DRIVING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT SOLUTIONS

Best Practices

Yvon Dalat
Raytheon Professional Services LLC

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Introduction

The 21st century has “industrialised” the learning function: programmes were designed for maximum efficiency and the lowest costs per seat, founded on a common blended curriculum deployed through a centralised Learning Management System (LMS). Historically, these solutions took months to develop and years to deploy to achieve results and the promise of better performance. Business results, though, are not always those expected; studies from recognised industry advisors have reported that large amounts of “scrap learning” (training delivered to students that goes unused) are still being delivered and many organisations are frustrated with their LMS.

This report examines the effectiveness of the learning function and the need to evolve towards managed learning partnerships. It outlines 5 best practices to transform – successfully – learning into effective learning and performance support solutions that deliver measurable, sustainable impact.

Raytheon’s experience with managing commercial accounts around the world – combined with advanced technology, Six Sigma toolset, and programme management strength – reveals how successful organisations can maximise the transformative power of (1) performance analytics, (2) technology and innovation to (3) redefine business learning. (4) Design for Global examines specific requirements for organisations with an international footprint.
Differentiated Approach to Sourcing Learning

Traditionally, the industry differentiates types of learning engagements based on the scope, complexity and length:

- **Out-tasking** is a project-based, non-strategic, transactional business engagement. It occurs when businesses turn over specific projects – rather than the entire learning function – to another organisation. For example: suppliers A, B, and C are tasked with learning design and development projects; suppliers D and E focus on training administration or delivery; another vendor (F) is contracted to deploy and maintain the LMS.

- Conversely, a comprehensive outsourcing engagement transfers the strategy, integration, and execution of the entire learning process to an external Tier 1 provider. This model enables organisations to focus their energy and priorities on their core business and reduce the risks of operating a training department with fixed labour and infrastructure costs.

- Many learning contracts are larger than one-off projects but do not necessarily outsource the entire learning business process. Often, they cover multiple areas of the learning value chain: training administration, courseware development or delivery operations. This hybrid approach between out-tasking and comprehensive outsourcing is a selective outsourcing.

As the number of players in the learning industry increases – together with the complexity of integrating technology – shaping and sourcing the right learning engagements is paramount to ensuring programme success. The fifth best practice described in this paper explores new ways to combine direct sourcing with the role of a learning integration partner; we will describe this new model as our fifth best practice: (5) Managed Learning Partnership.
Learning Operations Challenges

Expertise

Learning, like other functions such as Research & Development (R&D) or Engineering, is frequently confronted with integrating internal expertise with functional expertise from external partners. Addressing this Subject Matter Expert (SME) challenge is necessary to align learning with the business and provide timely access to the right data, product information, specific scenarios, and case studies. As such, it merits thoughtful discussions with the selected learning partners to shape a joint approach. There are a range of approaches to address this challenge upfront:

- At the inception of the programme, transfer the expertise from the customer to the learning partner
- Combine the outsourcing of learning development and delivery functions to allow the Instructional System Designers to rely on instructors for subject matter expertise
- Co-locate the training development team to the Engineering or Sales department, where the desired expertise and data can be easily accessed.

LMS

The next operational challenge is to select, configure, and deploy the right LMS. According to a 2012 survey from Brandon Hall Group\(^1\), 79% of organisations that had an LMS in place were either not satisfied or only somewhat satisfied with their current LMS solution provider. 47% of respondents were currently replacing their LMS, up from 33% of respondents in the previous years. Key sources of frustrations were found in defining the right balance between:

- Costs versus needs to customise the LMS
- Enterprise integration and security versus a SaaS solution
- Complex business requirements versus ease of use for employees
- Infrastructure readiness and compliance versus new mobile and social features

Many of these frustrations can be conquered with meticulous planning, otherwise implementing the LMS will turn into more pain than gain.

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Effectiveness Challenges

Lack of Business Alignment Results in “Scrap Learning”

Studies from trainingindustry.com, Skillsoft, 24/7 Learning and Knowledge-Advisors report that approximately 45% to 55% of the learning content delivered is perceived as “scrap learning”: in other words, approximately half of the learning delivered goes unused, is not relevant to the job, or requires employees to take a course so far ahead of when they need it that they forget what they learned by the time it is actually needed.

