



*“You know, I often talk or think about Jim Collins’ book ‘Good to Great’, and when I think about talent, it’s not good to great – we need to go from great to insanely great, ludicrously great people. But you need them where the value is.”*

**Sandy Ogg**  
Founder - CEO.works

## Introduction

In Sandy’s quote, he refers to developing ‘ludicrously great people’ - but with a focus on those jobs that contribute significant, economic, organizational **Value**. This poses two challenges - 1) identifying those jobs that create that type of value (recognizing that the target jobs continually evolve) and then 2) modernizing our Development processes so that the company has the agility to engage with the people in these jobs at the right time to develop their expertise to insanely great levels.

Historically, much as been said and written about people as valuable organizational assets, including the importance of “investing in our people.” This has never been more true than it is today. As the transition from an industrial-based to information-based economy has occurred over the last several decades, organizational learning needs have also changed. Today, success in the marketplace depends upon a workforce that is constantly learning and able to adapt to the dynamic environment a global economy brings. Companies who win are able to develop employees capable of consistently applying their knowledge and skills in new ways that focus on the organization’s core business, rather than a strictly defined job role. This creates a powerful differentiator called corporate agility.

A true **Enterprise Learning Strategy** enables corporate agility by aligning learning and development with the key job roles that deliver value for the organizations and optimizing those development experiences. Uncovering the linkages between L&D and these job roles is the essential first step in transforming organizational learning so that it reflects the needs of the present and the future.

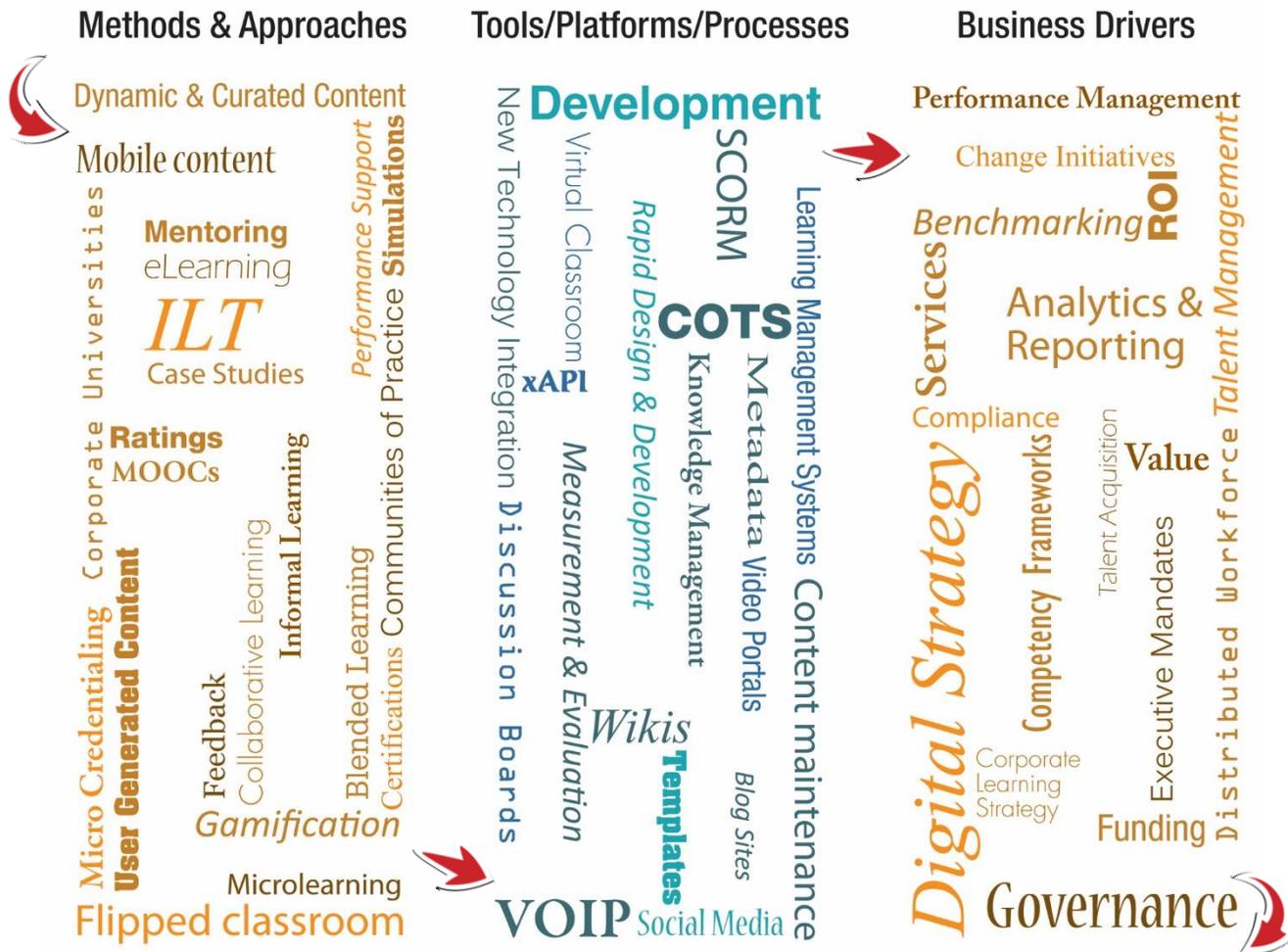
## The Learning Labyrinth: A Business Problem worth Solving

