change PERFORMANCE SUPPORT
5	When Something Goes Wrong PERFORMANCE SUPPORT

Most training efforts help the employee acquire knowledge. But, given the low retention rates and the difficulty finding information in a timely manner, it became clear that most learning was missing critical steps in the learning process. Very few learning programs today can successfully address the application of knowledge.

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PERFORMANCE SUPPORT SOLUTIONS

Performance support provides just-in-time information to employees while they work. Unlike traditional training and eLearning, which requires users step away from productive work in order to learn, performance support embeds into enterprise applications and business processes helping employees apply knowledge, adapt to change, or solve problems in real-time. A true performance support solution will always include these qualities:

Embedded

Performance support solutions allow employees to get what they need without interrupting their workflow, leaving their application, or suspending their business process.

Context Sensitive

Performance support takes into account the employee's role, current task, or process-state so users quickly receive the most relevant information at their moment of need.

Just-Enough Learning

An effective performance support solution will provide clear and immediate support to the employee starting with quick reminders and escalating to increasing levels of detail as necessary. The result—employees return to work in seconds, not minutes or hours.

Additive

Performance support drives more value from existing formal learning initiatives, and incorporates social learning at the most appropriate time and place.

Business Case

Finally, with performance support, return on investment is demonstrable and business outcomes are specific, e.g. increasing employee productivity, reducing help-desk calls, reducing error rates, decreasing compliance risk, reducing training costs, etc.

LEARNINGGUIDE SOLUTIONS

LearningGuide puts a proven set of performance support methodologies and technologies in place to help companies accelerate employee time to proficiency and increase workplace productivity. The LearningGuide team works closely with L&D to build the business case for performance support, and increase their measurable impact on the company at large. The team has worked with some of the world's largest and most successful manufacturing, business services, financial services, healthcare, entertainment, consumer retail and government organizations.

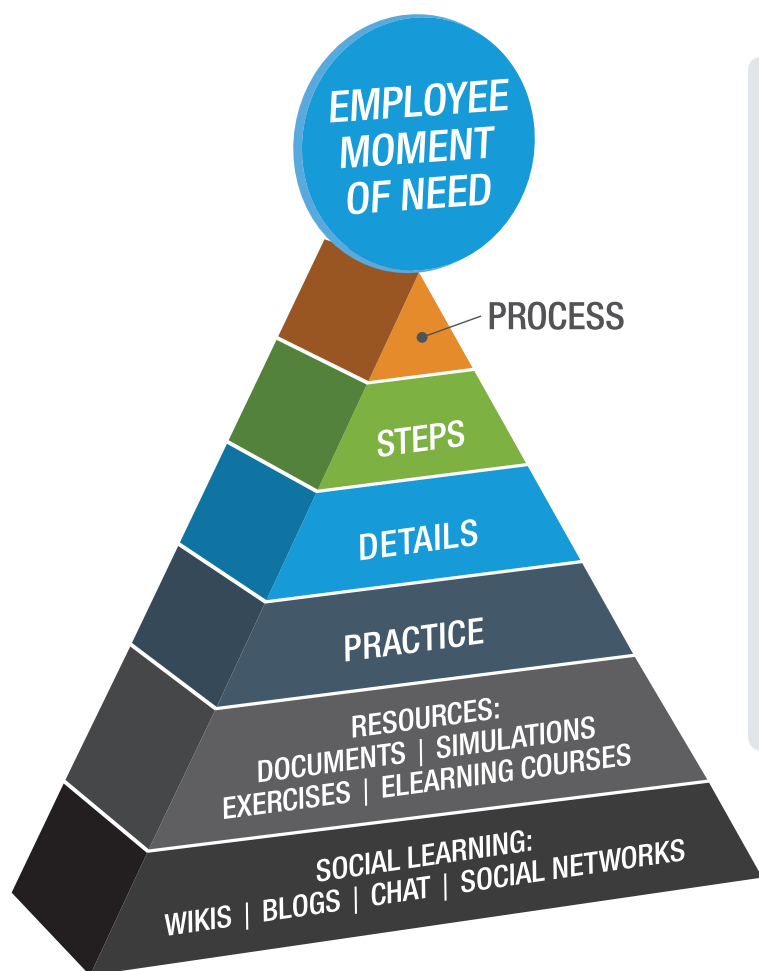
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The Key to Making L&D a Strategic Partner

At the center of LearningGuide’s methodology is an approach called “Just Enough Learning” which is designed to keep the employee moving forward with productive work: preventing lost productivity, maximizing adoption, and minimizing the need for outside help. This methodology does not require organizations to re-build or re-acquire learning assets. Rather, it focuses on integrating or “brokering” existing learning assets to meet the learner at their moment of need with just the right amount of information.

