

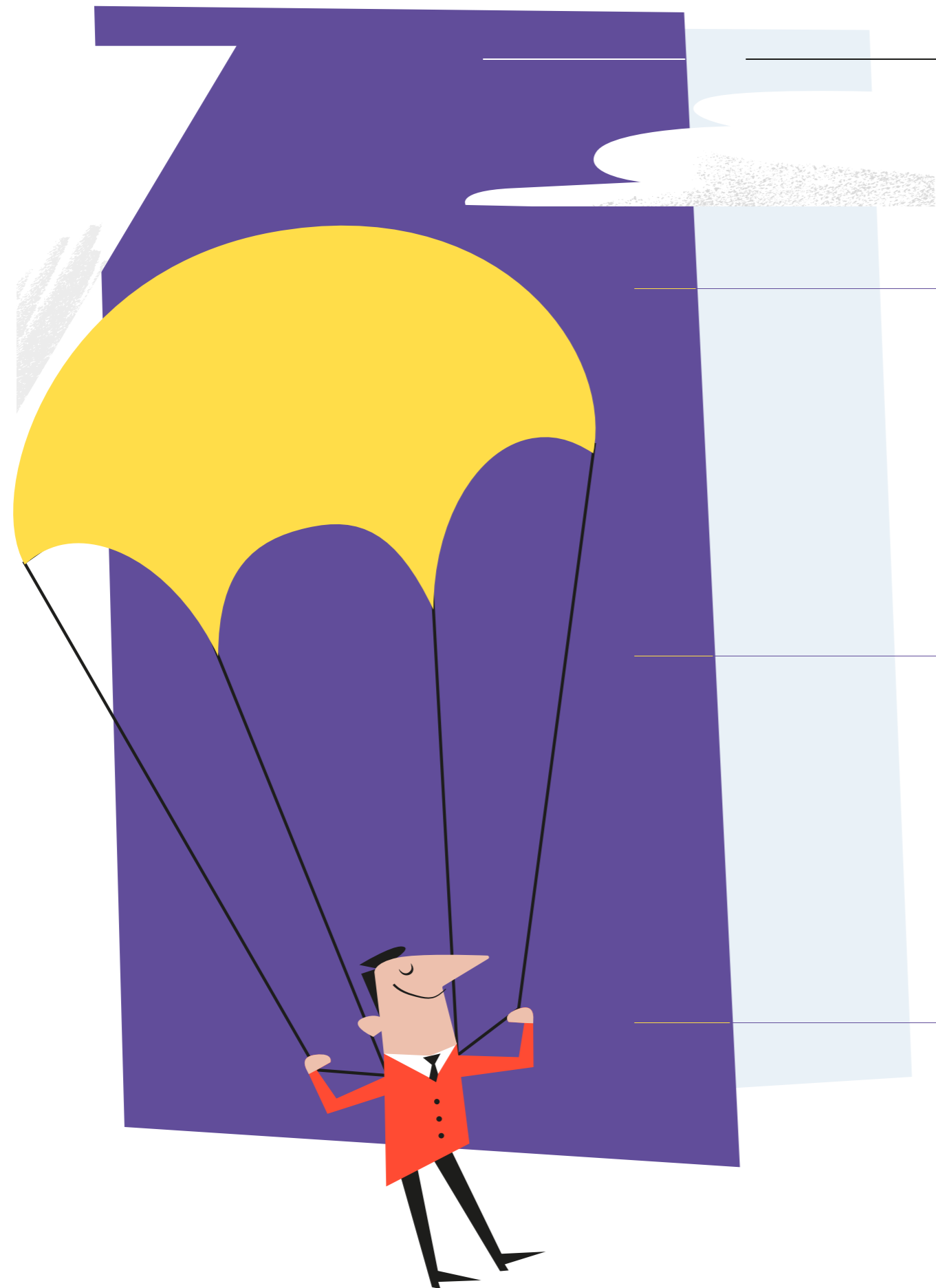


How to Successfully Take the Leap Into Blended Learning

An Expert Guide from



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01

About CDSM & Thingi





CDSM are an award-winning UK-based learning technology company. We harness contemporary technology and apply science to solve learning challenges.

Thingi is our blended learning ecosystem, a digital engagement platform encompassing our vision for 21st century learning.



More and more learning and development (L&D) managers are turning to Thingi to achieve greater success by taking a more contemporary and accountable approach to L&D.

Thingi is helping organisations who are:

-  Under pressure to prove greater ROI in their L&D programmes
-  Striving to gain greater support and trust for L&D activity from their leadership team
-  Struggling to engage learners with digital content and platforms
-  Having difficulty proving the benefits of modern learning activity in their business

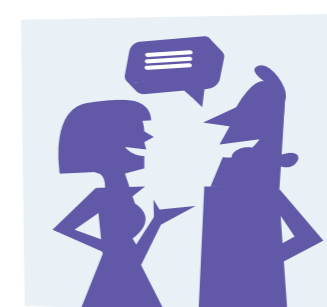


Our background in education and CPD means we focus only on learning strategies that provide measurable improvements. Our scientific approach focuses on empowering your staff to reach their maximum potential, thus creating greater value and commitment to your organisation.

Tailored to the needs of your business, our specialists will:



Support your existing team and respond to learning needs



Share their expertise in delivering blended learning that gets results



Help design a roadmap for sustainable L&D delivery in your organisation

This approach is proven to deliver measurable business improvement for our customers across the globe including Cambridge University, Oxford University, Honda Motor Europe, Boots, BMW and Anglian Home Improvement.

Together, we'll drive engagement for blended learning, helping you to grow a community of happier, more engaged and more capable staff.

02

Welcome

This expert guide explores how to take the leap from traditional learning to blended learning with maximum success.

It explores the first steps you need to take into going digital, how to overcome common challenges and how to plan for long-term success.





03

Learning Outcomes

Any good learning activity should have clear learning objectives. Here's an outline of what you should come away with from this guide.

01

Identify

Steps needed to begin your migration to blended learning.

07

02

Outline

Methods to overcome some of the common challenges to digital success.

03

Produce

A suitable plan for migrating from traditional to blended learning.

04

Measure

The impact of blended learning in your organisation following rollout.

08

04

Why Blended Learning?



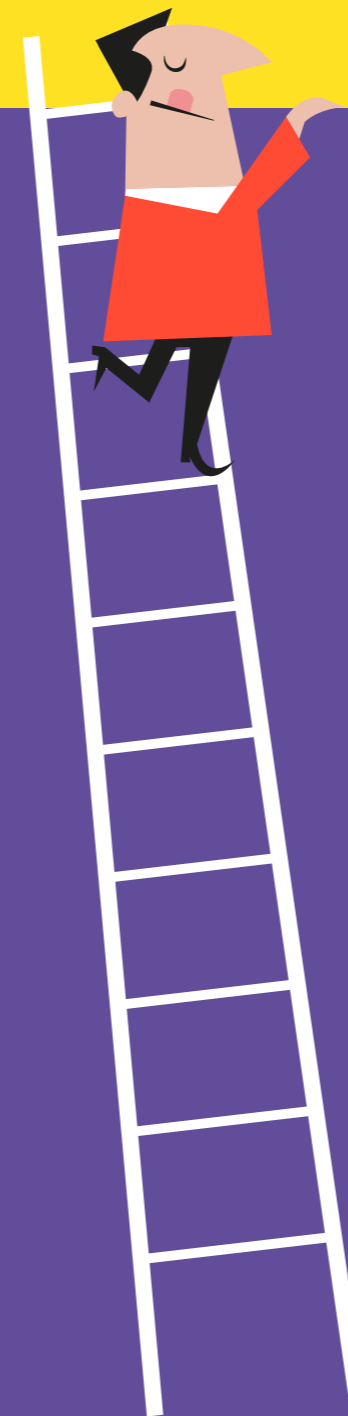
Blended learning. It's become something of a buzzword when discussing the development of an effective learning and development (L&D) programme. Research shows that the top performing training teams are four times more likely to both blend technologies into their learning solutions and to involve classroom trainers in using them to engage learners. ¹

You might be reading this because you've already taken the leap and perhaps it hasn't gone as well as you'd expected. Or maybe you're balanced on the precipice, still hesitant to leap into the unknown.