Organizations are facing an explosion of providers and platforms serving fresh content on demand, but the choices are overwhelming and few of them have a unifying strategy to make sense of it all. In addition, Learning organizations have a need to reach out beyond the typical corporate learner to their extended ‘Enterprise’ (Channels, Distributors, Customers, etc.). This significantly expands the size of the learning audience for the business.

This proliferation of technology and audiences has been building for some time and is the result of a complex set of influences - from research on how the brain works and the psychology of learning - to continual technology advancements - to societal

changes in how people communicate and interact with the world - to changes in the way businesses are run.

This has resulted in the emergence of an intricate maze of tools, platforms, approaches, methods and strategies aimed at helping people learn what they need to know to be effective within their organizations. We call this The Learning Labyrinth. Below are some examples of what we are talking about, categorized as Methods/Approaches, Tools/Platforms/Processes, and Business Drivers:



The Learning Labyrinth can be a mess to support and maintain - and it has left many learning leaders with the sense that they need to go somewhere new, and fast, but without knowing definitively which path to take. It's like reaching a point in the road with several forks and you can't get a GPS signal.

Your learners have needs you aren't meeting, and your leadership wants measurable results for their L&D investments. Standing still and not knowing what to do next is not the place to be.

Fortunately, there is a way to navigate through the maze. Before we discuss that, let's take a brief look at how we got here in the first place.

### Why is this happening?

Let's look at some core factors underlying the recent and continuing shifts in the organizational learning landscape.

### **Business Factors**

Organizational learning has matured significantly over the last couple of decades. Senior leaders across industries have discovered some new truths:

#### **1) Truth #1 - Leaders' expectations of Learning and Development (L&D) have changed**

Leaders recognize that Innovation is critical to both survival and growth in the marketplace. The ability to innovate consistently requires flexibility and creativity at all levels of the organization. Learning and Development is a key enabler of these capabilities and, in most cases, repeatedly asks for a 'Seat at the Table'. More and more, they are getting this 'seat'.

L&D is big business and no longer merely a cost center within the HR organization. Learning can and should produce measurable outcomes. As the capabilities of learning technology have increased dramatically over the last two decades, so have the corporate investments necessary to purchase and implement new learning 'systems' (System = People + Process + Technology). Today, many if not most, corporate learning organizations are held accountable to a Profit & Loss Statement and must be able to quantify their contributions to the business.

