



Kineo Briefing

Learning Strategy Master Plan

Part 3 – Efficiency

By Mark Harrison

Introduction

This is the third 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 by making your learning aligned and effective.

Your initiatives are delivering the goods but are you doing it all as efficiently as possible?

Read on and you'll find out.

Why Efficiency is so important

Once you have aligned your learning initiatives, you need to get the most out of the limited budgets that you have at your disposal. **Efficiency** has been a major driver behind the adoption of new technologies and continues to be a major catalyst for change in both the private and public sectors.

ASTD research shows that:

“the BEST always maximise the efficiency of the learning organisation by centralisation, internal process improvement, use of technology and strategic outsourcing”.

ASTD 2005.

Ultimately, efficiency without effectiveness is pointless and vice versa – both represent the key components in achieving a return on investment from your training spend.

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, Effectiveness, 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 efficient your learning strategy is in meeting your organisation's goals.

1 Regularly measure and report

They say the only things that you can change are the things you can measure. They're right. So, you have to start measuring how efficient you seem to be in designing, developing and delivering learning. Without this regular monitoring process, you cannot set yourself the incremental efficiency targets that will squeeze out those unnecessary costs.

You need to:

- Report on efficiency in the same form as the rest of the organisation
- Measure outputs (not just time spent) and do this regularly
- Get learners to confirm if the learning was delivered at the right time and place
- Regularly communicate information on efficiency (and effectiveness)
- Keep track on the cost of learning (per hour etc)
- Check on differences in the efficiency of cost and delivery within the organisation
- Monitor the number of needs analyses being carried out

2 Where possible, try to automate and centralise

This might be a thorny issue; for every organisation that has gone down a centralisation route, you'll find another identical one who swears that decentralisation was the only way ahead.

But, forgetting the political dimensions of local ownership, there are some things (like e-learning project management and development) that often benefit from a centralised and efficient centre of expertise.

You need to:

- Centralise and share resources wherever feasible
- Look to capture information and report automatically whenever possible
- Use self service booking for learning

3 Focus investment on high value/high volume areas

It's obvious that you need to put all your effort into things that deliver the most value for money. The priority ones will spin out from the alignment work you did earlier. The key is not to be distracted by maintaining content or courses that you've always provided – everything should be revisited.

You need to:

- Have a prioritisation process for deciding time and budget on potential learning programmes
- Aim for large scale compliance-based topics
- Look for single solutions for wider groups or across departments

4 Focus on providing learning content more efficiently and at lower costs

The move to more blended solutions has been strongly driven by these two key factors. You need to look at how content is designed, developed and delivered. Who should be responsible for each of these? How much will technology help in each case?

You need to:

- Reduce the decision-making touch points by providing knowledge and tools within the organisation
- Aim for maximum utilisation of development and delivery resources through forward planning, workflow management and regular review of upcoming needs
- Meet regularly with senior managers to reduce duplication
- Get stakeholders involved in learning academies to help ensure efficiency and alignment
- Share learning content via databases
- Improve take up of learning by internal marketing
- Use off-the-shelf components when possible and amend for bespoke solutions
- If you have large numbers compare the licensing costs against bespoke solutions
- Save time later on by carrying out needs analyses upfront – it usually saves time later on
- Use automation as much as possible (e.g. script to screen processes for e-learning content to remove the programming phase)

5 Make it easy to get access to learning

This might seem like an advertisement for e-learning. But that's not the case. It's all about looking at each situation and working out the quickest and easiest way in which your learners can get what they need. It all depends on the circumstances of each target group. In some cases, one group may need a very different approach from another.

You need to:

- Embed learning into day-to-day work routines
- Offer short learning opportunities
- Build informal learning approaches models within the organisation (with communities of best practice, easy access to content and real support from managers/coaches)

6 Make the learning process itself quicker and more efficient

This is where technology will make a difference. Waiting to get a place on an oversubscribed workshop is clearly not an efficient way of resolving a learning need. This is at the heart of the growing interest in workflow learning.

You need to:

- Offer 'just-in-time' rather than 'just-in-case' learning
- Adopt accelerated learning approaches
- Aim to reduce time out from work when creating training blends
- Look for business cases for technology as e-learning *can* be up to 30-40% faster to complete

Your Efficiency Checklist

1	Regularly measure and report	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
1.1	Report on efficiency in the same form as the rest of the organisation			
1.2	Measure outputs (not just time spent) and do this regularly			
1.3	Get learners to confirm if the learning was delivered at the right time and place			
1.4	Regularly communicate information on efficiency (and effectiveness)			
1.5	Keep track on the cost of learning (per hour etc)			
1.6	Check on differences in the efficiency of cost and delivery within the organisation			
1.7	Monitor the number of needs analyses being carried out			
2	Where possible, try to automate and centralise	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
2.1	Centralise and share resources wherever feasible			
2.2	Look to capture information and report automatically whenever possible			
2.3	Use self service booking for learning			

3	Focus investment on high value/high volume areas	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
3.1	Have a prioritisation process for deciding time and budget on potential learning programmes			
3.2	Aim for large scale compliance-based topics			
3.3	Look for single solutions for wider groups or across departments			

4	Focus on providing learning content more efficiently and at lower costs	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
4.1	Reduce the decision-making touch points by providing knowledge and tools within the organisation			
4.2	Aim for maximum utilisation of development and delivery resources through forward planning, workflow management and regular review of upcoming needs			
4.3	Meet regularly with senior managers to reduce duplication			
4.4	Get stakeholders involved in learning academies to help ensure efficiency and alignment			
4.5	Share learning content via databases			
4.6	Improve take up of learning by internal marketing			

4.7	Use off-the-shelf components when possible and amend for bespoke solutions			
4.8	If you have large numbers compare the licensing costs against bespoke solutions			
4.9	Save time later on by carrying out needs analyses upfront – it usually saves time later on			
4.10	Use automation as much as possible (e.g. script to screen processes for e-learning content to remove the programming phase)			

5	Make it easy to get access to learning	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
5.1	Embed learning into day-to-day work routines			
5.2	Offer short learning opportunities			
5.3	Build informal learning approaches models within the organisation (with communities of best practice, easy access to content and real support from managers/coaches)			

6	Make the learning process itself quicker and more efficient	Already doing this	Could do more of this	Must start doing this
6.1	Offer 'just-in-time' rather than 'just-in-case' learning			
6.2	Adopt accelerated learning approaches			
6.3	Aim to reduce time out from work when creating training blends			
6.4	Look for business cases for technology as e-learning <i>can</i> be up to 30-40% faster to complete			

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

We will be releasing the final part of the Learning Strategy Master Plan next month.

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