Knowledge Retention Versus Desired Behaviour

Amy Chapman, in a presentation on 6 September 2012, reported that employees memorised less and less information, from 75% in 1996 to 10% in 2006. Remembering knowledge is the basic level of Bloom’s taxonomy of learning objectives:

- Knowledge (K) = Remember
- Skills (S) = Understanding how to
- Application (A) = Desired behaviour

Amy Chapman’s study¹ begs the question: how can learning evolve from teaching knowledge to providing the skills to access the right knowledge in the right place when it is needed?

New approaches founded on learning transfer studies and employee engagement argue that Bloom’s taxonomy should be reversed into an A.S.K. model, where the training process starts first with the Application (A), with scenario and case study-based learning, continues with Skill (S) practice, and ends with training how to access the right Knowledge (K) at the point of work.

Measuring Business Outcome

This last challenge is illustrated by a study from Bersin and Associates. Having the ability to measure learning impact remains the Number One goal, mentioned 37% of the time ahead of any other training difficulties. The next two learning challenges are Alignment with Business and Learning Transfer. These findings corroborate the problems described in this section, and the need for integrated learning solutions focused on generating sustainable results.

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HOW SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATIONS APPLY BEST PRACTICES TO LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT

Raytheon Professional Services works with several U.S. and global organisations in a wide range of industries and government. By partnering with Raytheon, clients are typically able to reduce their learning spend by 35% to 40% while increasing training participation by a factor of 2 or 3. Most importantly, Raytheon’s programme teams focus on delivering measurable business results as demonstrated by:

- Driving 100% regulatory compliance and health and safety qualifications for a utilities customer
- Improving a client’s Customer Satisfaction Index by 10%
- Increasing the “likelihood of being recommended” to 93%
- Reducing revisit rates by up to 10%.

Best practices from these programmes include: (1) start with Performance Analytics, (2) introduce leading-edge technology and innovation, (3) redefine business learning, (4) design for global use, and (5) optimise the sourcing of learning engagements.

Start with Performance Analytics

We need to step out of the learning box to redefine business learning. Do not start with learning data, but focus on employee performance and talent management data: understand where your organisation wants to go, articulate desired versus current behaviours, analyse areas of failure that cause the greatest pain, map and measure key business processes that deliver customer value, and capture Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to establish a performance baseline.

Data worth analysing originate from two main areas:

- Performance Data: describing the employee productivity, Customer Satisfaction, sales volume, etc.
- Workforce or Talent Management Data: including attrition, recruitment sources, benefits, employee location, etc.

We call turning data into knowledge and knowledge into intelligence the Business Diagnostics Process: it begins with a robust suite of analytic tools to conduct descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive analytics studies. The Business Diagnostics Process ends with identifying root causes and desired and undesired effects.

The outcomes from performance analytics and root-cause analysis are prioritised causes for low performance, broken into instructional and non-instructional factors, and a set of KPIs to establish the performance baseline.

“Tighter alignment to Services’ metrics enabled us to refocus our learning investment on the activities that will improve [our employees’] performance over time.”

—David Strainick, NCR Global Learning
Introduce Leading-Edge Technology & Innovation

Over the last years, the industry has witnessed an outbreak of innovative approaches to learning that are shattering the traditional instructor-led and online models: gamification, gamified learning or serious games, 70/20/10 learning experience captured in xAPI or TinCan standards, Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality and Wearable Devices, Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS), and more. Bersin actually identified more than 600 learning technology providers.

These new approaches and technologies deserve some attention, but what matters most is to define their respective roles and objectives as an integral part of the solution.

There is a “science behind the blend”:

- Identifying the best media and methodology to address learning objectives
- Integrating them into one cohesive solution focused on what matters most to the business

RPS applies these principles to flawlessly execute large-scale programmes and drive competitive advantage for our customers.

Redefine Business Learning

Morgan McCall, working at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), laid out the original foundations for the 70/20/10 Model for Learning and Development. He revealed in this study that:

- Lessons learned by successful and effective managers are roughly 70% from tough jobs (such as Structured On The Job Training)
- 20% from people
- 10% from courses and reading

This model was later reviewed and validated by Lombardo and Eichinger and Professor Allen Tough. The take-away is that we should “not assume that [traditional] learning is the solution”: it is about redefining learning as a set of activities driving the performance of an employee from new hire to high performer. These activities start during the first days at work (typically with the on-boarding programme) and continue with:

- Placement assessment
- On-boarding
- Qualification or certification programmes
- Performance support tool, supervisor discussions
- Regular performance assessment
- Job rotation, expatriate assignments (if applicable)
- Mentoring
- Coaching

“[RPS] programme should be studied by every learning executive. The programme is incredibly ambitious and touches one of the most business-critical elements in the [Customer] business model. Its success is a testimony to the value of carefully honed best practices for programme analysis, design, implementation, and management.”