Significant trends in learning having taken root and are now accepted as best practices. The most important of these trends is a shift in the focus of workplace learning from content and discrete training events to experience and continuous, multi-modal interactions. Josh Bersin refers to this as Continuous Learning. Bersin describes the world of today's corporate learner as "All Media Always On." A world characterized by on-demand content in the form of e-learning, micro-learning, video, social media, and user-generated content consumed via many different devices everywhere, all the time. In this new world, the concepts of formal and informal learning have begun to merge. Sometimes this is represented as Skill Development and Performance Support. Either way - they are BOTH needed and have become simply different pieces of a holistic learning experience.

The feedback from learners across the Enterprise is loud and clear. Employees want things they aren't getting to enable their performance - and going elsewhere for it if not supported by the Learning organization. Early adopters of innovative technology within the organization are pushing forward with pilot projects and content

development, circumventing the centralized learning group. In short, the L&D function is at risk of becoming irrelevant in many organizations or relegated to the Compliance Reporting Unit Duties (CRUD).

## **2) Truth #2 - The employees of today are a far different breed from the past**

Employees view learning as an enabler of speed and performance in their jobs, rather than a vehicle to fulfill pre-defined compliance and knowledge requirements.

Employees entering the workforce today expect to have several jobs/roles and several employers during the course of their career. Learning and development is among the most important benefits of employment. In fact, among Millennials “training and development” is considered the most valuable benefit in their package (KPCB, cited in Bersin).

Expectations of workplace learning more closely mirror how employees learn outside of work. Today, when the average digital consumer has a problem, question or other need for information, what do they do? They grab the closest device and perform a web search, visit a blog site, post a question on social media, or watch a video (or sometimes all of the above!). Engaging learners the same way in the workplace is no longer a “nice to have” it’s a **“must have.”**

Due, in part, to a growing awareness that knowledge and skill development are critical to defining one’s career, building professional networks and generating new opportunities, employees are more actively embracing ownership of their own development activities. This isn’t confined to credits associated with formal learning tracked by the LMS (although that will continue to be an important component), but includes both internal and external sources of content available on demand.

### **Contextual Factors**

#### **1) Content is everywhere, and much of it is free.**

Here’s one view of the types of content available to today’s corporate learners



3. Adults are most interested in learning about subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. The material being taught needs to be focused on a specific issue rather than a general topic (i.e. problem-based versus content-based).

As the body of research on learning from the cognitive sciences continued to grow, constructivist learning theory also emerged with asserts that learning is an active process whereby the learner constructs new knowledge and ideas based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Fundamentally, constructivist learning is rooted in authentic activity and readily lends itself to problem/scenario/case-based strategies and simulated experiences.

More recently, research in neuroscience has spurred innovation in learning and development by linking findings from the hard sciences about how the human brain processes information and prevailing learning theories that have governed learning development activities. So, what are the implications for L&D professionals? Christiaan Vermeleun, CEO of Neuro-Link, explains “All people have different preferences, and it is essential that any learning organization needs to design learning experiences and learning environments that are aligned with how the human mind learns.”

Technology has transformed the way we live and work. The Digital Age is all about being connected, and virtually all aspects of life have been impacted by this rapid and dramatic shift - including learning. George Siemens (2005) has developed the theory of Connectivism, which he describes as “A Learning Theory for the Digital Age.” Building on chaos, network, and complexity and self-organization theories, Connectivism (Siemens, 2005) contends

*Learning is a process that occurs within nebulous environments of shifting core elements - not entirely under the control of the individual. Learning (defined as actionable knowledge) can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on connecting specialized information sets, and the connections that enable us to learn more are more important than our current state of knowing.*

#### Principles of Connectivism

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known

- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

(Siemens, 2005)

Machine Learning is a form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that searches for patterns in data (similar to data mining) and uses them to adjust actions the program takes, such as identifying and delivering content that the data suggests is interesting to the learner, or, more significantly, identifies development activities that are important to develop proficiency in the job (and creating Value for the organization). This allows for personalization of the learner experience which increases both engagement and utility. One ubiquitous example is content delivered to news feeds on social media platforms. The platform uses algorithms to detect what content the user is interested in based on their interactions, and uses that data to deliver more of that kind of content and less content that the user doesn't "use." This has powerful implications for learning in a digital age where time is of the essence and learners are increasingly focused on enabling performance at the point of need.