The aim of this expert guide is to help you map out what the unknown looks like, so that when you do finally make the jump, you're in for a comfortable landing.

But what is blended learning? Blended learning is defined as:

“A formal education program” in which a learner “learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path or pace.”²



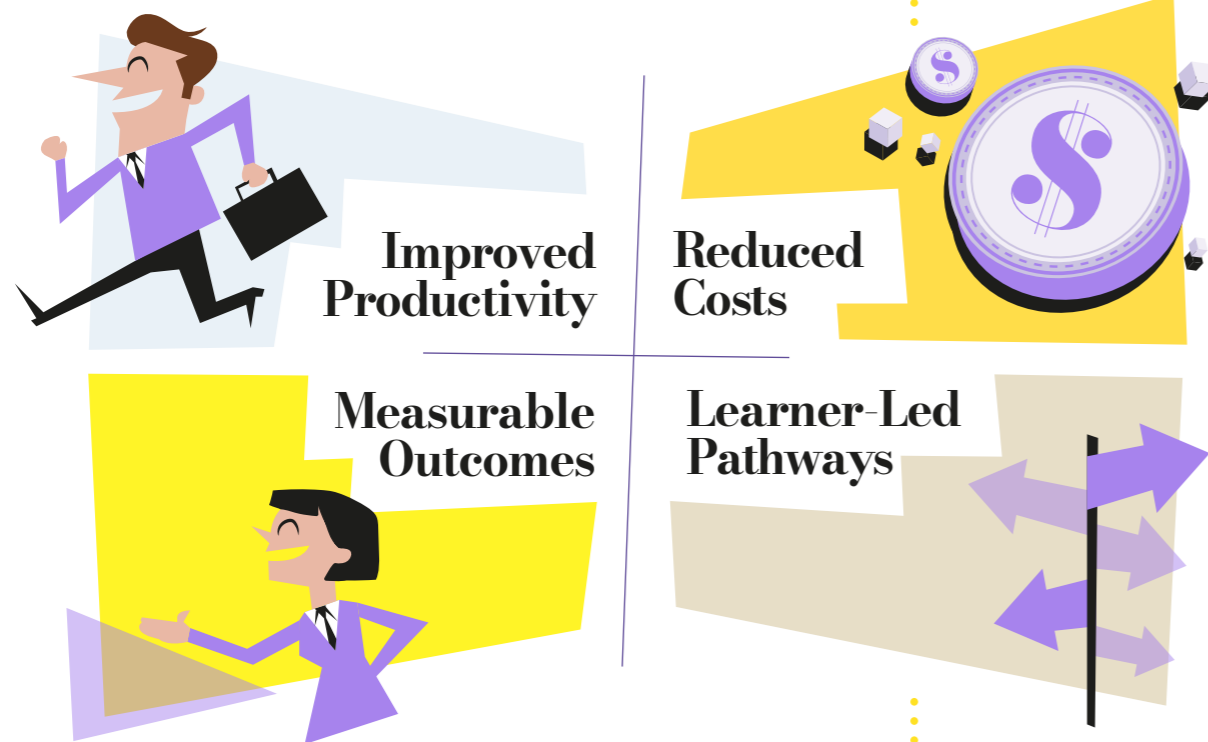
In other words, it's a programme where the learner combines traditional learning with online learning that they complete in their own time, whenever and wherever it suits them. This results in a more personalised, proactive and time-efficient experience when compared with a one-size-fits-all, intensive, traditional learning course.

It's no wonder then that more and more businesses are integrating digital learning into their L&D offering.

¹ Source: *'In-Focus: Transforming Formal Learning'* by Clarissa Hall
<https://towardsmaturity.org/2016/09/13/in-focus-transforming-formal-learning>

² Source: *'Blended Learning Definitions'* by Christensen Institute
<https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/>

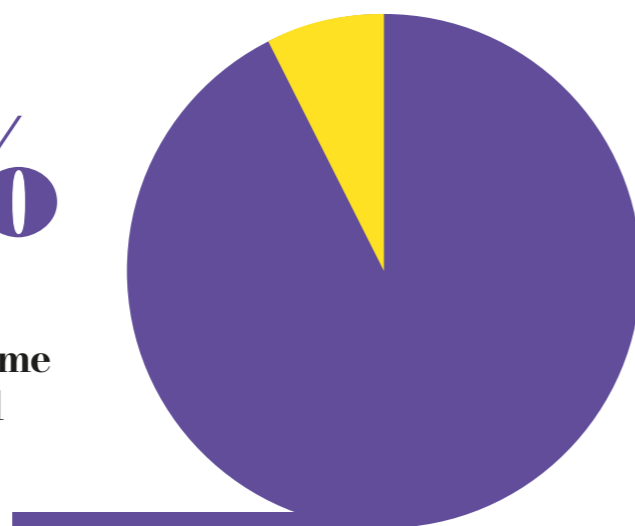
Some of the many advantages of a blended approach include:



What's more, a study by Towards Maturity revealed an overwhelmingly positive response to online learning in contrast to the traditional classroom experience...

90%

of students think online learning is at least the same or better than traditional classroom experience.



