

Empowering employees: the role of L&D in modern workplaces (webinar)

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Rob Moss:

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Personnel Today webinar brought to you in association with Skillsoft. The world we know is changing, we live in what is arguably the most significant period of change in the way in which human beings develop new skills. Online videos, MOOCs and learning over social media are just three examples of learning methods that not long ago did not even exist. But how is this affecting employers and their staff and what is the role of the learning and development? How is it changing and how should the professionals empower their employees to learn in ways that suit both them as individuals and the organisation as a whole?

Well, answering these questions I am delighted to welcome Jane Hart, a speaker and author on modern approaches to workplace learning and the founder of the Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies. Jane has been advising businesses for more than 25 years, focusing on helping them modernise their approach to workplace learning and to create more relevant development initiatives. In a moment I will hand over to Jane who will present for around 30 to 40 minutes and then we will have a live Q&A discussion and that will be fed by questions from you in the audience. Submit your questions at any time via the chat page and we will address them at the end unless there is anything particularly pressing in which case I will ask Jane to clarify. We are aiming to finish no later than three o'clock,

so without further ado I will hand over to Jane Hart.
Over to you Jane.

Jane Hart:

Thank you very much Rob for that introduction and thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. It is great to see so many people are in the participant list and I recognise quite a few names there so hello to all of you. As you said Rob, this is a very interesting new topic really and I think one that is going to become increasingly important over the coming years.

So during the session what I want to cover is the rationale of the case for what I am calling employee-led learning and I am going to do that by starting off considering five factors that are impacting the workplace today and what this means for a new role for us, learning about this in the workplace. I am then going to spend most of the time looking at that new role of learning development and by considering ten practical ways that you might consider to empower employee led learning. I am going to take a lot of this material from my recent book which is called, *Learning in the Modern Workplace*. At the end of the session if you are interested I will give you the link where you can find out more about it.

So let's get started and as I said, start by thinking about the case for employee-led learning. What I would like to do is start by giving you a quote from an article that appeared in TechCrunch last year by Carl Messer and he said, 'If you are an employee on Henry Ford's assembly line in Detroit in the 1920s you received a high degree of training and preparation before you ever set foot in the factory. You learnt what your role was and were given all the tools you needed to accomplish your job from day one. From then on your role never changed, you did your part to move the product forward along the assembly line from the day you began until the day you retired 40 or 50 years later. Since those days the business world has

transformed, but the workforce training process hasn't kept up with the pace of change.'

I think Carl has pretty much summarised the situation that we are seeing today and like Carl and many others, really I think this means we now need to adopt brand new practices to support learning in today's workplace. So I am going to start by looking at the five factors that have an impact in the workplace and I think are driving the new approach to workplace learning. Now there has been a lot of talk about the effects of digitisation on the workplace, and this quote from Microsoft for instance, I think summarises it well: 'The exponential growth of digital connectivity, devices and information is driving profound changes in the way we work, all around the world.'

But digitisation is much more than converting paper-based or offline processes into online processes. From what I understand, it actually involves much more than just converting classroom training into e-learning. Or as Microsoft goes on to say, 'In order to survive in this world, companies need to rethink everything from culture to tools and environments.' Again, this means that L&D too needs to rethink their whole approach to workplace learning, their tool culture, their tools and their environment by adopting what I think is a new modern understanding of what it means to learn at work today.

I think the affecting factor I want to consider gives us clues as to what this might look like. Now it is increasingly clear, from this piece of evidence that learning habits are changing. Individuals no longer rely on being trained as the only way to learn the work, many appreciate they learn as they do their work as well as through their interaction with their colleagues, their manager and maybe even their coach. You can see those things listed on the left. They also make significant use of the web, not just to access online courses, but also a variety of

different sources in different formats, particularly video, as well as to build their professional networks or connections from around the world or social networks like Twitter and LinkedIn and so forth. And in doing so we often bypass learning development to solve their learning and performance problems much more quickly and more easily. For L&D this therefore means not trying to maintain that role of learning gatekeeper, nor does it mean trying to be the learning police banning access to anything that hasn't been created by them. I also think it means that beliefs like, 'Our people don't know what to learn,' or 'We can't trust them to learn the right things,' just aren't appropriate anymore. This 'we know best' attitude is really not up to it. In fact, *Towards Maturity – The Learner Voice* report shows that employees like to be in charge of how they learn, with 91% wanting to learn at their own pace and 82% knowing what they need to learn in order to do their job.