### Where is it leading?

The confluence of these stimuli is bringing both near-term challenges and long-term opportunities. Organizations that are able to "crack the code" can make the Learning Labyrinth work for rather than against them. This can create deep value for the company by enabling L&D activities that effectively serve the needs of learners and the business simultaneously.

Many organizations are approaching a new problem with old thinking and tools, attempting to use a strategy and infrastructure to deliver a model they were never intended to support. You don't need to jettison what you are doing today in order to embrace the future. The universe is expanding, and so must your thinking.

The old model revolved around a LMS. However, the LMS is best suited to support 'macro-learning' events or systematized learning (like Compliance or Regulatory training). The LMS also plays an important role in managing Certifications, tracking progress, and distributing reports about Learner's activity across the organization - all valuable roles. The explosion of content has now made 'micro-learning' more available and more relevant than before. But most LMS systems don't support micro-

learning. In fact, micro-learning is coming from a LOT of places, which makes curating, managing, and reporting on it a nightmare.

Instead, there is most likely a technology layer that supports both macro-learning and micro-learning, resulting in a better Learner Experience. This brings together all content sources so that the Learner doesn't have to search for them. If this layer then uses AI (or machine learning) to better understand the job role, location, and learning style of the Learner, then this layer can begin prescribing content for the Learner - further simplifying the process. Then, an enterprise search function (across all content sources) allows the user to supplement the prescribed learning with learning that they need for career development, special projects, and other ad hoc needs.

*What does a world-class Enterprise Learning Experience look like?*

The Learning Experience Platform (Bersin by Deloitte, LLP) represents the spectrum of platforms and tools available to today's corporate learner. The challenge for L&D organizations is to leverage these platforms and tools to their maximum impact for individual learners and business needs and goals. This can be done by developing and implementing an Enterprise Learning Strategy that provides a clear rationale for the investments in learning technologies and clear linkage to business goals and expected outcomes.

This platform would leverage web-services (in the form of API's) to connect the various systems, both from a content definition and access perspective as well as a data management perspective.

You would also find a common data repository (or many repositories) that would collect information about the Learner and be able to provide information about the Development status of that person. This could come in the form of a Learning Management Systems (LMS) database OR a Learning Record Store (LRS), or some combination of these.

Reporting against this data (from many sources) is being done through visually-oriented analytics tools. This allows Reporting to be done by a wider audience. These tools also allow for automated, scheduled report delivery as well as dashboards designed to inform the report consumers about business issues (versus just supplying data in rollup tables).

The bottom line is that this 'platform' provides the BEST Learning Experience across the Enterprise (the **Enterprise Learning Experience**) and supports the Learning organization in cultivating better and better learning experiences.



(Bersin by Deloitte LLP)

### How do you get there?

#### rapidLD can help!

Our Services business includes a Content Technology consulting practice centered on the **Enterprise Learning Experience** which has been built to help organizations migrate to the next generation of learning. We help organizations transform their learning function by focusing on four fundamental issues:

- *What are the **business imperatives** that will drive your Learner Experience - Growth? Innovation? Speed of execution? What is the company being stressed with right now?*
- *What should you do to **enable performance** against these business imperatives for the Enterprise Learner while continuing to maximize the value of what you are already doing?*
- *How can you **implement** a new strategy that integrates seamlessly with your existing technology and programs?*
- *How can you **tie your strategy and investments** to clear business goals and **validate its success**?*

We can help you chart a course to address these issues through a series of analysis activities that are consolidated into an **Enterprise Learning Strategy Assessment (ELSA)**.

The first step is to gain a clear understanding of the business imperatives and the job roles that create significant value for the company. This is your “burning platform” which drives a strategy that delivers maximum value.