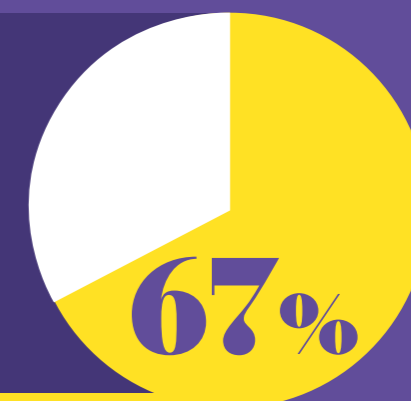
— Towards Maturity

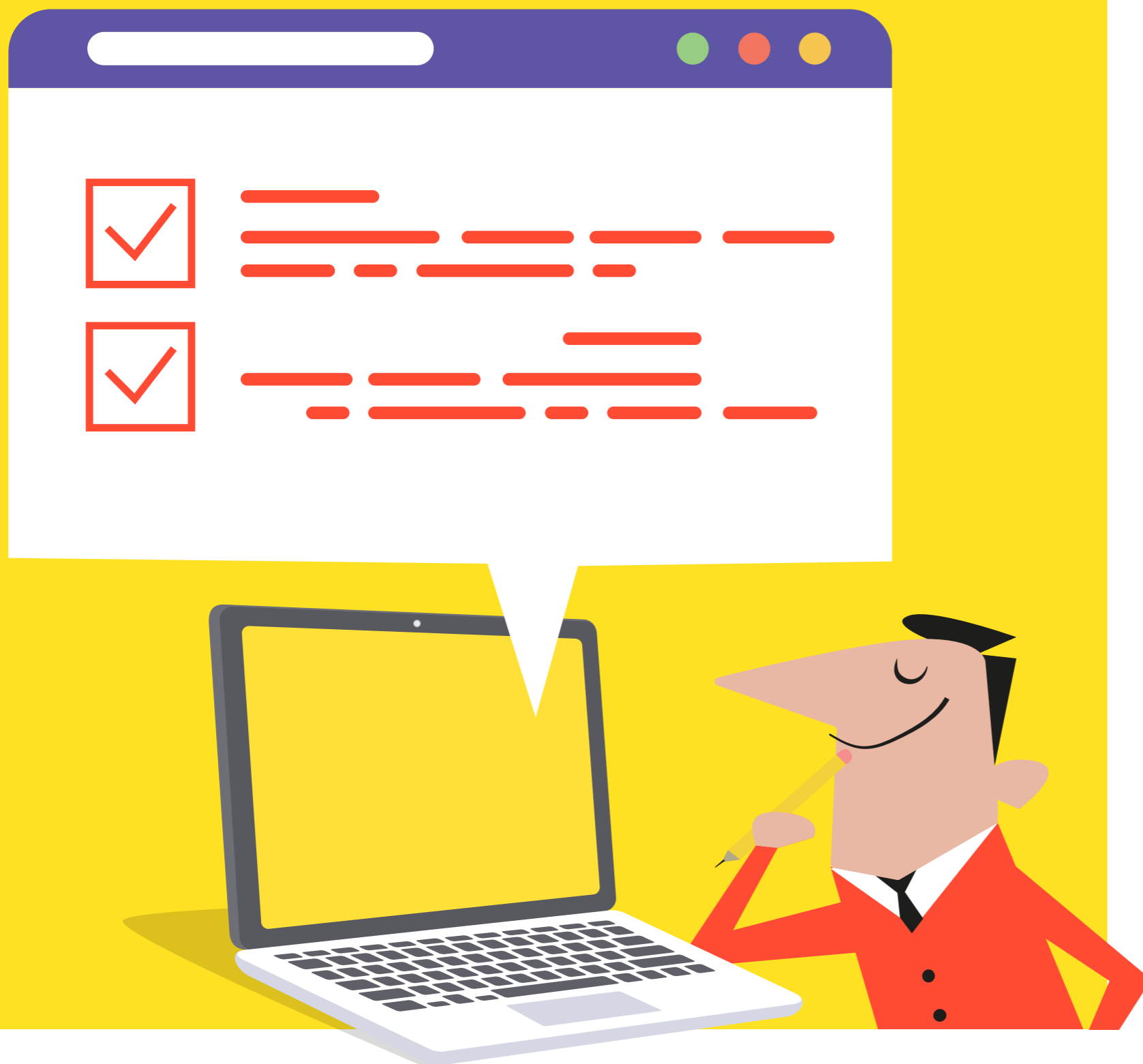
...which makes sense when you consider that today, online learning is the new normal. In fact, corporations have increased their use of online learning by a whopping 900% in the last 16 years...



...which is largely down to the popularity of mobile and video. Take mobile for instance. As the need for on-demand and accessible learning grows, it's no surprise to learn that 67% of learners now use mobile devices to access learning.

- Learners using mobile devices to access learning
- Learners accessing learning through more traditional means (e.g. desktop or laptop computers, classroom courses, etc.)





The evidence is clear – digital and blended learning can add a whole range of benefits to an organisation.

So, now it's more a case of 'Why aren't you?' as opposed to 'Why would you?' Let's take a look at some of the reasons many L&D professionals may be apprehensive about going digital.

Taking the First Steps to Digital

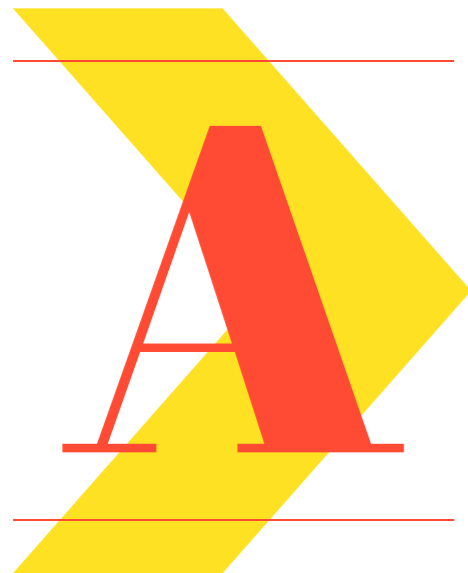
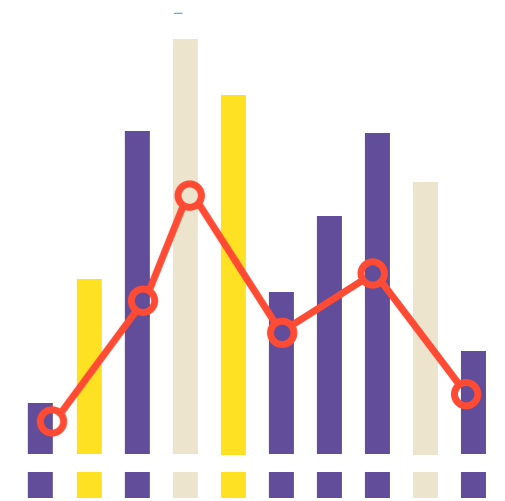
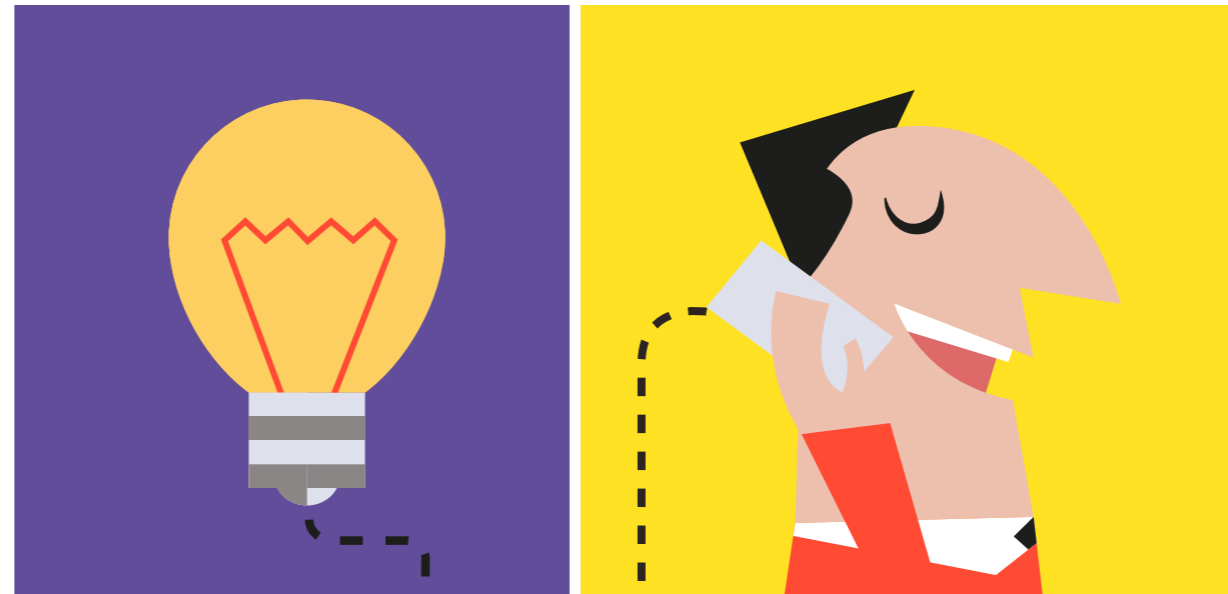


If you've yet to make the leap into going digital, what is it that's holding you back? We understand that not everyone is keen to take the plunge into blended learning right away, despite proven positive results. Is it cost? Worry that employees will not engage with new technology? Overwhelm from all the choices available?

To break it down and make the change less daunting, let's first take a look at some of the essential challenges you may need to face.

Then we can look at the best ways to overcome them.