Laura Overton founder Towards Maturity commented on the report and said, 'The message is clear that the L&D team must adapt to the needs of colleagues rather than force them to do what L&D wants them to do.' So L&D needs to embrace these changing learning habits. But it doesn't just mean creating modern resources in ways that are more consistent with the way people learn from them, although that is a part of it. It means actively encouraging and supporting individuals to find their own solutions to their learning performance in the way that suits them best. I think this is going to be important for the next reason.

We are now seeing a multi-generational workforce, four generations in the workplace for the very first time. Much has been written about the different attitudes to work and learning that each of these generations and in particular their exposure and use of new technology. But I think rather than stereotyping people on generational grounds,

assuming that a baby boomer will have no interest or experience in social media, whilst a millennial will be a fully web savvy person, or that a baby boomer will prefer classroom course or a millennial would prefer to watch a YouTube video. I think what needs to be recognised is that everyone is different and that a one size fits all and a sheep-dip approach to training is just no longer appropriate. Once again this doesn't mean creating resources in multiple formats to ensure that everyone's preferences are met, that is a pretty impossible task. But rather supporting flexibility and autonomy so that individuals construct their own learning experiences that suit them best.

There is another good reason for this approach too. We are now living in an era of exponential information growth, huge amounts of data are being created every day. What is more, the half-life of a piece of knowledge today is just around five years, in other words knowledge is decaying and stills are going out of date very quickly. In fact, it has been said that a college degree will be out of date before the loan is paid off. So whereas in the past individuals have trained to do their jobs once and this would last them their whole careers, over time as job roles became more sophisticated or new technology and procedures were introduced, training became a full-time operation to keep people knowledgeable to keep them up to date.

But this doesn't mean L&D needs to work even harder creating even more content. There's a finite amount L&D can do, but it means adopting a new approach, one that comes from not trying to do it all themselves and control it all, but recognising that everyone needs to be constantly keeping themselves up to date, learning and developing new skills and expertise in the way that suits them best, encouraged and supported by line managers and learning development partners.

As I said, the learning development role won't be to create more stuff but focus on helping people with new skills many will need to have to learn themselves, and there is of course another influence on this as well. We are seeing the emergence of the gig economy. That is an environment where temporary positions are just commonplace. It means that there is no longer such a thing as a 'job for life'. In fact, for most individuals this means that the mass has a life of jobs, and one estimate is that current students will have more than ten jobs by the time they are 38.

Companies are going to see a growing contingent workforce made up of freelancers, independent professionals and temporary contract workers. In fact, research from Ernst & Young shows that two in five organisations expect to increase their use of the contingent workforce by 2020. This means that people are going to be recruited into the skills to do a job, not recruited and then trained to do a job. So if employees want to stay in a company they therefore need to keep their skills up to date themselves. But in fact, supporting individuals to do just that will actually be beneficial for the organisation as it will reduce the cost of recruitment. So this means helping individuals to organise and manage their own professional sub-development in line with organisation objectives to achieve new levels of performance.

All of this, this introduction here, I think means that we need a new approach to workplace learning, one that focuses on the individual and how they learn at work, and one that I call modern workplace learning. It means doing things differently and doing different things. So as I said, it is not just about providing modern training, designing and delivering modern contents of learning experiences. But it is also about the quality of managing that learning, that is working with managers to help them value and support everyday learning, both individually and in work

teams or groups. It also means employing, empowering employee-led learning, helping individuals take responsibility for their own continuous self-development, and sharing those experiences so the organisation can benefit from them too.

As I said this is all very new work; we focused a lot on the training division, we are moving more into the supportive manager-led learning. But now I think we need to broaden out and think about employee-led learning. So I just have a first poll here to ask you a quick question based on the very minimal of information that I have given you today. How much time are you spending on what might be considered empowering employee-led learning? So Rob, I will hand it over to you so that you can work on the poll.

Rob Moss:

Okay, thanks Jane. Right, so how much time do you currently spend on empowering employee-led learning? There are four options, 'none of the time', 'some of my time', 'a lot of my time' or 'all of my time'. Simply click the radio button next to the line you most agree with and submit and we can take a look at the responses from the audience. We have got around 150 of you dialled in, so I can see that a lot of you have voted already. We will just give that another ten seconds or so to get as many responses as possible. Okay, that's great. Okay, so it looks like we have got 99 responses and there are the results. So the vast majority saying that, 'some of my time is spent on empowering employee-led learning.' Jane, back to you.