—Bersin & Associates
We have identified new ways to achieve organisational innovation:

- **New ways of learning**
  - Leveraging technology and innovation
- **Performance support**
  - 88.7% of 1,546 ISD interviewed by ASTD believe that “there will be a greater emphasis to support learning at the moment of need using Electronic Performance Support System”.
- **Network and community**
  - According to Chesler’s ASTD study, in-person coaching is “still king in supporting the learning function” for 71.9% of all respondents, followed by in-person mentoring with 66.3% of all responses.
- **Diversity through social computing**
  - The same ASTD study reported that 20.2% of the surveyed organisations are currently using Social Networks to support the learning function, and 37.1% are considering using it. Similar results were also found for Podcasts (22.6% currently using, 35.7% considering) and Wikis (22.6% currently using, 33.0% considering).

**Design for Global (for International Organisations)**

A key enabler of a successful global programme rollout is to design a learning and performance support solution with the right global standards, tools, and processes:

- **Establish global content standards to ensure that content is designed for global deployment right from the start:**
  - smaller reusable modules
  - text compression
  - memory and glossary

Common technology and formatting standards across markets allow for easier reuse between markets; they also facilitate the rollout of new technology such as mobile learning and performance support tools.

- **Start with the global design and development processes in the first country of use; alternatively, in the market where the new product is engineered. The responsibility of this “homeroom” region is to capture global requirements during a global analysis process and incorporate them in the original design. This upfront step maximises reuse in subsequent market rollouts.**

- **Design the overall architecture of the global learning system around smaller learning modules:** these building blocks should be small enough to allow for greater reuse, but not too small to be properly “meta-tagged” and discovered.

We found that one lesson addressing one learning objective is a good formula. In addition, this building block can be also used as a Performance Support Object to reinforce the learning retention in the weeks following the learning event.

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1Chesler, Adam (2010) “Instructional System Design: today and the future” Section III, 1,546 respondents, ASTD Research
Deploy common tools and technology. Key global systems include:
- a global courseware repository
- a multi-lingual, rapid-development Learning Content Management System (LCMS)
- a deployment platform allowing the various countries and global learning suppliers to edit, translate, and review existing learning modules
- a ticketing system to capture new learning requests in support of a joint participative governance process.

Optimise the Sourcing of Learning Engagements

RPS has been able to deliver more than 25% savings in training cost by rationalising curriculum by more than 25%. The main levers driving efficiency improvements are:
- Adjusting the learning blend
- Introducing new learning technology
- Optimising the training facility footprint
- Increasing operational efficiency

A comprehensive outsourcing engagement is the most appropriate vehicle to drive change, as the learning partner is responsible for leading the necessary transformation and demonstrating a measurable impact on the business performance.

The Managed Learning Partnership engagement model is an alternative form of outsourcing: the Customer tasks a single Tier 1 learning partner with the overall integration responsibility but retains specific areas of expertise and Off-The-Shelf content or learning system “widgets” from Tier 2 providers. This hybrid model works best when the learning partner brings:
- Experience in programme integration and risk management
- Analytics, technology and innovation expertise
- Demonstrated ability to operate a joint governance process
- Scale and financial strengths
- A track record and brand associated with meeting commitment and delivering results

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Figure 1: A. B. C. and D. represent various Learning Suppliers
CUSTOMER CASE STUDY: AT A GLANCE

Challenges

The customer needed to address the following three business learning challenges:

- Training costs and efficiency
  A single, central training location drove up travel expenses for over 90% of the learners; 90% of the training volume was delivered by Instructors

- Time to competency
  New Hires reached competency after a 20-week on-boarding programme that covered nearly 60 areas of failure, over 400 related causes, and nearly 100 repair types

- Service quality
  High revisit rate drove unnecessary efforts and parts expenses

Solution

We leveraged Analytics, Technology and Innovation to reinvent their learning programme. Starting mid-2012, we devised a new strategic learning solution founded on: (1) a strong collaborative governance process; (2) curriculum analysis and redesign; (3) performance analytics; and (4) blended learning technology and innovation to reinvent the development and delivery of our clients’ service learning.