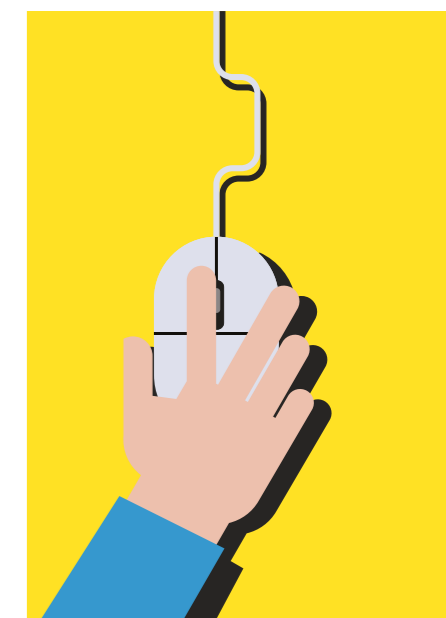
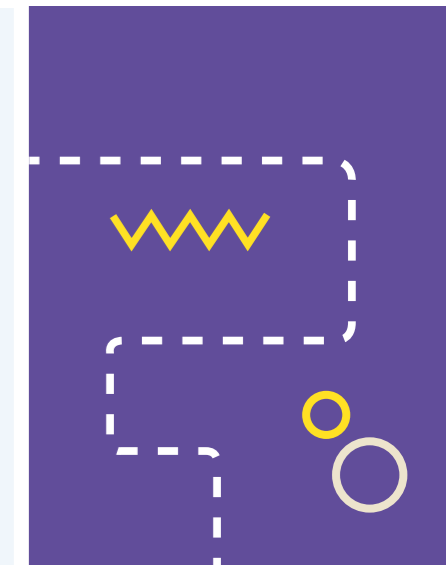
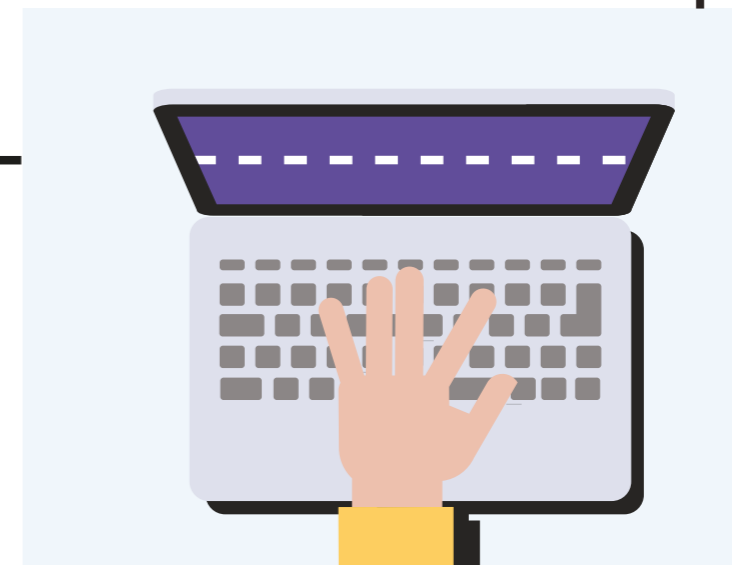
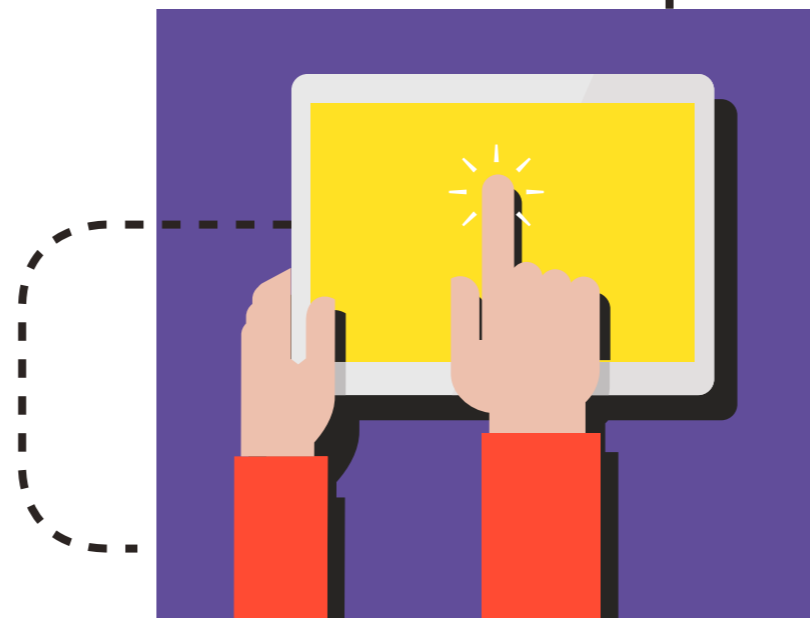




Identifying the Needs of Stakeholders

Successful change management relies on both clear communication with the workforce and buy-in from the top down. Communicate with each stakeholder and get to know their needs – this is essential for getting them on board.

The first critical step will therefore require a mapping of the internal requirements for stakeholders.



L&D / HR Team

These include:

The Leadership Team

What are their success criteria? Is it performance improvement, cost reduction, ROI or all of these? Is it a vanity project, fuelled by the actions of competitors, or is there a greater affinity with the L&D team? Understand exactly what they need to consider the project a success and what measures they will be looking for to determine this. Whatever their expectations are, it is critical to get buy-in from your leadership team to grant sponsorship of your project.

How can the needs of the L&D team be dovetailed with HR requirements? HR may be mandated by leadership to implement and report on compliance training – Health and Safety or GDPR, for example – which is probably the least exciting, but most necessary, content that learners will cover. So, how can you balance the needs of HR and leadership with the need to set a good first impression of your newly implemented solution?



96%

of organisations want to increase **self-directed learning**, but only

24%

consider that they have been **successful**.

Source — *Towards Maturity*

People Managers

How will they be able to set targets, as well as support and manage the learning of their team? The needs of people managers may not be clear to them at this stage, as the brave new world of blended learning will require a revisit of their role. Understanding their needs and challenges is critical to the success of the project.



Practitioners / Trainers

How can technology be used to make the delivery of their content easier? And how can they remain essential in a more technology-driven environment? Remember, it is these people who will be indispensable to the rollout and ongoing success of your blended solution.



Staff

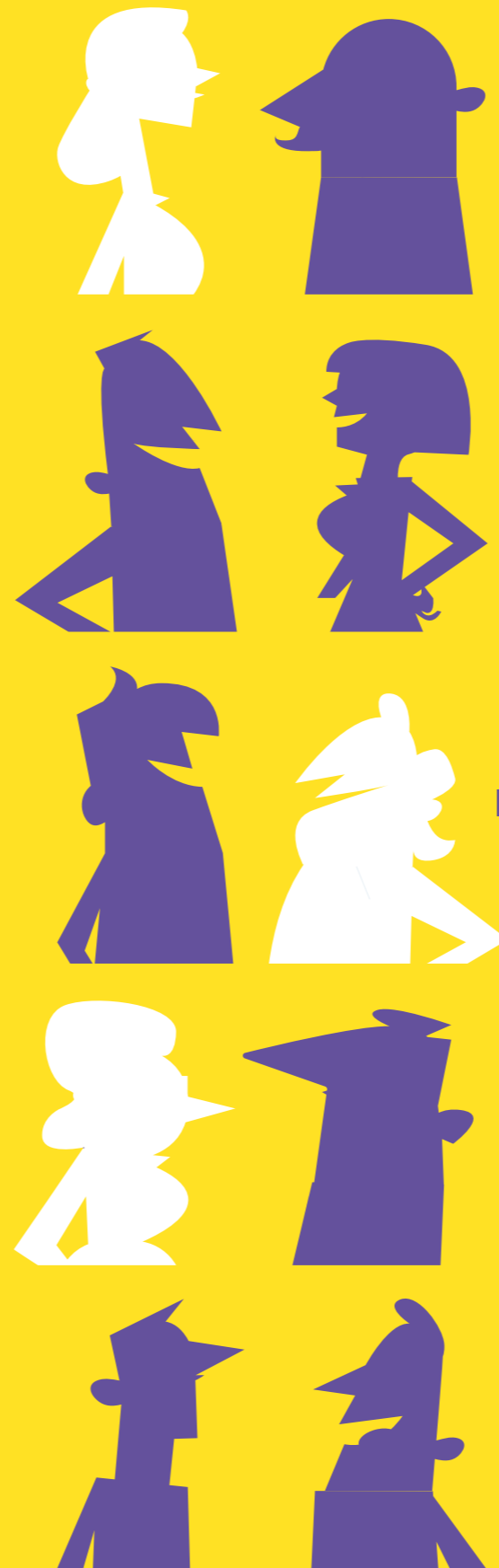
Of course, it's important that you fully understand the needs of your learners themselves. How do they want to learn? How can a learner-led approach be fostered? And how can the curriculum give them what they need to develop?