- 1) Enterprise Learning Goals & Future State Assessment- This assessment uncovers the alignment with company strategy, strategy influencers, and requirements for Learning.
  - This assessment starts with the corporate strategy but should include an understanding of industry pressures, competitors, market conditions and forecasts, as well as other factors which will influence the path that the business takes in the next 12-18 months. This enables the development of a clearly defined Future State of Learning for the organization. This assessment also identifies the key job roles that provide economic and organizational value so that learning resources can be concentrated to maximize the impact and realize value.
  - From this baseline, a set of Enterprise Learning Goals are developed (or refined) to align business goals with the Future State of Learning. These are socialized in the organization so that everyone has an understanding of how they are derived and how the future state will serve them.
  - Bringing together learning constituents enables the learning organization to consolidate requirements, allowing for the most efficient and effective use of content and technology. Then, identifying the most valuable job roles facilitates a laser focus on development activities that will support the organization.

These activities clearly identify **Learning Strategy Goals and Future State of Learning**. After this assessment is completed, and the alignment of Learning Goals to the overarching corporate strategy is understood, the following assessments become primary inputs into the ELSA:

- 2) Learner Experience Content Assessment - This analysis effort is designed to help organizations understand their current capabilities and capability gaps that are needed to support a new Enterprise Learning Experience from a content perspective. This assessment will take on various forms depending on the organization's starting point.
  - The challenge that most organizations have is that content bubbles up from many places because there are many constituents that believe they need content now! There are a myriad set of tools used to develop it. And there are an equal number of systems used to deliver it. Identifying this universe of content, tools, and delivery systems becomes the baseline.
  - This baseline inventory is then used to determine the minimum content, tools, and deployment systems that the learning organization needs to deliver on its mission. This also then defines the People and Tools that are needed to support the requirements. Since this also factors in user

preferences and previous feedback, the best possible solution is identified.

- This baseline provides the pivot point for understanding the gaps in content and delivery systems. These gaps can then be addressed in the Recommendations so that there is a better organizational fit with the content, tools, and delivery systems.