HOW IT WORKS

Performance support begins when an end-user has “a moment of need.” This often happens when he or she is trying to remember something, something goes wrong, or something changes. The user then calls upon the performance support solution from wherever he or she is working, which could be an application like CRM or ERP, a web portal, or a mobile device. The solution captures the user’s context, including role, workflow status and system state, and passes that information to the performance support software, which determines which learning asset to deliver.



Just Enough Learning™

Methodology

- 1. Process**
overview of the business process
- 2. Steps**
concise quick reference instructions
- 3. Details**
robust and detailed job-aids
- 4. Practice**
real-world exercises in the application
- 5. Resources**
links to existing learning assets in LMS, KMS, etc
- 6. Social**
connect to social information channels

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The performance support software selects the most appropriate learning asset from a “virtual repository”. The virtual repository is a catalogue of all available learning assets within an organization, including existing learning assets contained within an LMS, for example, as well as new assets built specifically for the performance support solution. The virtual repository allows the performance support software to quickly find, and serve the most appropriate learning asset to the employee.

The learning asset is delivered back to the employee within seconds through the same interface used to make the request, providing just the right amount of learning, at the moment of need, and allowing productive work to continue.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS

Increases Help Desk & Call Center Efficiency

Deloitte leveraged quick, task-specific refreshers and hints, deeper, step-by-step help, and live skill building exercises to reduce call volume and duration, while making help desk staff more productive.

Increases Sales Productivity and CRM Adoption

Cigna embedded performance support into Salesforce.com to provide specific task-level support around a standard presales process. 84% of the sales team uses the performance support solution daily resulting in a 6% increase in daily productive work. The result was described by their sales leadership as a “quantum leap” in terms of time savings and process consistency.

Accelerates Introduction of New Products

Herman Miller, manufacturer of premium office chairs, delivers new product information to their sales team at the moment of need, while they are working with customers. Product information is now viewed five times more frequently than previous LMS-based solution, face to face training has been significantly reduced, and product launches now happen faster.

Eases Business Process or System Changes

A U.S.-based hospital system leveraged performance support to accelerate their staff’s time to proficiency on a major enterprise system transition. Embedded and context sensitive support got employees up-to-speed rapidly and minimized the need for classroom training, ensuring the hospital system continued to run smoothly during the transition.

Improves Regulatory Compliance

An international healthcare supplier used performance support to keep employees informed about the latest regulatory compliance measures, without requiring them to step away from their work for training or eLearning.

On-Boarding New Employees

A large international energy company going through a merger provided transitional employees with a business process performance support, connecting several IT systems to a single business process. Performance support greatly increased the new employees’ speed of adoption of the business process, while reducing errors, and helping to drive the overall success of the merger.

Case Study

A large organization was preparing to deploy a new enterprise software solution to 5,000 users. They prepared and delivered classroom training – in this case, 20 hours. However, as the employees began using the solution, they quickly encountered problems. The employees could not recall the training they had received in the classroom when they were back on the job. They either were calling the help desk or they made errors. The organization was disappointed in the training offered by their L&D team.

The L&D team then partnered with LearningGuide Solutions to build a performance support solution. This solution provided embedded performance support inside the application—exactly where and when it was needed. The L&D team immediately saw the value in this approach and incorporated the solution into the classroom training.

The introduction of performance support allowed classroom training to be reduced from 20 hours to five hours. While working with LearningGuide, the customer realized the classroom was best suited to introducing new knowledge, and that the performance support solution would be where the workers would go for support on the job. As a result, one of the major objectives of the classroom training is now an introduction to the performance support solution itself.

After the performance support solution was implemented, the results were immediate. There was less time spent in the classroom, fewer help desk calls, increased productivity, and fewer errors.

Using just the reduced classroom hours, the cost savings were substantial.

Number of Workers

5,000

Time saved in training/worker

15 hours

Time saved by organization

9,375 days

Cost savings to organization

\$1,312,500.00

Assumptions: annual salary = \$30,000; work day = 8 hours

With the investment in LearningGuide's performance support solution and the additional savings realized beyond just the reduced classroom time, the return on investment (ROI) was even more impressive.

Conclusion

Businesses will continue to change in order to remain competitive, and the need for employees to get the help they need, when they need it—at their moment of need—will become even more critical to the organization’s success. The L&D teams who are able to meet all “Five Moments of Need” are the ones who will be recognized as strategic partners to the business. As a strategic partner, L&D must continually improve the value of human resources by improving worker productivity.

No longer are L&D organizations destined to be stuck in a vicious cycle. Solutions like LearningGuide can help organizations immediately improve worker productivity and help L&D prove their strategic value to the organization, giving them the competitive edge.



The most valuable assets of a 20th-century company were its production equipment. The most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity.

Peter Drucker

influential writer and management consultant

About LearningGuide Solutions

LearningGuide Solutions helps companies accelerate employee time to proficiency and increase workplace productivity. We offer immediate performance support, delivering just the right amount of information at the moment of need. For more information about LearningGuide Solutions, visit www.learningguide.us.

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