Involving your staff in the investigation lets them feel as though they are participating in the journey. The result? Greater buy-in when it comes to implementation. Make sure objectives are in line with learners' needs. If learners don't see the learning content as relevant and practical to their real-life challenges, they will become frustrated and disengaged.

7/10
employees

say job-related training and development opportunities **directly influence** their decision to stay with a company.

Source — CED



Another Challenge to Digital Implementation...

IT

Although we haven't included them as a stakeholder, it's worth bearing in mind that corporate IT can often be a barrier to the implementation of new technology. Whilst you'll need to get them on side, remember: they should not be the ones dictating the solution for the L&D team.

It will already be expected that your brand-new platform will 'play nicely' with your organisation's existing technology, so you should make sure that it's the needs of your actual stakeholders that are priority when rolling out a successful learning platform solution and not the constraints presented by the IT department.

B Building a Compelling Business Case

If you want to highlight the value of a blended solution in terms of business value to your stakeholders, then it's vital that you build a compelling business case. You need to pitch to them not just what the organisation will gain by going digital, but also what you risk losing from not doing it.

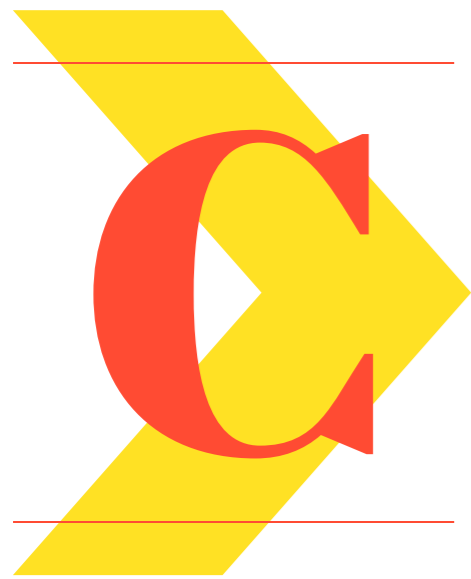
Map your stakeholder requirements to ensure that the particular benefits of a blended strategy are relevant to each group.



Let's take your practitioners, for example. These are the people who will need to drive your blended activities, so it's therefore important you provide them with a convincing business case. Through effective support and incentivisation, your existing training staff, subject matter experts and practitioners can embrace digital and become your champions.



Do your research, collect your evidence and provide real-life case studies of other organisations who are already reaping the benefits of blended learning. Just make sure you do it in a way that's relevant to the people you're presenting to. How will their working lives be improved? What benefits do they most care about? And what are they most afraid to lose out on?






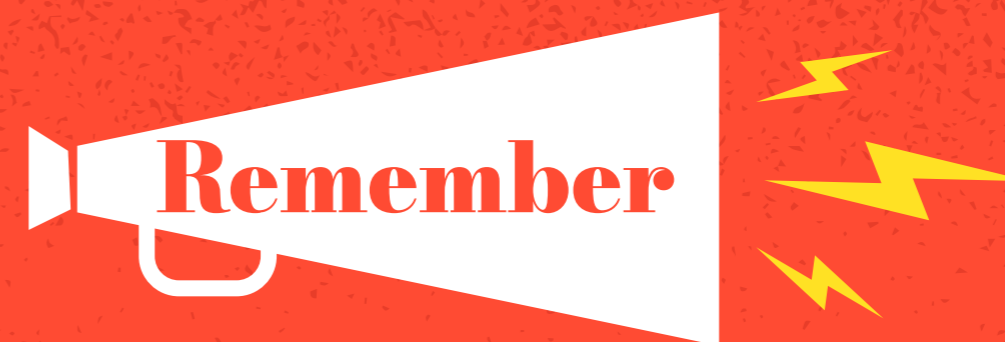
Finding a Suitable Product or Products

Once you've identified the needs of your stakeholders effectively, the next step is to find a suitable solution.



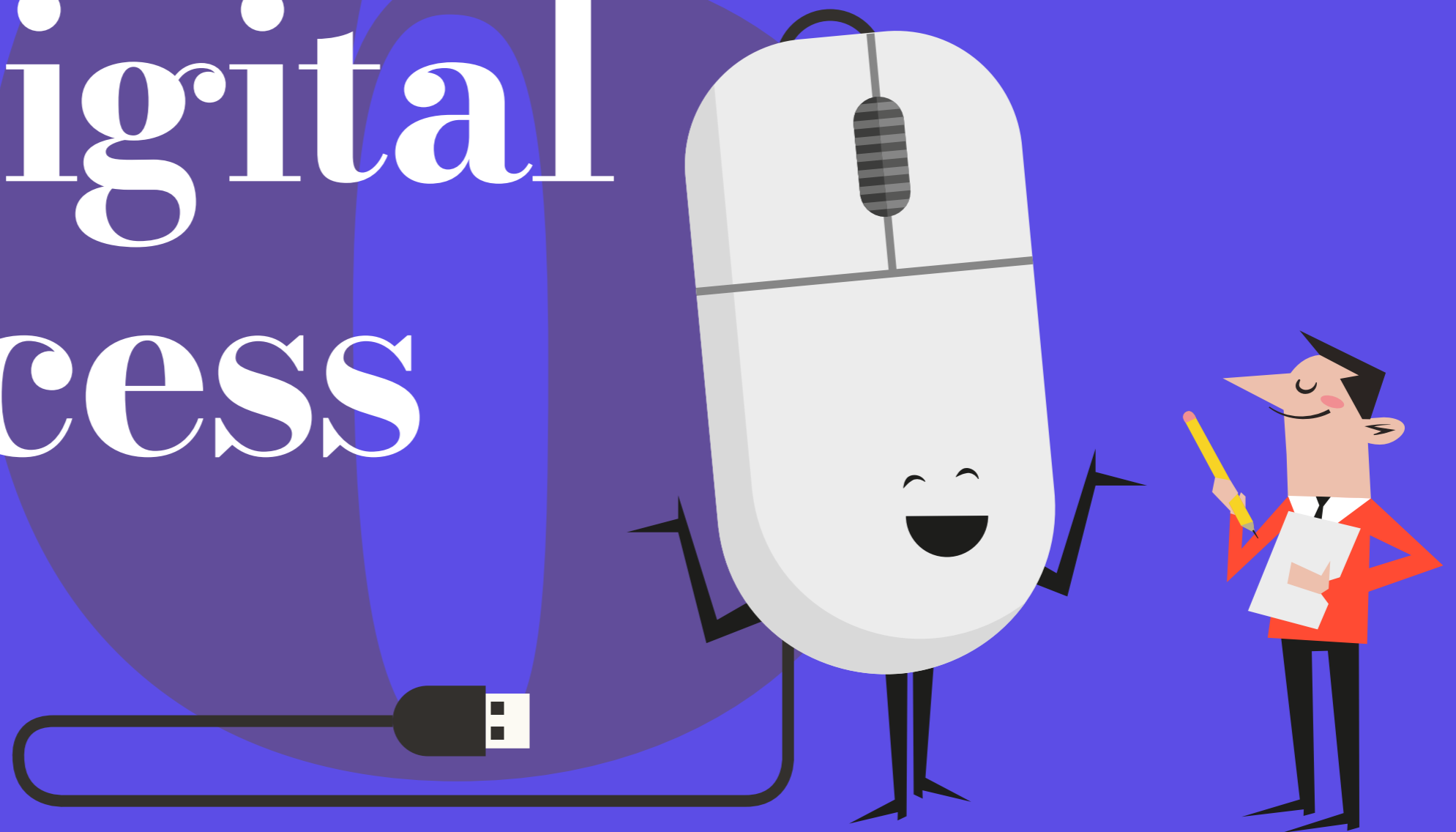
It's crucial you ensure at this stage that:

-  The values and vision of the provider align with your own
-  You focus only on the features that are priority
-  These features are mapped to your stakeholders' needs



It is much harder to change provider than it is to choose the right one in the first place!