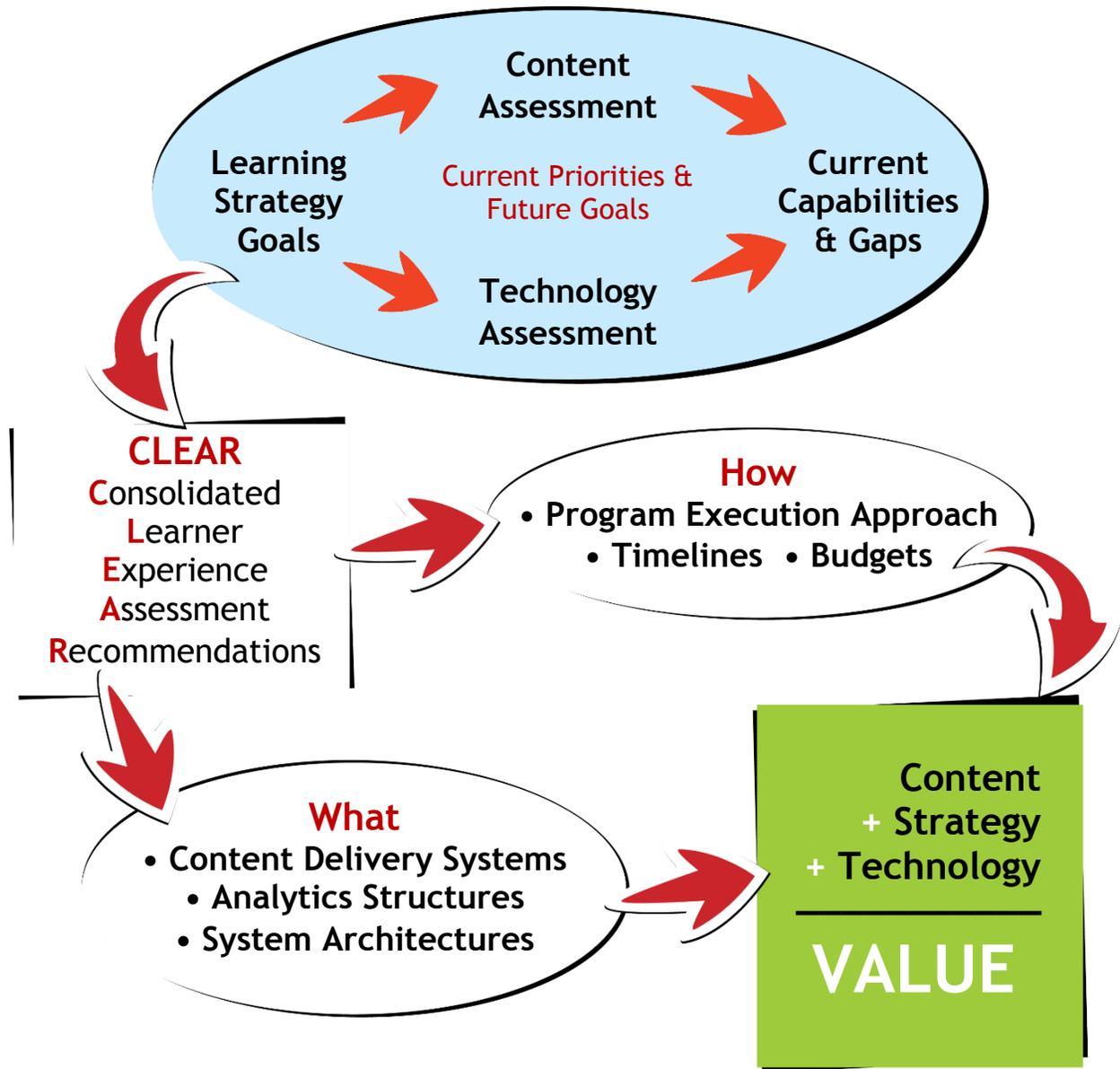
3) Learner Experience Technology Assessment - This analysis effort is designed to identify the fewest technology component options necessary to enable the Future State.

- Learning technology components are often redundant in organizations. Frequently, enterprise solutions are purchased which have a wide array of capability. Business Units, Departments and other groups then take advantage of what is available and develop and deploy additional content or capability on their own. This creates redundancy with the L&D team.
- Surveying these systems, identifying potential capability (if the systems were all upgraded to the 'current' version), and then mapping out a consolidation strategy will not only reduce the number of systems but also reduce complexity of managing them (including data). While consolidation may not always be possible, integrating existing systems can be a strategy to improve the user experience for those consuming content with these systems.
- Consolidation provides an opportunity to significantly reduce the cost of systems (annual licensing, maintenance, and support). This cost savings is not only associated with the native applications but also the database systems that underpin them. Leveraging web-service integrations, organizations can pursue optimized User Experience for their learners.

Once the Content and Technology Assessments are complete, a set of Consolidated Learner Experience Assessment Recommendations (CLEAR) will be provided. This includes content delivery system changes, analytics structures, and system architectures. Recommendations will be made for projects to achieve these changes, including estimated timelines and budgets.

- Complete Comprehensive Systems inventory:
  - Delivery capability
  - Breadth and depth
  - Known and anticipated issues
  - Integration capability
- Complete Comprehensive Support Inventory:
  - Required Roles
  - Required Skills by Role
  - Current People and Skills

rapidLD Enterprise Learning Strategy Assessment (ELSA)



## The Benefits of an Enterprise Learning Experience strategy:

- Develop a strategy that links your investments to a clear business case with measureable outcomes
- Pick the right partners and platforms for your culture and environment, and effectively integrate them into your existing infrastructure
- Transform your learning function through organization and process design, and change management that reflects Enterprise Learning principles and successfully achieves buy-in at all levels of the organization.
- Embed learning as a way of life at your organization!