Jane Hart:

That is interesting that people are doing it some of the time. Interesting though that nobody is spending all of their time on it and a few people none of the time on it 10%. Let's have a look at some thoughts about what it might mean to you as we go through the rest of this presentation. But I just wanted to show you, give you a summary

really of what I think modern workplace learning means comparing it to what may be a traditional culture.

I think that this means a number of different things. I think in this modern workplace we need the responsibility trend transferred from exclusively L&D's responsibility, someone who designs and delivers and manages training to everyone's responsibility who takes an active part in supporting their own learning and the manager is taking an active part in supporting their teams learning and so forth. The definition that train of learning needs to move from being primarily training to work-wide learning, which recognises that learning happens in many different contexts.

Our late learnings relationship to work changes, it moves from one that considers it's learning then work. In other words, you train somebody before they do a job, learning for and through work in many different ways, and the learning experience gets moved into the one-size-fits-all, sheep-dip approach to a more personal, personally created one, which is relevant and appropriate for any individual. Learning metrics move from focusing on activity to those things like course attendance or completion figures to ones that focus on performance, what changes or new performances are we seeing as a result of learning.

And the L&D service then moves from a command and control service focused on organising managing learning to one that enables and supports all these different ways of learning. For me it is one of the key things, it is about letting go, it is about helping people rather than telling people what to do. And the focus moves from contents development to skills development, particularly the skills to develop self-organised continuous learners. I think this new culture of learning is beginning to take place, but it is obviously not going to happen overnight.

But I want you to look at now some of the steps that you might take, some of the ways forward you might think about considering to do, the move towards a culture which is more about empowering employees to organise and manage much more than learning, and clearly within the time available I am not going to be able to go into any of these in enormous detail. If you are interested in following any of these up than I have written quite a lot about each one of these in my book, so as I say I will give you the link for that at the end.

But I just want to highlight briefly some of the ways that we can change from just putting their creative content to actually giving them power, individuals in the workplace. I think it really starts off by working with managers to help them to see the value. Because the managers are actually going to be the key to it all. They are going to be the key to building a new learning mind-set. And it will mean helping them to understand and promote this in their team and of course traditionally many managers think that the responsibility of learning lies at the L&D department, so if they have a problem they just phone them up and order a course. But they need to recognise and value much more of the learning that takes place every day as people do their jobs. It also means helping managers themselves have a continuous learning mind-set. Showing them how they can role model this, demonstrate how they are continuous learners, and also that they are going to reward continuous learners and that is going to be key if they want this new behaviour to take place.

I think in these early days the amount of sitting down with managers and having those one-to-one conversations, it is not going to be something you want to force every manager to do. There will be many that are sympathetic and supportive to this new approach and they are the people who you would want to start to work with. One certainly doesn't want to start with loads of resistance to

new ideas; you can deal with them later. So find the people who are going to work with you, to understand this new of learning and your role then is going to be much more advisory and supportive rather than bore dictators.

Of course part of that advice is, 'Well what can they do to start to put this practically into operation?' I think one of the first things they can do is to think about recruiting for what is called 'learnability'. Now we have seen what are needed are employees to take responsibility for driving their own continuous development, that employees think about the skills they need to develop now and in the future. And for a number of forward-looking organisations, continuous learning does lie at the centre of their company culture. Companies like Google and Ernst & Young, for example, are now looking for learnability when recruiting employees. Eric Schmidt from Google for instance is actually looking for learning animals, people who are naturally curious and inquisitive and who are generally interested in acquiring new knowledge.

So as most interviews are competency-based, assessing what the individuals can do now. I think one way forward is to focus more on learnability asking the individual what he or she is doing to keep up to date and what evidence they have to demonstrate it. So by employing learning animals that person will have high learnability skills, will mean that they are going to be far less reliant on being spoon-fed training and are able to do much more for themselves. I am wondering if any of your organisations you are recruiting for learnability and if so what kind of questions you are asking. It would be interesting to hear, if you have got those in the chat.

