

MODERN WORKPLACE LEARNING, SOME PROFESSIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

Interview with Jane Hart

With the release of her new book in October 'Modern Workplace Learning' we had the opportunity to interview Jane Hart, an International Specialist on modern approaches to workplace learning.

**L&D
TALKS**

Food for thought

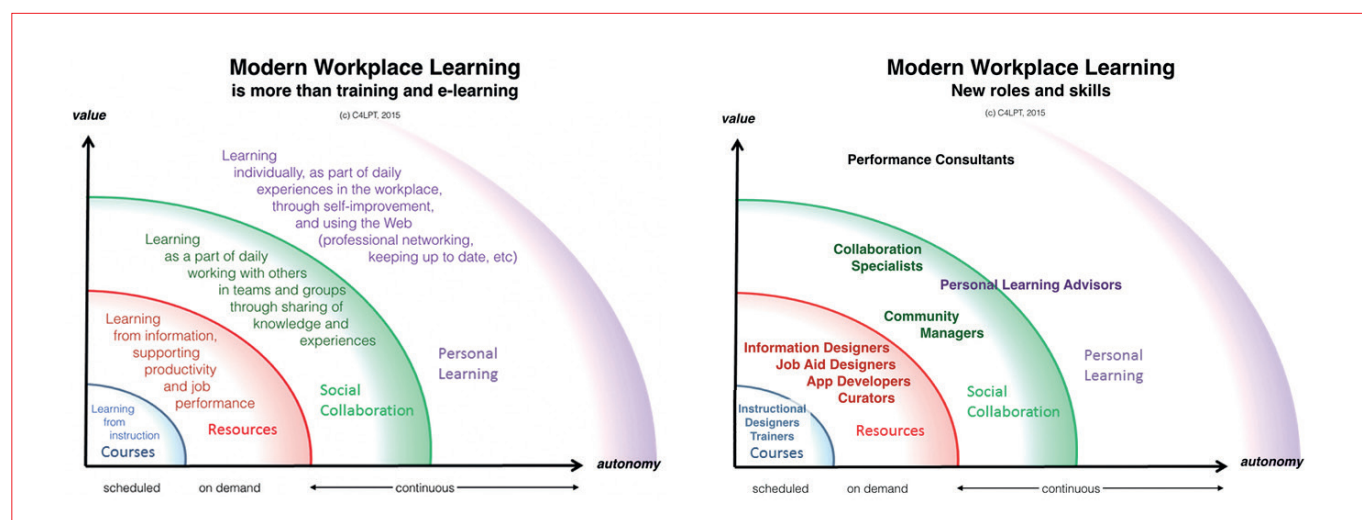
Hello Jane, thank you for taking the time to answer some of the question we have.

When reading parts of your new book it seems to us that the role in L&D – Learning and Development – and the role of trainers is evolving more towards a coaching role?

"Yes, the role of L&D is absolutely evolving and expanding in many different directions.

I wrote briefly about this in my post that the modern L&D department requires other skills than instructional design

In the workplace we don't just learn from instruction, i.e. by being taught in classroom training or online courses. We learn in many different ways – from information, from working with our teams as well as through our own experiences in doing our jobs. In fact most of the way we learn in the workplace happens in these non-taught ways.



"Looking at the models above you see that Instructional Design is therefore not the right approach for helping people with all these other ways of learning; it's not about designing learning for them, but helping people to learn for themselves as they do their jobs, and share their knowledge and experiences with one another.

In the new world of workplace learning, instructional design is only one skill. It requires a range of other new roles and skills. Not everyone will need to have all these skills, but there will be a need for specialists in each of these areas.

L&D departments who think workplace learning is all about instructional design, will paint themselves into the training corner, as others in the organization take on these new roles to support the real learning that happens in their organization."



In your previous book 'The Social Learning' you write 'Learning as much as possible has more result via interacting with peers instead of listening to internal experts'. What exact is the added value of peers instead of experts? Are experts still indispensable?

"So-called "experts" may have domain knowledge, but everyone has something to share on a topic or domain. They have their own questions, their own experiences, their own ideas that are worth sharing. All this is just as important and valuable as the expert's opinion. After all, the world is changing, so things are changing all the time."

Should experts follow 'policy-rules', or rely on their own judgment to share information with others on the ESN-Enterprise Social Network?

"Those who are familiar with the Social Web are not used to rules and regulations so it is likely to have a detrimental effect. The more rules and regulations you put in place, the less likely discussion will be stimulated. Those who are not used to sharing, may need guidance and advice on how/what to share - not rules about what NOT to share."

