



## Kineo Briefing

### Learning Strategy Master Plan

#### Part 2 – Effectiveness

By Mark Harrison

#### Introduction

This is the second part of four Kineo Briefings that look at what you can do to create a truly *learning* organisation.

Kineo consultants have been involved in creating many successful learning strategies and have studied effective implementations all around the world.

The broad lessons we have learnt are captured in these briefings which look at the four main characteristics (identified by ASTD) that are consistently present in the most successful learning organisations.

These are **alignment (to overall organisational goals), effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability**. If you look at them all, you will have a comprehensive, high level plan to deliver a learning strategy that really delivers results.

This briefing builds on what you will have achieved once you have properly aligned your learning strategy to your organisation's vision and goals.

You are now aligned. Now, you now have to deliver. So, how can you ensure all of your initiatives are effective?

Read on and you'll find out.

## Why Effectiveness is so important

If you develop or deliver learning content, you have to be judged against the **effectiveness** of your learning intervention. This effectiveness has to be measured against the short and long-term business strategies. So the logic is that if your learning is not aligned, you can never be truly effective.

This is reflected in ASTD research which shows that

“BEST Award Winning organisations maximise the effectiveness of learning on individual and organisational performance by aligning learning activities with business needs and providing timely access to relevant learning opportunities.”

*ASTD 2005.*

To be effective you have to match agreed learning needs with the right content and the right approach, at the right time.

Combine *effectiveness* and *efficiency* (covered in another Kineo briefing) and you have the key components of Return on Investment. Without effectiveness it will simply be SOI – Savings on Investment. Effectiveness must lead to tangible benefits, which need to be broadcasted to all of the key stakeholders.

On the next pages, we will look at a number of high level recommendations that were recently developed by Mark Harrison of Kineo in consultation with over a hundred learning professionals in the UK.

He conducted the same exercise for the other components (Alignment, Efficiency, and Sustainability) and those recommendations are listed in the other three companion briefings.

At the end of this Kineo Briefing, you'll get a checklist that can help you work out for yourself how effective your learning strategy is in meeting your organisation's goals.

## **1 Find a common definition for effectiveness within the organisation**

This is not as easy as it might seem. But, without a common terminology and clear success criteria, you cannot target your programmes and then measure and communicate their success.

You need to:

- define success at the organisation, team and individual level
- judge effectiveness by the impact on the customer at the centre of the process

## **2 Concentrate on providing what learners need**

Again, it might be obvious but only if you do this, can you make an impact on the ground. It also helps in the learning design process. Too often the content of learning programmes is pitched at engaging and entertaining learners and not at delivering targeted improvements in performance.

You need to:

- In the beginning, define the expected benefits of the programme – then evaluate success against these benefits
- Do needs analyses when you can – this means you deal with the right areas in the right amount of depth

### **3 Provide learning that really engages the learner**

OK, we said engagement shouldn't be the guiding purpose for a learning initiative. But without it, learners will easily find better things to do with their time. In some cases, they may have been reluctant to start the learning in the first place and so you may have to lure them into the whole process and quickly show them it is interesting and of real value to them.

You need to:

- Make learning personal – aim to meet every individual's aims
- Ensure learners get learning the way they need it
- Integrate learning into people's jobs
- Develop learning that involves not just informs the learner
- Make sure what they learn is immediately applied at work by offering just-in-time options
- Present information in the context of realistic working situations
- Use simulations -you can learn well by making mistakes in safe environments

### **4 Improve commitment to learning**

This is a key part of most successful learning strategies. The alignment process should deliver an organisational commitment to improving performance but it has to be felt at an individual level as well. So, you need to concentrate on the commitment of each learner.

You need to:

- Get learners to take more responsibility for their development through learning contracts etc.

- Ensure learning activities are initiated for good reasons (not just for a break from work etc.)
- Use different approaches to appeal to a wide range of learners
- Encourage learners to reflect on their learning experiences through tools like learning logs and best practice sharing

## 5 Develop effective learning support models

The most effective learning initiatives include human support for learners before, during and after the core learning experience. This means when you put together a learning solution you should pay just as much attention to the people surrounding the project as to the learners themselves.

You need to:

- Make responsibilities for everyone very clear with SMART objectives for every programme
- Develop champions in each part of the organisation for each major learning programme
- Encourage buddying and peer to peer support
- Ensure that the return from a training experience is positive and fully supported

## 6 Measure the effectiveness of learning

Until recently, learning and development didn't need to prove its effectiveness and so this discipline has been neglected in many training initiatives. Times are changing and, though many do not necessarily have to prove cast iron business cases (based on return on investment analysis), you have to promise tangible benefits to get the budgets and commitment you need. This means you need to ensure effectiveness is measured both prior to and after learning takes place, to back up your original business case.