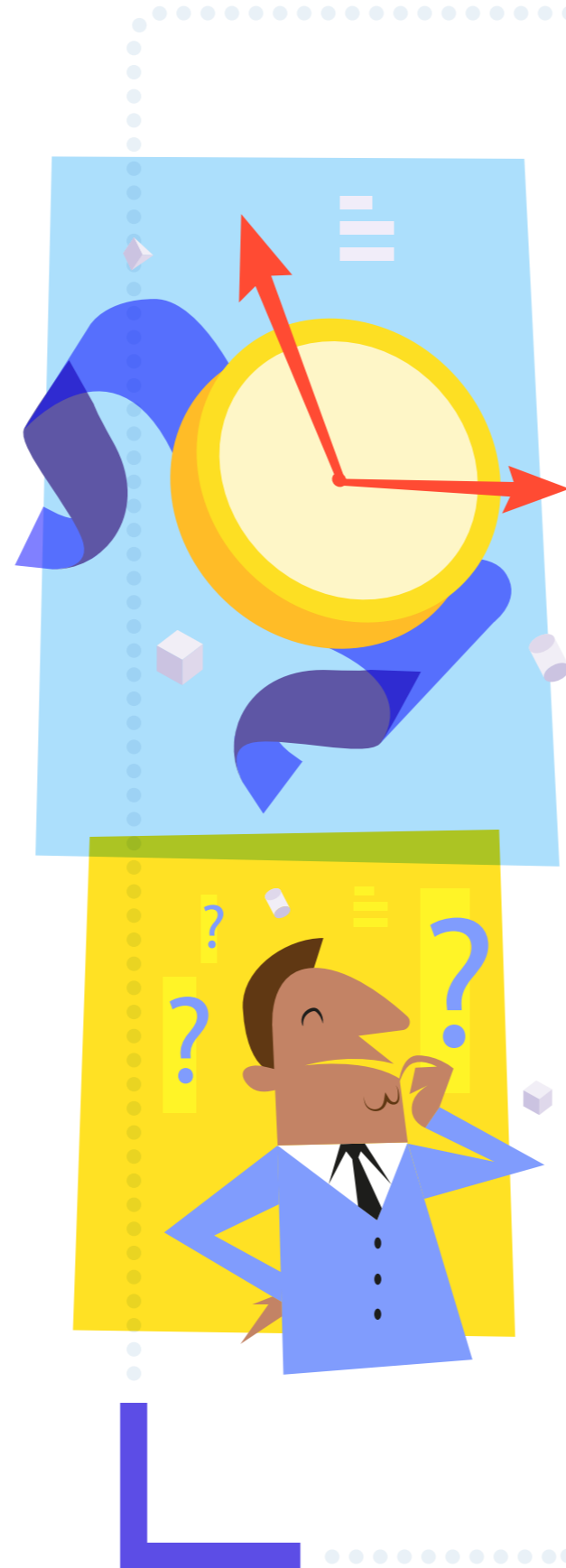
The Challenges to Digital Success



What's been your worst experience with learning technology? Was it an endless click-through of questions and answers? Screen after screen of uninspiring text? We've heard many horror stories from existing customers that have had a bad experience with it in the past.

You might have taken all the right steps in finding a solution that maps perfectly to the needs of your organisation and learners, but this doesn't guarantee success.

To improve your chances of success at this stage, let's take a look at some of the key challenges you will face when implementing a digital solution.



Over
90%

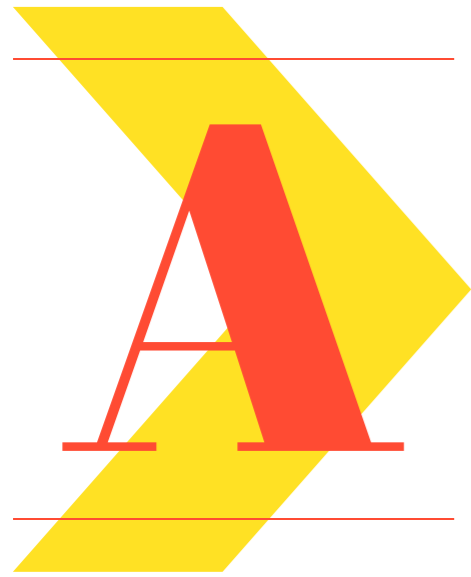
of L&D leaders would like learning technology to enable a **quicker response** to changing business conditions and

a massive

60%

of organisations cannot implement a technology-enabled learning strategy due to **lack of skills**.

Source — *Towards Maturity*



Engagement

There's a lot of focus in the L&D world at the moment on **engagement**, with organisations waking up to the significance of an engaged workforce.

Simply put, learner engagement is the emotional commitment that employees feel towards their personal development and the learning goals – it is not necessarily synonymous with happiness or satisfaction.

To be fully engaged, learners need to actually care about their personal development and learning goals.



So why is this important?

Consider this: in a survey by Gallup, **companies with engaged employees outperform those without by up to 202%**. The figures are simply staggering.

B Content

Ensuring that you have suitable content in your new system – readily mapped to your curriculum and ready for rollout – might seem at first like a mammoth task.

You might want to ask yourself at this stage:



Do you have to launch with a full library of content covering all areas of the curriculum?



What content do you have already that will fit with the new technology?



Will you need to buy some off-the-shelf to address the shortfall?

Content is king, as they say, and it's vital to the success of your new technology. If you feel daunted by the task, it's worth taking a look at our blog post, to find out how an informal learning library can help you organise and distribute the relevant content on-demand:

Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 2: The Value of Informal Learning Libraries





Community

What is the learning culture currently in your organisation? And how can you foster a community of active participants in your new learning environment?

The success of new modes of learning – including social, learner-led and informal – depends on the willingness of your staff to participate in a learning community. However, this isn't easy if one doesn't already exist.

A thriving learning culture starts with engaged employees. Champion those who are already engaged – if you're going to create a successful culture of engaged learners, we need these social influencers to lead by example.



“It’s [about] empowering people to discuss new knowledge with co-workers and experiment on their own.”

Maria Ho

Association for Talent Development

D Sustainability

It takes a significant amount of effort to implement new learning technology, which means you should at least be looking at a **three-year plan**. Your solution therefore needs to be sustainable in terms of investment of time, resources and cost.

You will need to be able to smooth out the peaks and troughs of success in order to demonstrate value and benefit to leadership – which, in turn, will increase the likelihood of them continuing to invest in L&D.