Because when it comes to existing employees, particularly those who currently don't exhibit high levels of learnability, it is about helping them to understand the value of continuous learning. Many

people will probably expect their company to teach them any new skill they need to have to do their job. But they are going to need to understand that this situation is not going to exist forever and it means taking some more responsibility for themselves. In particular, it means explaining a, 'What's in it for me?', that continuous self-development is not just something for the organisations sake, but for their own sake too. In other words, if they are employable and marketable they will need to demonstrate they are continuously learning and in doing so in the organisation they will also be rewarded for it, by a continued employment or even promotion. So broadly it will be about nurturing and supporting individuals to feel that they can take on this new idea of continuous learning.

One of the ways that you can start with that is to help employees learn from their everyday work experiences. I think most people recognise now that this happens all the time. Sometimes it is a conscious experience where they are aware that they are learning something, at other times it can happen subconsciously, like they are not even aware of it. But of course, as you know, learning from experience is very important.

But John Dewey said that we don't learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on experience. For individual teams and organisations, how much we learn from our past is critical for our improvement and future success. So it is not just a matter of encouraging people to be aware of their daily experiences, but to reflect on what they have learnt from them too. I am sure you are all aware work-reflected practice is an important activity for many professionals. It is not actually found in many workplaces, and whilst it is true that not many people do take the time to think about their day, Charles Jennings points out, 'Reflective practice itself doesn't just happen, it is a learned process, it requires some degree of

awareness and the facility to critically evaluate experiences, actions and results.' So Charles suggests that is a good starting point for embedding reflection into daily workflow and the way to do that is to think about it on two levels. Individual reflection and then reflection of colleagues and team members. I think one of the ways that you could start is by working with the manager to explore these two levels of reflection and how you can help him or her to imbed them into the working day.

So for example, an individual might spend five or ten minutes at the end of the day writing up their reflections on their day's experiences, and I think there is a good role here to help build as well as maintain this new habit. It is not something that is just going to happen by itself. And when it comes to collective reflection, the manager will need to be encouraged to share, let the team share ideas, experiences, successes and failures with one another. We will talk a bit about that later.

The other example, I think also when we begin to empower employee-led learning, one big piece of the picture involves building new skills, and as I showed you earlier, modern professionals are learning may different ways in different concepts particularly on the web. But in order for any individual to learn effectively in this new world of learning, they need a new set of learning skills. That is not just about how to study online or where do you find courses, but these other things that I have highlighted on this slide here: How to build and maintain and professional network; how to get the most out of online groups from other communities; how to participate in professional events and particular online conferences and other live events and get the most of them; how to locate and subscribe to what I call knowledge flows, constant drip-feeds of information coming through things like blogs and news feeds. But at the same time avoid information overload and as well

connect the dots between the random pieces of information that they are revealing. As well as trying to define, validate and use external resources.

There is going to be a big push here towards helping people building these new skills. This is going to be key, but it is not going to come not through [unclear – 0:26:55:2] or e-learning courses, but by using modern approaches to do that. For example, things like running a learning campaign to expose them to new ideas, using a variety of resources so that individuals can tap into as appropriate. More tasks and challenges for them to work on, things they don't already know. Again, particular things that they need to work on, not telling them they have to do it in a very prescribed way. It might even involve small groups learning to share ideas and experiences. But in order to make the most of out the new world of learning many people are going to need to acquire these new skills.

But simply encouraging self-organised learning isn't going to be enough to really change the organisational culture. I think to do that it means making sure that self-organised learning is a key part of your organisational learning strategy. This means a number of things. To do that effectively it involves individuals creating their own employee development plans where they set their own professional goals. As I have said, aligned with jobs teams and organisational approach objectives. Thinking about where their new roles or skills are going to lead and the skills they are going to need to continue in those jobs. It involves helping them to identify the resources and activities that people are best suited to them to achieve their goals. Perhaps with the focus on using more free web data resources rather than doing it in a contrived way. It means recording and evidencing their own progress and performance themselves, rather than centrally. It means sharing

development plans as well as significant learning and achievements. To enable the organisation to benefit from the new knowledge and skills.

But along with this, what would also be required is some sort of provision of protected learning time. When it comes to learning, as we know, many people have good intentions about the things that they are going to do, but then the demands of the day job kick in. So I think if an organisation truly believes in continuous learning that really is at the core of their philosophy, it means giving people time to do it. So for instance, if an organisation offers say just 30 minutes protected time a day to an individual to work on their goal, this would ensure that individual free learning and the continuous process and the value of it for the organisation and for themselves. It also would be important for them to manage their own time, decide when they spend that daily quota of time or build it up during the week to provide the upmost flexibility. Actually if you think about it, just 30 minutes a day over a year adds up to around 100 learning hours, which is the equivalent to about twelve conventional training days. So it really is a very powerful way of helping people learn in the way that they want to do it themselves. So I think there is a great goal here to help to set up and assist individuals and managers with their self-organised and self-managed learning. Not just something that they have to get on and do on their own, there is a big opportunity just to get stuck in and help in this area.

