

# WORKPLACE LEARNING NO LONGER THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF L&D

In a world of change, we look to people with a vision, experts in their domain that can lead the way. Jane Hart is all about modernizing the workplace. She is an international speaker, editor of the Modern Workplace Magazine and author of many books. Therefore, she is the perfect interviewee to address some of the issues L&D professionals struggle with these days: staying relevant, evolving alongside the rapid technological developments and creating effective training programs, classes and what not. She will also take the stage on August 30<sup>th</sup> during a Summerclass 'Designing & Delivering Modern Training for the Workplace'.

**Your Summerclass will take place in The House of Change, which is quite appropriate as a setting. In your opinion, what is the biggest change trainers and coaches need to make to meet the challenge of the modern business climate?**

Not to feel the need to track, manage and control everything that their people learn – but instead provide them with resources and opportunities to enable them to learn and support them as they do so. It is more important to measure performance outcomes.

Training is no longer enough in the modern workplace.

Everyone needs to take it upon themselves to self-improve and self-develop in the new and evolving world of work where jobs are changing all the time – and where there is no such thing as a job for life.

Furthermore, organizations need workers to be self-sufficient lifelong learners too – that is people who are constantly discovering new things – new ideas, new thinking, new resources – and bring what they learn into the organisation, so that others can benefit from them too. In fact,

this is the only way to build a true “learning culture“ or “learning organisation” – otherwise you simply have a training culture.

As the power of the individual grows, modern employees want more flexibility and autonomy in how they work and learn. We are now in the Age of the Individual.

Whilst many L&D professionals do recognise this, they just don't know how to enable and support continuous independent learning, and more often than not try to force-fit it into the traditional training model – by trying to capture and manage everything in some sort of central enterprise learning management system or “learning platform”. Whereas an enterprise platform might be relevant to keep track of (mandatory) corporate training, it is just not appropriate to use it to try to manage an individual's professional learning.

In other words, the traditional, top down, one-size-fits-all, command-and-control approach to workplace learning – which organizations have been using for more than 100 years – is just not up to the new world of work. What it requires is a new workplace learning model, one that turns everything on its head. I will be happy to talk more about the Employee-centred Learning & Development (ECLD) Model during the summerclass.

**Can you name some tactics, or tips and tricks that never get old?**

Remembering it is all about purpose and motivation of the individuals. They need to see purpose in what they are doing and this will drive their motivation to engage in any learning initiatives.

So, I strongly urge to make your training as effective as possible, with a clear impact on the job. Start by considering what new performance is needed and provide training that meets those needs, rather than considering what people need to learn. Use a performance - rather than training - design and assessment approach like Performance Consulting or Design Thinking.

On our website, [modernworkplacelearning.com](http://modernworkplacelearning.com) you can find a list of 10 reasons to modernize workplace training, each with some pointers how to address the issues.

**Are there any recurring topics that are as important today as they were five years ago? Can you elaborate on that?**

The results of our annual survey show year after year that people see e-learning as one of the least valued ways to learn at work, together with conferences and classroom training.



What does this mean? It means that most of L&D efforts are focused on activities that individuals find of little value. It means it's therefore time to re-focus efforts on those activities that bring more value to individuals – both inside and outside the workplace

But it doesn't mean organising and managing these activities (in the old, traditional ways) but helping individuals to do this for themselves in the ways that suit them best.

**You are the Founder of the Center for Learning & Performance Technologies, which is one of the most visited learning sites on the Web and you invite people to connect with you via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and E-mail. So, it is fair to say you embrace (social) technologies to open the dialogue. How important is technology for Learning & Development and how can people benefit from e-learning?** Social technologies allow people to interact with and learn from one another in ways not possible before. But remember that using social technologies to MAKE people interact with one another is not the way forward.

The traditional way of implementing any new trend or technology – we have seen it with e-learning and the LMS – is to do this top-down. I already mentioned the poor score of e-learning in our survey, so there is clearly something wrong with the implementation of these platforms. Someone or some people decide what tools or platforms are best for use within the organization and these are then purchased, installed and set up for employees to use. They then have to get the employees to use the tools, perhaps even train them to how to do so.

In other words, it is seen in terms of imposing social and collaboration tools on the workforce, compelling them to share and collaborate, and then controlling and tracking what they do share.

However, social media is an important way for L&D to keep up to date themselves with what their peers are doing – quickly, easily and informally – not just something to use in their training.

A more appropriate approach, therefore is to use a supportive bottom-up approach, which is more about supporting those individuals who already are sharing and collaborating with one another and encouraging others to experience the benefits of social working and learning. It is also about recognizing the fact that social learning works best when individuals and teams have a genuine purpose, need or interest to do so, e.g. to deal with a common issue or problem or to support one another – rather than because they are being told or forced to do so.

And furthermore, the ultimate success of the use of social technologies to support collaborative learning and working doesn't lie in the quantity of sharing that takes place which is measured in the number of posts, likes and comments – since that just encourages people to share for sharing's sake and ultimately leads to over-sharing and noise – but in the value that people derive from those shared experiences, which leads to improvements in job, team and organisational performance.

**Final question, Jane. How optimistic (or pessimistic) are you when it comes to the near – and not so near – future of the Learning and Development Professional? Any last pointers for those who are in doubt of their own added value, or words of encouragement to attend your summerclass?**



Organizations do already recognise that to deal with a fast-changing world they now need to value “learning agility” or “learnability” – that is the capacity to keep learning and developing new skills and expertise, even if they are not obviously linked to one's current job.

In a Harvard Business review article, which is titled “It's the company's job to help people learn”, Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Mara Swan make three recommendations for managers to foster learnability in the workplace: select for it, nurture it, and reward it.

In her column “How leaders face the future of work”, Lynda Gratton explains that leaders need to actively champion the learning agenda, by making their involvement in learning initiatives a priority, and by role-modeling adult learning through their own development activities. As I said earlier, it is as clear as day that workplace learning is no longer the sole responsibility of L&D - it's now up to everyone.

A growing number in L&D get this and are pushing forward, others are scared of the future and resisting change – but things will have to change. So the more people that understand what needs to be done, the better. It is a big task that lies ahead, but I am sure that we can do it. Although many modern professionals recognise they are constantly learning from a multitude of sources as a natural way of life, there are others who think that workplace learning is all about being trained. So, when it comes to learning in the modern workplace, the first step will involve helping both managers and employees acquire a new mindset about what this means in practice – and how the learning function can help them.

Modern Workplace Learning is more than designing and delivering training, but where it is appropriate – there is a lot of scope for doing things in new and more relevant ways. In the summerclass we'll consider what that might look like. ■



**Robin Leemans** is Marketing Communications Specialist for VOV lerend netwerk, working on his debut novel in the off hours. When you meet him, talk to him about literature, fitness and his two beautiful daughters. You will not be sorry.