

# L&D: A NEVER-ENDING STORY

I had the pleasure of sharing a very enriching moment, during my interview with Jérôme Wargnier - CEO of Alberon Partners - who will be present at the next L&D Talks event on 23 and 24 October 2019 to lead the masterclass "L&D Performance: from promise to proof". A 3-hour interview of which I can only give you 10% and then invite you to come and see him and talk to him in person to fill the remaining 20% and 70% (according to our rule 70-20-10).

**Serge: Jérôme, can you tell us where the name Alberon comes from?**

Jerome: Alberon (or Oberon) is the king of the elves in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream". He has a wonderful power; by placing flower petals on the eyes of a sleeper, he allows him to perceive things with greater clarity. For me, this is the power of training. As I have always been passionate about fantasy, it has become my vocation; helping L&D professionals to have a clear and effective perception of new practices.



**Serge: Who are you in life? How do you describe your mission?**

Jérôme: I am a "proximity optimist". We live in an increasingly complex, changing and sometimes brutal world. Most training professionals have chosen this path out of humanism and are now facing unprecedented challenges. Thanks to my job, I can help them. Optimistic proximity means "Head in the stars and feet on the ground"; I know how to be a dreamer when it comes to surpassing myself, and I am rigorous when it comes to measuring the value of a program. We need to demonstrate that we really deliver the promises we make.

**L&D, "More with Less"?**

Jérôme: This is undoubtedly the new rule of the game. More and more solutions, always more efficient, deployed faster for more people... with greater constraints. This equation finds no solution with the practices and tools of the 20th century. L&D must therefore reinvent itself to support the transformation of organizations. Alberon's mission is to provide a simple and up-to-date vision of these new practices. We help L&D departments use them in order to achieve their objectives. Most of the time, we continue with the design of the first courses to demonstrate their relevance and value.

Then we transfer our know-how to make them autonomous in the design of paths that are both efficient and pleasant; a delicate and fascinating alchemy.

**The 2 ingredients of a good training today?**

Jérôme: L&D is change management! It provides individuals with the means to develop, adapt, surpass themselves and flourish. At collective level, it makes the execution of strategies possible. It is therefore a source of transformation and performance.

If we had to retain only two key factors, I would say they are Meaning and Learning Experience.

To qualify the meaning, there are no ready-made answers... but there are unavoidable questions. Why is this training essential? What is the operational problem? What do we want to observe in six months from now? What would be the consequences if we could not implement this program? And the learner must also benefit from it; why invest time and effort? In other words, we need to address the "What's in It for Me" question for all stakeholders. With a good 'Why' the 'How' is always easier to design.

The learning experience is the second ingredient of good training. To keep its promise, a course must be balanced, pleasant and personalized. This is how we create engagement, emotions and gratification. Learners are made the heroes of their training. You can imagine if, as in a video game, our employees considered learning as a quest by which they will advance their "competence bar". The character they make grow is themselves, in real life.



### Learning Manager as a conductor!

Jérôme: The job of Learning Manager has evolved so much that it is no longer possible to manage all dimensions alone. The challenge now is to build an ecosystem that includes inside experts and service providers. Not to mention the leaders, the HR community or the unions. The Learning Manager must know enough to lead musicians with incredibly varied skills, from team management to negotiation, from business consulting to project management and from design to technologies. Finally, she will increasingly make the difference through her proximity to the business and her interpersonal skills. It is therefore urgent to help Learning Managers to develop these new practices. Actually, the primary targets of L&D are training professionals!

### What about the digital revolution in all this?

Jérôme: I see a lot of very positive things in it. First, we have a more comprehensive arsenal of training formats than before. Technological solutions are more and more "User-Friendly"; techno has made a great effort to get within the reach of educators. Finally, everything is connectable and delivered as a service (SaaS). On the other hand, digital is not a magic wand! I have seen many companies seduced by technological innovations rush headlong, without a clear strategy. Let us not confuse means and goals. If mobile learning is adapted to your populations, then you shouldn't hesitate. If you want to exploit virtual reality because it's trendy, think twice.

A good use of digital technology reinforces the human dimension of training. It makes it possible to keep in touch and share with learners, from kick off to closing of the journey. We will introduce new learning behaviors, then support and advise in the first stages, and finally gradually disappear to leave the learner to use the tools independently. To do this skillfully, you have to ask yourself the right questions again:

"Who are my targets? How do they learn? In which environment? Why is this training important to them?" And after all these answers, we can start working and use technology a little, a lot, passionately, madly or not at all. Let's avoid that our "Plug and Play" solutions turn into "Plug and Pray".

### Neuroscience in training: a potential?

Jerome: We live in an era where we have more and more information about how our brains work and learn. Knowing that emotions or stress play a major role in learning, or that we need to properly calibrate our messages to avoid cognitive saturation, is good! Knowing how to build a training program that meets these principles is another story. We have the theory; let's turn it into actionable practices.

In my training, I always seek the right balance between effort and reward. In concrete terms, this means analyzing and estimating these two dimensions during the design of a curriculum. Whenever we have the right mix, we found a sustainable engagement of learners and significantly higher impacts.

### What is your favorite failure and what did you learn from it?

Jérôme: "Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn". In hindsight, I tell myself that I had the chance not to choose the right path in my studies. I started with finance that didn't suit me... and gave up. Then I had to work. Years later, I resumed my studies with HR. This frustration gave me a thirst for learning that never dried up.

### A message for Stimulearning readers before you come in October?

Jérôme: L&D is changing; it's both exciting and worrying. We must reinvent everything, discover new territories, without losing our purpose. Our mission is to serve the strategy of our organizations and to work for the development of our employees. Let us therefore stay the course, master our fundamentals and be able to innovate with reason L&D is defined by what it makes possible.

## PASSPORT

- ✧ **Role?** Founder and CEO Alberon Partners (2012)
- ✧ **Experience?** Co-founder at Teach on Mars (2013), Consulting Director at CrossKnowledge (2005-2011), Trainer & Coach, DOit (1993-2004)
- ✧ **Education?** Master's Degree in Executive HR at ESSEC Business School, ICF Coach, Master's Degree in Management, CNAM
- ✧ **Favorite Quote?** "You always learn alone, but never without others" Philippe Carré
- ✧ **What does Stimulearning mean to you?** Share with a community of peers to challenge my practice and learn from others. A great opportunity to recharge mind and heart.
- ✧ **Which book or information source do you recommend?** I subscribed to a supplier who offers book summaries, which allows me to read 3 or 4 per week, in all disciplines. I also have a list of blogs and experts that I regularly follow. ■



Après 24 années passées au sein du Groupe Chimique SOLVAY, 10 années en Ressources Humaines en tant que manager dont les 6 dernières en tant que Directeur EMEA du département Learning, **Serge Lanhove** est devenu en juillet 2019 Senior Consultant indépendant. Aujourd'hui, il propose son expertise dans les domaines L&D, OD, Talent, Change Management, Coaching et Well Being.