Alongside this I think it also means promoting personal learning systems. Now the LMS has for quite a while now been seen as a primary system in organisations that can track and manage employee learning centrally. Whereas LMS has an important part to play in recording and tracking maybe mandatory and compliance training, I don't believe it is appropriate to try and track everything everyone learns. What is much more appropriate

is for an individual to establish their own personal learning systems where they own their own learning and maintain that portfolio of evidence. Now there are a few systems on the market at the moment that do this kind of thing and for those people with high learnability skills, that is what they tend to use the tools like OneNote and Evernote to capture reflections.

I wanted to mention one platform that I have seen that does offer this functionality and that is something called PebblePad, and what it does, it offers the ability to an individual to create a privately controlled personal learning space. But more than this it provides a whole set of templates to support an individual's learning, so an action plan for setting professional goals, a structure reflected template for recording and reflecting experiences. Wherever they happen, in the classroom, online, in the conference, wherever it may be. There is also this mobile app which makes it very easy for individuals to use those templates to record their experiences or take photos or whatever on the go which they can then send back to their personal learning space. Everything by default is private to them or they can share it with whoever they want to, their managers or other people, their network or whoever it might be.

I think employing some sort of system like this or encouraging a system like this does actually mean that there are a number of advantages. First of all, it sets a clear message about the importance of individually controlled self-organised learning and it took that personal stage right at the centre of organisational development and it ensured that learning is integrated from beyond the workplace, and it moved that focus away from tracking activity to tracking performance changes by the managers. Actually when you look at PebblePad it is a win-win for both the organisation and the individual, because the individual phase is portable. It can

actually detach from one organisation and re-attach to another, so that means the individual can continue to build on their professional development as they move from job to job. The organisation will benefit from the wealth of experience that these employees are building over time. But it is a big new mind-set change, I think, to adopt something like this. So I would be interested to see if anybody is thinking of doing something like this, because it means a real rethink of those tools that learning technology is all about.

Of course, ultimately it is not just about employees doing things themselves. It is about sharing what they have learnt with their work teams and even the wider organisation. The big role here to help a team do this so they can learn from one another, the natural part of everyday working. Of course, it requires good social skills to help a team do this. It is not a matter of just telling people to go social, it is actually showing them what it means to be social. It means perhaps working with small groups, helping them to consider what to share, how to add value and how to avoid over-sharing and generally understanding the importance of sharing in terms of not only their own self-development but the development of the team. As I have said, there is a good opportunity for L&D professionals to move into these more facilitative roles, supporting, building experiences across the whole team.

You can go even wider than that. You have a role sharing more widely in the organisation by facilitating what I call sharing a work event, and once you have established this self-organised learning culture there is now a big opportunity to bring people together or at least to coordinate the bringing of people together to share their work. Which would probably be the outcome of some professional self-organised professional development initiative during a networking session. So they are not just confined to their own teams,

but they could be done in more informal situations, sharing with the rest of the organisation. Maybe they could be done in the form of more networking types of activities, where people come back to learning, lightening talks or key speaking events or perhaps even facilitating larger events like company unconferences where individuals can share and discuss their work in more informal ways. This shows that it is not about just the individual learning from him or herself, but actually helping the organisation benefit from this much wider experience now that everybody is having.

But finally I suppose if you want to establish employee led learning, then there is going to be another opportunity to respond to specific needs and this is why I think that there is an opportunity to create what I call a learning help desk or a learning concierge service. What this modern learning help desk does is it provides a bespoke service to employees to help them with a wide range of learning and performance issues. You feed staff more by skilled learning advisors, so they are going to have roles that will do things like this is going to help address *ad hoc* performance problems. So individual ones which perhaps would traditionally be solved by sending them on a course helping them to understand what best suits them to do in the context of their work. You could help them set up those employee development plans, helping them diagnose their own learning needs or considering where their job might lead in the future and what new skills they are going to need to keep up to date with their job, helping them with their professional goals, and align their business goals. It could help them understand their own learning preferences and determine what learning strategies and resources best suit them. It is about identifying new ways to evidence performance. So how can I show what I can now do, it won't be much of showing what I have learnt,

but what I can do now as a result of my self-development?