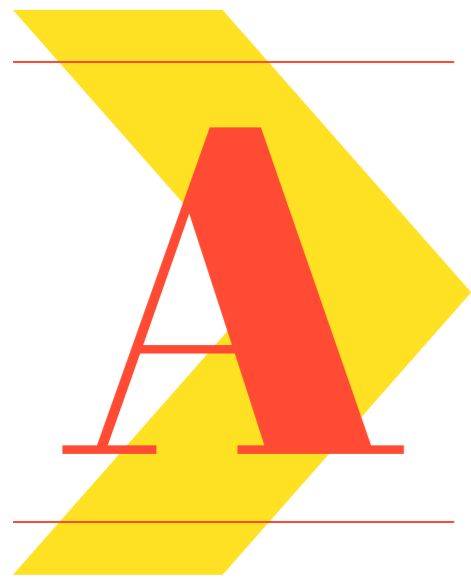
Planning for Success



So, now that we've looked at the common challenges, how do we plan for success?

Everyone has their own slightly different set of challenges, but we've put together a few simple pointers that could prove useful if you haven't already considered them.



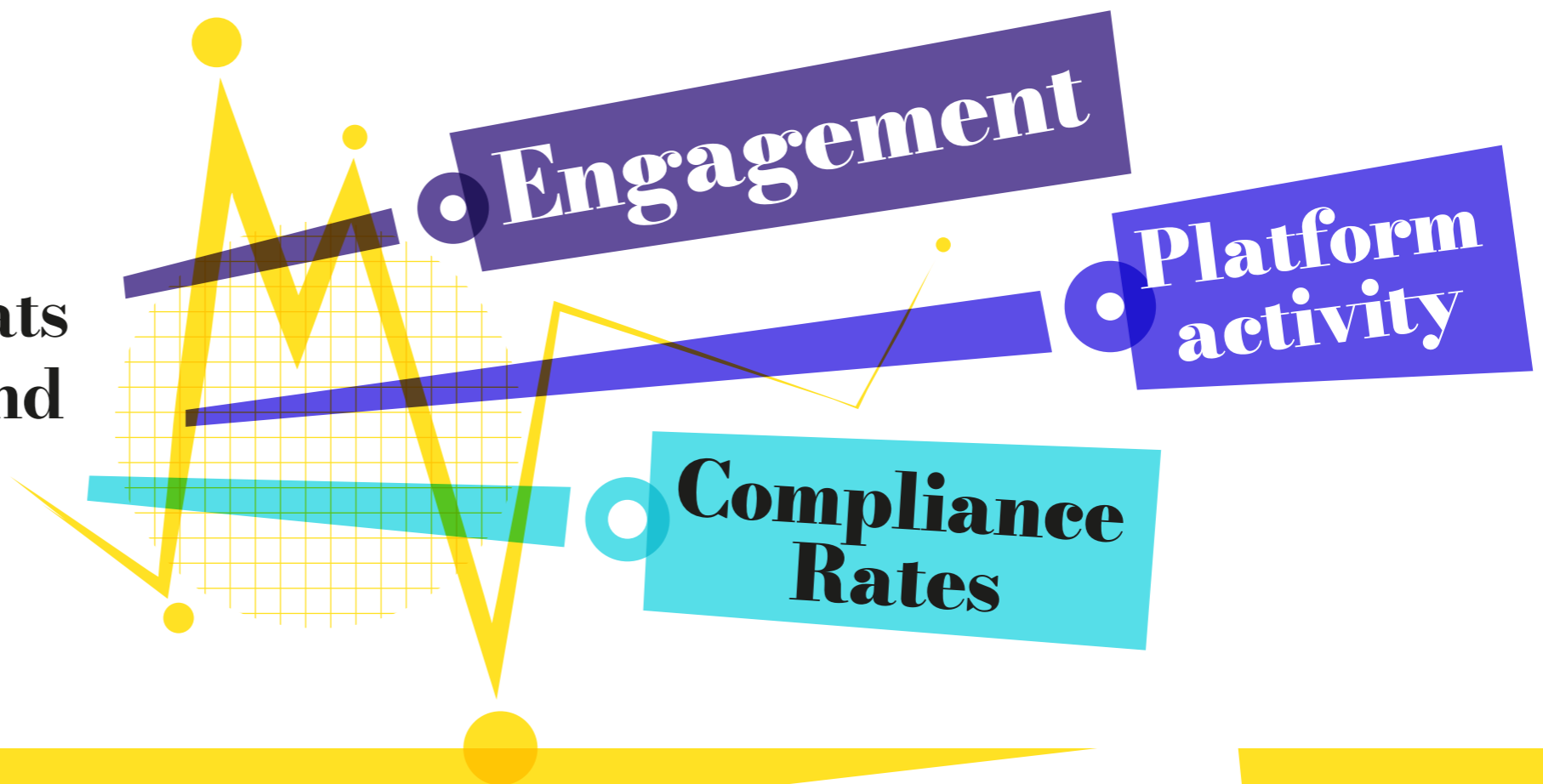


Define Success Criteria

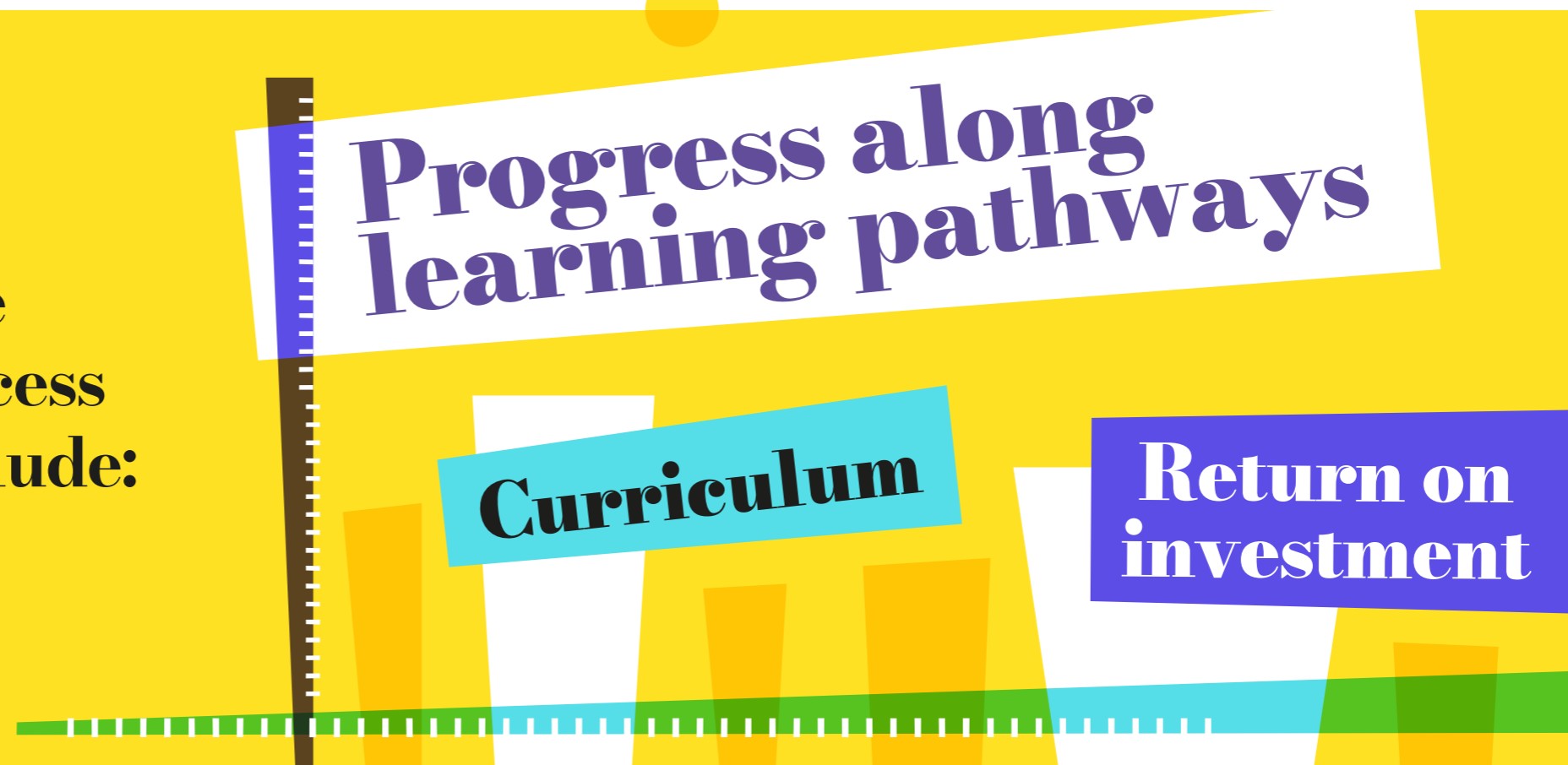
It sounds obvious, but without success criteria how can you demonstrate a successful solution to your stakeholders? What are the expectations of your stakeholders and how will you measure the results?