### Supporting the Enterprise Learning Strategy

rapidLD has deep capability to support both the Content and Technology sides of your business. As your strategic plans take shape at a granular level, we stand ready to assist through a broad spectrum of consulting services.

### **Content & Learning**

Charting a new course requires a firm understanding of both where you are today and where you want to go. The following assessment components can help you get there:

- Informal Learning Maturity: Are you already leveraging informal learning in your strategy? If so, how well are you doing it? If not, are you really ready? We can examine your environment and uncover targeted opportunities to add or enhance enterprise learning specific to curriculum or role.
- Learning Delivery: Do your delivery platforms and modalities support your current and future goals? Get a clear picture of your current state delivery model, how it compares to similar organizations and recommendations to make it best-in-class. Whether it's integrating new tools and platforms or making the current ones work better for you, we'll help you see the whole field.
- Off-the-Shelf (OTS) Curriculum Opportunity: If you are like most learning organizations today, you are being asked to do more with less. You need to produce greater volumes of high-quality learning, FAST... but your content development budgets are shrinking. We analyze your curricula to identify areas where OTS providers can replace or augment existing formal and informal learning content.
- Mobile Readiness: Mobile learning can give businesses multiple opportunities to go beyond just courses and instruction. In fact, the right mobile learning

strategy can provide a competitive advantage - better customer experiences, higher employee engagement, and more productive operations. Our 3-point assessment strategy includes an initial, hour-long structured discussion that will help identify areas where the organization can leverage learning opportunities as they present themselves.

## Technology

Based on the results of your Enterprise Learning Strategy Assessment (ELSA), your rapidLD consultants stand ready to help you design and implement your new strategy through the following service offerings -

- Vendor Selection: There are literally thousands of partners in the learning space which leaves you with a dizzying number of options in any area of expertise where you might need assistance. The rapidLD team knows the key players, and more importantly, how to evaluate whether they are right for **you**. We take a systematic approach to rating and scoring potential partners and provide you with a comprehensive set of recommendations and considerations to help facilitate your decision making process.
  
- Pilot Design and Execution: Implementing a new platform or delivery strategy is serious business. Even seemingly small problems can be costly and significantly damage your learning brand. That's why pilot projects are such a widely accepted best practice. Our team can help you with design and development of these projects - whether you are integrating new informal learning technologies, migrating content from classroom to virtual classroom delivery or implementing a new Learning Content Management System (LCMS). rapidLD can build the project plan, design the solution, develop templates for your team to use, coordinate with third party vendors and provide you with an evaluation plan and summary report when the project is complete.
  
- Workflow and Process Design and Development: Learning content development is a production environment that requires sound workflow and process methodology in order to ensure consistent quality and reliable planning and forecasting. Our consultants have decades of experience building learning in a wide variety of settings. Let us put this breadth and depth of experience to work for you on:
  - End-to-end design and development processes and templates for rapid development
  - Learning organization design to support informal learning or rapid development
  - Design and development processes for informal learning platforms
  - Design, development and deployment workflow processes supporting new delivery models

- Processes to support Integration of off-the-shelf content with your LMS
- Measurement and Evaluation Strategy and Service: Learning has had a seat at the executive leadership table for a while now as most organizations have figured out that it is a real enabler of sustainable success. That's certainly a good thing, but increased attention brings an increased need to understand what the investments in learning are doing to support business drivers and goals. A cohesive measurement and evaluation strategy is absolutely critical to maximizing the value of learning for your organization. rapidLD can assess your needs and design a custom measurement and evaluation strategy that tracks and reports on the key performance indicators (KPIs) that matter to your business. Some ways we are able to do this include:
  - Enterprise Learning Measurement Strategy
  - Learning Delivery ROI Analysis
  - Off-the-Shelf Content Reporting and Analytics services

When it comes to measuring the effectiveness of your programs - both for learners and the organization - one size definitely does not fit all. Our consultants can create a strategy that pulls together a variety of methods and evaluation instruments into a holistic plan. And, if you need help with execution, we stand at the ready to help.

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