I don't think there is any issue because people work through their own personal goals, therefore their activities won't be judged on the number of people they put through courses or booked on e-learning courses or whatever it is. It will be judged on the success of how self-organised learning converts into improvements in jobs, team and organisational performance.

I really have covered an awful lot of stuff here. I have seen this happening in organisations around the world in different ways. I am wondering how you are interested in how this really works. So my last call really I would be interested to see now based on the some of the ideas I have talked about this afternoon, is how much time would you like to spend on this kind of activity. Not what you currently spend, but how much you would like to spend. Rob, do you want to?

Rob Moss:

Indeed, thank you Jane, lots of questions coming as well and I can see that people are voting in the poll already. So this is how much time you would like to spend on empowering employee-led learning. I am pleased to see that so far no one has voted for 'none of my time'. We have got most people having voted now, so I will just give it a few more seconds and then we will have a look. So, Jane a lot of people saying, 'a lot of my time', about 60%, 9% saying 'all of my time'. Back to you.

Jane Hart:

Thanks Rob. I have jotted down the figures from the first poll which was, 'How much do you currently spend?' The big one was 71% on 'some of the time' and that has dropped down now to about 31%, so it moved up to 60% now 'I like to spend a lot of my time on this'. So, I think this is great news because it shows there is the interest and desire to move on into that. And as I said before nobody said they want to spend all of their

time on it, 8% are actually considering spending all of their time on it. I think that does show that many people here on the call at least recognise the importance and value of it and want to spend more time on it. So I think that is jolly good news because as I said it is not about trying to do everything all at once. At least if you have the interest and desire to move things in those directions we are actually all going to be working together in the right place.

So before I hand over to you for a Q&A then Rob, I will just pop up on the screen the link to my book if anybody is interested to look at it further. I know looking at the list a number of people have done it already, but if you haven't if you go through that link you can find more about it and as I have said I have covered very briefly here some of the high level things that I think it means moving away from perhaps, creating stuff to much more supporting managers, supporting individuals in very different ways. Of course something that I have not really been able to talk about is actually what it means to skills the L&D professions, like what is the implications for everybody concerned, but I am suspecting that those are going to come up in the questions. So I will hand it over to you now then to pick up any questions that you have spotted.

Rob Moss:

Thank you Jane, a really great talk full of lots of practical tips as well. We have got at least twenty questions or twenty comments. I did prompt people to try and think of blockers, the sort of thing that might be stopping them from doing some of the things that you were talking about, so we have got quite a few ideas there in terms of the things that get in the way.

Let's have a look at some of the questions, and I will go back to one of the early questions. I guess obviously that some of these questions overlap. Julia was one of the first people to point out around the fact that people in her organisation still

expect to be spoon-fed. I am sure you have come across this before Jane.

Jane Hart:

Yes, as I said earlier many people do expect to come into the organisation and expect to be trained to do their job. But there are also a lot of people who don't necessarily need to be spoon-fed and perhaps a good place to start is exactly with those people. By making it a more voluntary activity to start with, not forcing it upon everybody. I don't think forcing anything on anybody works very well. But opening it up to people who want to do this. As I say if you reward these kind of activities then other people will see the benefits because as those people remain in the organisation or are promoted in the organisation because they are doing much more for themselves. I think it sends out a message to those who just want to be spoon-fed. There will be obviously a need to continue to spoon-feed certain individuals, but I am sure there are many others who you could just find and tap into those and get some of your champions if you like and certainly managers who support these activities that you are not going to be able to change everybody's mind-sets overnight, but you need to start with the people who want to work with you on these kinds of areas.

Rob Moss:

Okay, great. I guess that touches on a few of the other questions that have come in around how you encourage managers to take this seriously and not just managers, but also the senior leadership team. Would you recommend a launch of an activity that you put out on the internet and on e-mail to try to encourage people to start to think different, almost like a campaign?

Jane Hart:

I think it is going to be a number of different activities. It is going to be in the first instance talking to people, talking to managers, finding those managers who do see the future as differently. There are certainly many that think that

is L&D's job. As I say there are individuals who want to spoon-feed that will change as well. What is happening to the ones who do see things differently, who do understand the value of data. We are not having to try and convince all of these people, there are so many people out there that think like this. L&D thinks there is a problem out there, there is perhaps a bigger problem than perhaps you can see but you just need to find the people who really think differently and work with them.