- Participative Governance
  We established a robust and collaborative learning governance process focused on the following three questions:
  – What are the business priorities and challenges? How aligned are our learning strategy and tactics?
  – What is the field telling us? Are we listening to the learners and their supervisors?
  – What are the data telling us?

- Performance Analytics
  We mined and analysed data from 860,000 work orders, including areas of repairs, root causes, actual repairs, and revisit rates for each. This enabled us to identify the most frequent areas of repairs, most frequent causes, and most effective repairs. These analytics revealed that:
  – 98% of the work orders were covered by the 20 most frequent areas of failure
  – Similarly, the top 20 causes represented 50% of all work orders
  – 98% of the work orders were actually covered by the top 20 repairs

  These radical discoveries resulted in a new strategy refocusing the design, development and delivery of service learning.

- Blended curriculum analysis, compression and redesign
  We applied our analysis process to dissect, compress and re-blend the New Hire on-boarding curriculum; our goal was to reduce the time-to-competency and the number of trips to the central training location.
Transform Learning into a Managed Learning Partnership Delivering Measurable Improvement

- **Technology and innovation**
  
  We assisted our client with launching a new LMS infrastructure. As a result of the curriculum redesign, we expanded the blend and developed a new performance support tool. By leveraging data from the analytics studies, this web-based tool – available on mobile, laptop and desktop – enables the learners to easily select the appropriate areas of repair (from the most frequent list) and related root causes to access a list of most effective repairs.

**Results**

By introducing groundbreaking performance analytics, technology and innovation, RPS reinvented how our clients’ employees consume, engage with, and leverage learning in their everyday lives. The new strategy produced the following business impact and benefits:

- **Field Feedback**
  
  Field evaluation of learning transfer scored 4.3 out 5. This validated that the learner population has fully accepted the new approach and change to blended learning

- **Efficiency**
  
  We recorded a 140% increase in learning completions while reducing the annual training-related costs by 17% over the same time period

- **Effectiveness**
  
  Our transformative learning solution enabled us to reduce time-to-competency of New Hires to 8 weeks in 2014 from 20 weeks in 2012: this equals a 60% improvement in the time-to-competency

- **Business Impact**
  
  Studies spanning a period of six months demonstrated a 10% reduction in revisit rates for the targeted areas of failure

- **Industry Recognition**
  
  The programme received 3 awards from hcm HUMAN CAPITAL MEDIA during the 2014 Chief Learning Officer symposium
CONCLUSION

From our experience in multiple industries and domains, we have learned that the traditional approach to learning and development needs to be challenged: new approaches to business learning are about defining a solution founded on analytics, innovation and technology.

Performance analytics help us gain insight into specific business challenges, and technology allows us to deploy innovative solutions that transform how learners consume and adopt new skills (transfer in Figure 3).

Applying the right global standards, tools, and processes enables us to design a learning and performance support solution that is easy to reuse between markets.

New ways of sourcing learning engagements, such as the Managed Learning Partnership model, help foster a stronger collaboration, accelerate innovation globally, and fully reap the benefits of a leveraged, flexible partnership focused on generating measurable business improvements.

Our 21st century solution to measuring learning impact on business delivers award-winning results. For more information about how Raytheon can help your learning organisation drive competitive advantage through effective Learning and Performance Support solutions, please contact us at rps.com.

Figure 2: new approach to Business Learning
About the Author

Yvon Dalat is Director of Key Accounts at Raytheon Professional Services LLC and is responsible for multiple international programmes for Fortune 100 organisations. His expertise encompasses Performance Analytics and Measurement, Programme Communications, Proposal Management, and Global Key Account Management and Learning solutions delivered in 40 countries and 30 languages around the world.

About Raytheon Professional Services LLC

Raytheon Professional Services is a technology and innovation leader specialising in learning & performance support business solutions throughout the world. With a history of innovation spanning 92 years, Raytheon provides analytics-driven, innovative and technology solutions for commercial, oil and gas, healthcare and civil markets; as well as a broad range of support services: business diagnostics, content development and translation, LMS and technology rollout, training administration, global deployment.