

6 steps to bridging the gap in your skills development plan

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Despite efforts by many HR and Learning and Development (L&D) managers to address the widening skills gap, a recent study shows that only half of employees consider the training provided by their employers to be useful. Adult learning specialists suggest this is because there is also a gap in learning opportunities available to employees.



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The same study reveals that a whopping 96% of employees want to develop their skills and grow their careers, proving that an effective skills development programme has never been more relevant. To do this, a no-fuss L&D plan focused on building critical competencies and meeting the organisation's objectives is essential.

Step 1: Define your organisation's goals

These are usually initiated by an organisational pain point or challenge. Anything from losing your innovative lead to needing to increase market share. Challenges are always related to the organisation's goals. If not, they're usually not worth fixing. If the organisation's goals are initially unclear, take time to explore them as they will help you determine your training needs.

Organisational goals may be measurable, such as financial performance, revenue, profit, earning growth, and share price, but may also include softer outcomes, such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and culture. We recommend you investigate how the organisation's goals need to be achieved by department, as it will help clarify your training needs.

Step 2: Honest training needs analysis

This is to understand the gap between your employee's current skills and where they need to be to meet your goals. Identify behaviours that will help achieve the set goals identified in Step 1.

That intersection of skills needed to achieve your goals is an accurate way to determine your learning and development

pathways.

Step 3: Prioritise

Once you've identified your learning needs, by department and individual, you have the beginnings of a L&D roadmap. Next, consider what your short- and long-term training needs are, so you can prioritise and build critical skills pathways. At the end of this process, you should be clear on both present and future training needs and have an actionable L&D plan to achieve them.

We suggest prioritising human-centered skills, competencies that will get big wins fast, and skills that are resistant to change, such as analysis, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Step 4: Chose the most appropriate learning solution

Be sure to take your employees needs into account as you select your learning solution. Afterall, they need to learn effectively and stay engaged while still performing at their roles. As you assess the best solution for your organisation, ask the following:

- Is the solution flexible and easy to update?
- Can it be personalised?
- Will it hold learners interest?
- Does it support busy, time-strapped adult learners?
- Can your existing training resources be used?
- Do you need new instructional materials?
- How can you harness technology?
- Can you include rich educational media, like video, animation, and interactive content?
- Does your platform offer granular metrics to show success by individual, course, and organisation?
- What gamification strategies can you include to keep your employees engaged?

Step 5: Develop champions

Without stakeholder backing and learning champions, even the most comprehensive L&D plan can leave you underwhelmed. With buy-in from middle to C-suite management you'll not only create a culture of learning, but also ensure there is shared purpose in the learning experience.

The World Economic Forum anticipates a boost of up to \$6.5tn to the global GDP if organisations address their skills gaps. It's important that the benefits of your L&D programme to the organisation and the individual are clearly communicated across the organisation.

Step 6: Track, measure and optimise

The future of work has never been more dynamic, which is why you need to keep monitoring your learning metrics, identifying new gaps and opportunities and ensuring your employees are completing their personalised learning pathways and meeting their training goals. Your learning plan must be as dynamic as your people, your customers, your business, and the economic landscape.

This simplified plan should help you not only close the skills gap, but also close the L&D gap. It lays a foundation for a simple, yet effective and actionable plan based on the premise that “where the organisation needs to go, is where skills need to be learnt”.

ABOUT MICHAEL GULLAN

Michael Gullan is the founder and CEO of G&G Advocacy. Michael provides strategic consulting to G&G Advocacy's clients at a senior level. Michael is passionate about the science of adult learning in the corporate workplace and has made it his mission to provide innovative and effective e-learning solutions designed to nurture an educated and high-performance workforce in South Africa so we can build a stronger, sustainable economy which creates more jobs and opportunities for society.

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