Don't make it a great big push, keep it fairly quiet and in my experience it spreads much more virally when people are doing things quietly under the radar rather than seeing this is a new initiative, we are going to force everybody to do it. That just doesn't really work. It is about finding the managers and helping them with their teams, and finding the individuals. So there is a whole different level of activities you can do and you can also do much more of a campaign for support learning as you are going through it. There are going to be a number of activities that can be undertaken to support this.

Rob Moss:

Carrie raises a point and I guess this relates to the trend that we read about where people are perhaps moving away from annual appraisals and towards more regular performance check-ins and review conversations and how that relates to employee-led learning. The two to me seem to kind of fit together quite well.

Jane Hart:

Yes, I absolutely agree with you. It is going to be, 'What are your performance problems and how can you best solve them?' L&D might give you some advice, and many people are doing this already. If they have a problem they go out and they solve it for themselves, but if you need more help that is when L&D might be able to provide a more learning advisory role to support these. It is not about just going on a course, but

understanding how these individuals perhaps prefer to work on an issue. Do they do it on their own, or do they do it with others or would they rather do it in a face-to-face situation, go online? Understanding some of their needs as well as their preferences rather than just giving them a one-size-fits-all solution to anything. Certainly it is much more about performance, addressing individual performance problems rather than very generic performance problems.

Rob Moss:

You mentioned fairly early on about the shortening half-life of knowledge and that kind of got me thinking about the modern equivalent of training needs analysis. How do companies ensure their staff are learning about the new things that they need to be learning about quickly?

Jane Hart:

People are doing this for themselves. There are many people out there keeping abreast of what is happening in L&D or marketing or whatever it is. It is just about helping those people bring those ideas in and share them so others recognise them. And really supporting those people who are doing just that, seeing them as really important personnel in the organisation, rather than this top saying, 'You must do this,' and they tell you what you have to learn, so it really turns it around it becomes much more of an individual and sharing initiative rather than a L&D telling you what you have got to keep up on. If people do have difficulties understanding what they need to do, I think this is when it comes to understanding what these new skills are to the future, how they can best go out and find out what is happening in their industry or their profession. A lot of people are doing this already, we are just not giving them the credit, or in many cases they are being banned from doing it, or they are certainly not encouraged to do it. It is simply just changing our whole approach that what you are doing is very valuable, just bring it in and share it with us all.

Rob Moss:

Okay, perfect. When you were talking about reflective practice, we had a little flurry of comments come in from including from Heather around time. I am sure this is one that you hear a lot. How do you recommend people find the time to dedicate to learning?

Jane Hart:

That is good, if the organisation sees continuous learning as a core part of their activities, which I am seeing many organisations now. They have got to put their money where their mouth is and just time for these kind of things. If people are going to have to do this in their own time, it is not going to happen. So, by providing a protected time, as I said at one point, this is the way to do it. Even if it is just for half an hour, twenty minutes, it can make a big difference over time. Even if it just ten minutes of sit down and write up your experiences and share them with a group. Those ten minutes are actually very valuable ten minutes. I repeat again, that if organisations see this as key and it is up to perhaps certain development people to help managers see this as key, then they need to provide the time to do it and not expect it to happen as an extra to their job.

Of course, the day job takes over and you think, 'I haven't got time to do it today,' but there are a lot of people who once they have got into the habit of doing these kinds of things, spending time, ten minutes a day just reflecting on things it becomes such an important part of their day they can't actually go back to a position where they didn't do it. So it does take time to build that habit and so I think that really is a key role for L&D to help people build these new habits. It is not just about telling them they have got to do it, but actually being there on the ground, on the grassroots helping people build these new habits.

Rob Moss:

Okay, and I guess a question from Victoria that's related to that. What are your thoughts on a

learning-based approached compensation, especially in the light of annual appraisals?

Jane Hart:

Well I did talk about rewards, didn't I? I think the reward comes from... Well it is up to the organisation to decide how that reward is, but I think that reward comes in terms of, if you demonstrate what you have been doing all this learning for yourself and your performance has increased and you can now do x, y, z because of it and you can see that that is where your role is going to go and you are preparing for your role. That really should be considered to be an important part of, that is not necessarily a monetary reward, but promotion or other kinds of rewards.