How can this sharing be done professionally and how can it be supported by us: 'not just delivering content, but helping people to learn as much as possible'

"This is a huge topic which I cover in a major section of my new book. It certainly requires a very different approach for L&D – no longer designing and delivering ad hoc experiences FOR people, but helping the manager and his/her team to extract the learning from their daily work experiences."

Flex-working on several locations creates a new position within the company. YouTube-like video's and communities on the Enterprise Social Platform can strengthen the Social Learning. What else can be done with flex-working-people to share and learn more?

"They need to see the ESN – Enterprise Social Network – as THE place to underpin their work – not as a separate activity. In my book I provide some examples of how to help and support helping them use their ESN as a part of daily work."

Reduce the quantity of effort, time and money on training and E-learning. Helping people to create their own job aids and to share them. Both implicate a coaching role from L&D and a tool so people are able to share video's, pictures, text, diagrams, ...

"Yes, L&D's role might involve 'advising' and supporting this activity – although many will be quite capable of just picking up their phone and shooting a video – it will be about providing the best type and level of support that teams require/desire – 'not imposing' training on them. I've set up a MWL – Modern Workplace Learning – Association: for learning professionals to share ideas and thoughts on this."

While their colleagues are flex-workers, it takes new starting employees more time to install a new network. In the past, all colleagues were in the neighborhood and they could easily connect the new one with the most relevant issue-solver. Today this connecting-issue is extreme for new employees but also for existing staff. How can we help them connect again as quickly as possible?

"For L&D it means working with a manager to understand the specific needs of his/her team and how best to help them. There are no one-size fits all situations; it's going to be about providing bespoke support and guidance"

How can we increase PKM - Personal Knowledge Management ?

"L&D needs to help managers as well as individuals to understand what it is and why it is important for every one of us. The business needs to get the WIIFM – What's In It For Me – and that it's important for them in their future work life. It is not an organizational requirement"

We read that content is less interesting, instead, the conversations around it are important! How can conversations increase our learning? Do we not need both: content and the perception?

"It's not an or/or situation. You probably need both. Some people prefer (need) the content and others the conversation. Once again, it is not a one-size fits all situation. We need to be aware of the needs and requirements of individuals and groups to provide the best support we can give them."

Looking at this change in learning, should L&D departments look for different profiles when hiring new people within their OWN department? What mix would you advice to meet the challenge?

"As I mentioned before, different specialist roles will require different skills and background. This mix can be found in several ways. Some will buy in new skills, others may up skill. Skill sharing across the organization is also very useful. "

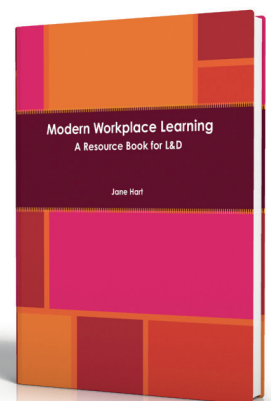
You mention Backchannel Learning like twitter and using the hashtags. We occasionally tweet, but does that really work? Do people learn from this? Often tweets on events are non-informative or incomplete or incomprehensive.

"A backchannel provides ADDITIONAL discussion and ideas around a conference or other event. A backchannel doesn't just have to be on Twitter, you can use your ESN to provide a backchannel too. But note I personally learn every day from what people tweet. Not necessarily from every tweet for sure , but since you are not always aware of what you learn until sometime later, just having exposure to new streams from interesting people is important."

A new style of learning is Gamification? What is your opinion on this?

"My colleague Harold Jarcho sums it up well in his blog of 2013 'Work is already a game'. When it comes to gamification in use of ESN's (leaderboards etc) I think it can lead to over-sharing. What is needed is 'valuable' sharing and not lots of sharing. So quality and not quantity. Research shows gamification does provides positive effects but that these effects are very much dependent on the 'context' in which the gamification is being implemented, as well as on users using it."

Thank you, Jane, for this interview! ■



Ann Le Roy – Account Manager in Charge, Communication, Learning and Development at KBC Bank and Insurances. Passionate about Inspiring People to grow and improve individual, team and organizational performance.

Leni De Goeyse – Training consultant at KBC Bank and Insurances, writer, artist and Creative Coach at Feeling Irie. Always looking for new ways to share knowledge and experience on a Social and Experimental way.

Jane Hart (GB) est oratrice et organisatrice d'une Master Class lors des L&D Talks. Toutes les personnes qui s'inscrivent à la Master Class repartiront avec son nouveau livre intitulé 'Modern Workplace Learning: A Practical Resource for L&D.' Rendez-vous le 8 octobre à Bruxelles avec les autres professionnels en L&D. Voir aussi en page 2 version néerlandais.