You need to:

- Agree standard data values with your financial people and align with these metrics
- Use performance indicator and balanced scorecard data to measure effectiveness
- Measure what learners knew before and after programmes
- Find out the sort of things that stakeholders would most like to hear (as regards end results)
- Treat learners consumers – ask if a programme helped and why
- Treat learning as a product – refine by constantly using surveys and focus groups
- Plan evaluation at the same time as designing the programmes
- Embed assessment in programmes – learners should be continuously demonstrating their knowledge and skills
- Be selective about which learning initiatives are actually measured to Level 4 (Organisational Impact) – mix hard and soft data
- See how many business units are now beginning to ask for help and request more learning

## 7 Communicate the effectiveness of learning initiatives

So, you've got evidence of the success of your learning initiatives. Now, you have to let people know about it. You have to spread the news to the key stakeholders and generally wear your marketing hat.

You need to:

- Manage your communication in line with the organisational goals – present your results the way business areas present theirs (using structure of your organisation's Annual Report perhaps?)
- Capture success stories and always bring them into your communications. As they say, it's only when you are fed up saying the same thing time and time again will your message finally get through to the people who need to hear it.
- Plan what 'sound-bites' you want stakeholders to remember and repeat

## Your Effectiveness Checklist

1	Find a common definition for effectiveness within the organisation	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
1.1	Define success at the organisation, team and individual level			
1.2	Judge effectiveness by the impact on the customer at the centre of the process			
2	Concentrate on providing what learners need	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
2.1	In the beginning, define the expected benefits of the programme – then evaluate success against these benefits			
2.2	Do needs analyses when you can – this means you deal with the right areas in the right amount of depth			

3	Provide learning that really engages the learner	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
3.1	Make learning personal – aim to meet every individual's aims			
3.2	Ensure learners get learning the way they need it			
3.3	Integrate learning into people's jobs			
3.4	Develop learning that involves not just informs the learner			
3.5	Make sure what they learn is immediately applied at work by offering just-in-time options			
3.6	Present information in the context of realistic working situations			
3.9	Use simulations -you can learn well by making mistakes in safe environments			

4	Improve commitment to learning	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
4.1	Get learners to take more responsibility for their development through learning contracts etc.			
4.2	Ensure learning activities are initiated for good reasons (not just for a break from work etc.)			
4.3	Use different approaches to appeal to a wide range of learners			
4.4	Encourage learners to reflect on their learning experiences through tools like learning logs and best practice sharing			

5	Develop effective learning support models	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
5.1	Make responsibilities for everyone very clear with SMART objectives for every programme			
5.2	Develop champions in each part of the organisation for each major learning programme			
5.3	Encourage buddying and peer to peer support			
5.4	Ensure that the return from a training experience is positive and fully supported			

6	Measure the effectiveness of learning	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
6.1	Agree standard data values with your financial people and align with these metrics			
6.2	Use performance indicator and balanced scorecard data to measure effectiveness			
6.3	Measure what learners knew before and after programmes			
6.4	Find out the sort of things that stakeholders would most like to hear (as regards end results)			
6.5	Treat learners consumers – ask if a programme helped and why			
6.6	Treat learning as a product – refine by constantly using surveys and focus groups			
6.7	Plan evaluation at the same time as designing the programmes			
6.8	Embed assessment in programmes – learners should be continuously demonstrating their knowledge and skills			
6.9	Be selective about which learning initiatives are actually measured to Level 4 (Organisational Impact) – mix hard and soft data			
6.10	See how many business units are now beginning to ask for help and request more learning			

7	Communicate the effectiveness of learning initiatives	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
7.1	Manage your communication in line with the organisational goals – present your results the way business areas present theirs (Annual Report structure?)			
7.2	Capture success stories and always bring them into your communications. As they say, it's only when you are fed up saying the same thing time and time again will your message finally get through to the people who need to hear it.			
7.3	Plan what 'soundbites' you want stakeholders to remember and repeat			

If you would like more information, advice or help on making your learning programmes Effective, why not contact Kineo at [info@kineo.co.uk](mailto:info@kineo.co.uk) or on +44 (0)870 3830003.

We will be releasing the two remaining parts of Learning Strategy Master Plan in the coming months.

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