I think you do need to see these new approaches embedded in all the other working practices and not just see learning as some sort of activity that sits out of all working practices. It is going to be an opportunity to really get in and start making some significant impact by bringing learning right into the heart of the business, rather than just seeing it as something you just go and get a course when you need it from time to time or when we have to tell you health and safety. But learning becomes the whole core of the business, continuous learning in particular.

Rob Moss:

Thank you. A question from Vivienne around funding. 'I am finding one of the hardest areas to overcome is funding for training, I am looking towards grants and partnership training swapping. Any comments the idea of securing funding to help new employees in the modern workplace?'

Jane Hart:

Well, as she goes on to say, I am reading it here. The other area is that learning is not always a paid option, she says she likes the idea of short periods of a day mounting up, I haven't thought of it in that way. I think there is so much free out there. Okay, we tend to think that is not invented here so it is not valid, but again that is where the L&D have a

really important part to play. To find and perhaps source some of the good stuff out there, curate it for want of a better word. Bring it in and make it available. So if they are in these areas, this is the kind of stuff that you might find useful. So it hasn't got to be a paid funded thing, there is so much you can do for free. Every day I am learning in these ways and I am not paying a dime to do it, it is all free, everything I have learnt is for free. From the stuff that people share about what they are doing, from all kinds of videos and other resources that I find. Even if you think you want to go on a course, there are loads of books and other things which are free to take. So it doesn't mean actually more money. You can learn an awful lot for very little nowadays.

Rob Moss:

Okay, that's great. Julia asks, if L&D is operating a kind of concierge service you recommend, what is the line manager's role?

Jane Hart:

That is a good question. It is going to be a supportive role to the line manager. Maybe it is the line manager comes first and if he or she can't help with support for the question, that is perhaps when you call in your learning concierge, your learning advisor. It is about working together and finding where the learning advisor can add value to what the manager does. It is going to be very important the manager himself or herself takes on much more of a people development role. So, I don't think it is about picking it up; it is about how they can work together. This is really going to be key, working with individual managers, how can I best support you, what can I do to support you and your people development or help your team with some of these new activities?' So, I don't think it is an either or, I think it is about working together.

Rob Moss:

Okay, fantastic, thank you. We are running out of time now. Just one question from me. When we began, Jane, I mentioned social learning and video based learning and MOOCs. Of all the

technologies we now have at our fingertips what do you feel is the most important one for employees and employers to encourage their employees to take advantage of?

Jane Hart:

I think the most key thing is personal learning tools. I don't know how many of you saw an article that I wrote the other day, *A Modern Professional Learners Toolkit*. Basically it is made up of all the tools around that modern professional slide I showed you earlier on in the session. In other words, it is finding the things that suit you best, not necessarily enterprise tools, but the ones that any individual can find to support their own learning. This is really the key, to some it might be social things like being part of a professional network, learning from others. For some it will be perhaps going on courses. It is going to be up to the individual, but there is so much out there, there are so many tools that can support, technologies that can support learning in many many different ways that I really think it is up to the individual to choose the one from the many of them that suits them best. There is no one technology that is the key one, it is up to the individual's brain, which is to make those decisions and to find things of value, to learn from them and share.

Rob Moss:

Perfect. Thank you so much Jane for your answers to the questions and thanks to everyone for sending in those questions. I am afraid that is all we have time for. Coming up on Personnel Today in the next few weeks we have a webinar on keeping the business case for buying new software. Look out for the launch next month as well of the Personnel Today awards 2017, which are open to entries and you may want to enter the Excellence in Learning and Development category. the deadline for entries is in June, so you have got two or three months to get your entries in. Don't forget also that April sees the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, so we have plenty of advice and resources going live on the site at the moment

to help your organisation prepare for that. It just leaves me to thank my guest speaker, Jane Hart. Thank you Jane for such an engaging talk and for sharing your expertise on this topic, thank you.

Jane Hart:

Thank you Rob for inviting me to speak today and thanks to everybody for their interesting questions, they are all very valid. I am pleased to see that a lot of you want to try and push forward for this, so that is good news. But thanks again Rob.

Rob Moss:

Our pleasure and thank you to Skillsoft for supporting this afternoons webinar and thank you all for joining us and submitting your questions. You have been listening to a Personnel Today webinar in association with Skillsoft. Goodbye.