Your success criteria could include simple stats to demonstrate usage and take-up; for example:

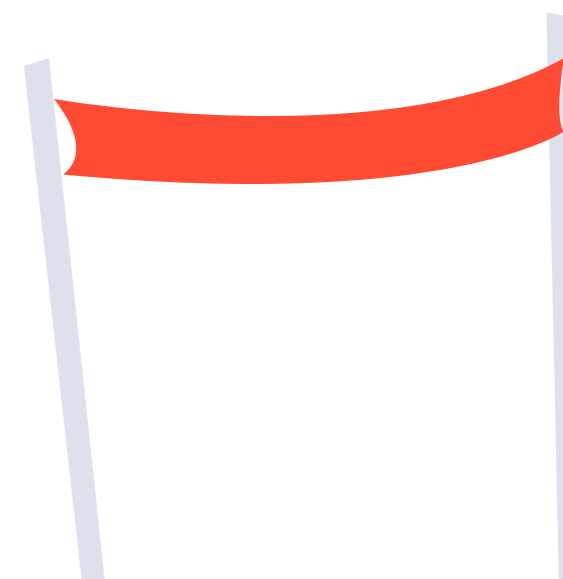


Examples of more sophisticated success criteria could include:



B Identify and 'Power Up' Your Champions

There will be plenty of people who will pick up the new technology and run with it, and there will also be those who need plenty of encouragement, but the success of a modern learning platform is heavily dependent on **identifying and encouraging your champions.**



As the modern workplace changes, the roles of your L&D team will also need to change. At the World of Learning conference 2018, there was a genuine buzz around how the role of the L&D professional is adapting to support the new methods of learning enabled by modern platform technology.

By this, we mean that L&D professionals are increasingly becoming facilitators, coaches and mentors instead of just enforcers and managers.

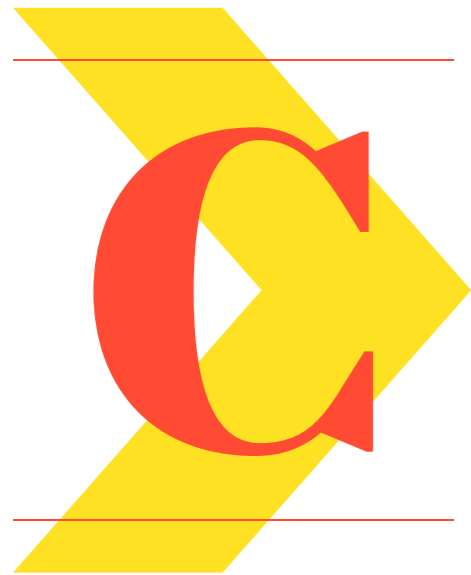
These will be the people in your organisation who will be helping you with content creation, curation and social influence – all time-consuming tasks for a centralised team to keep on top of.

By championing your key people, you provide them with the reward and recognition model that will encourage them to participate more.



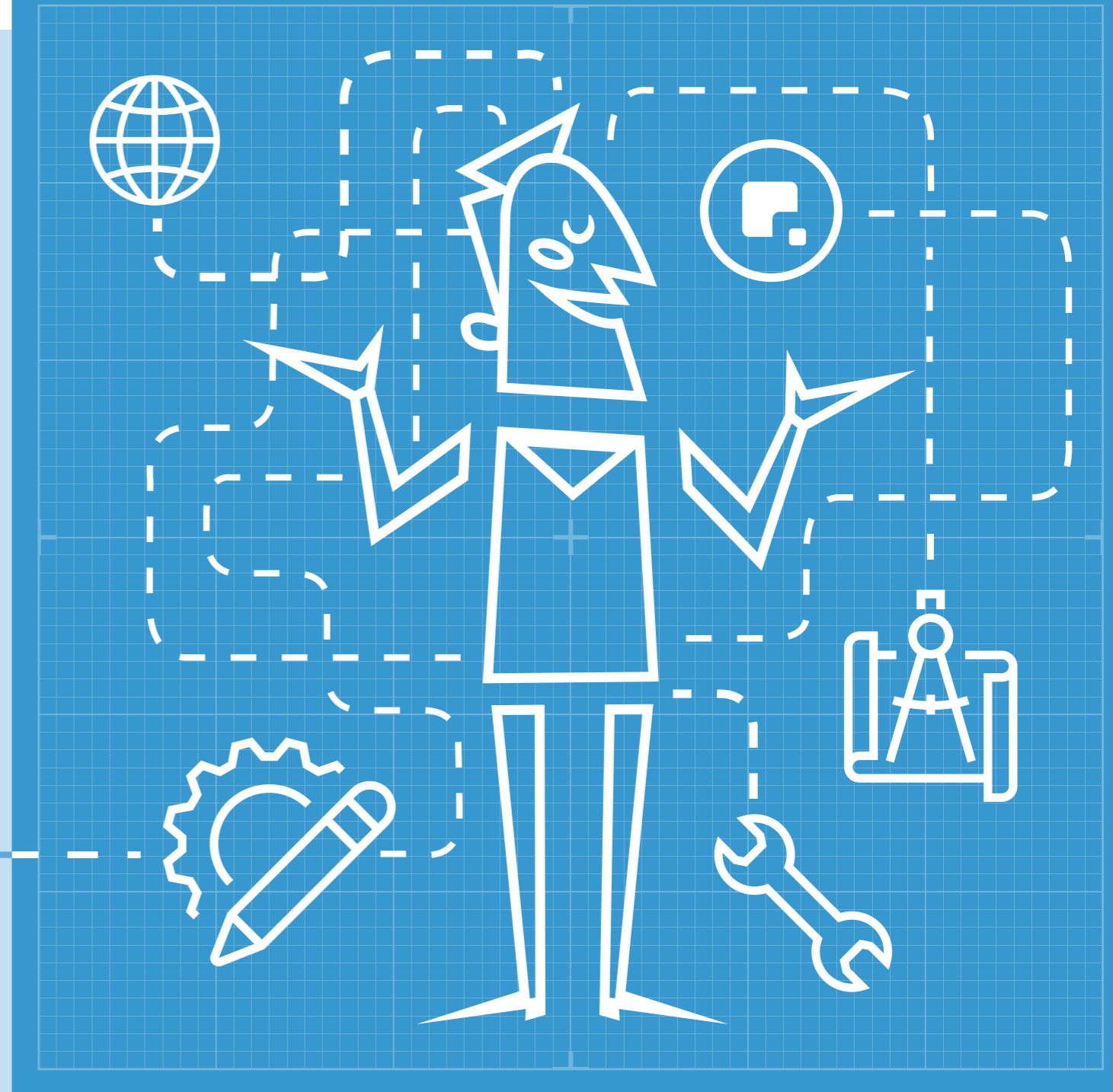
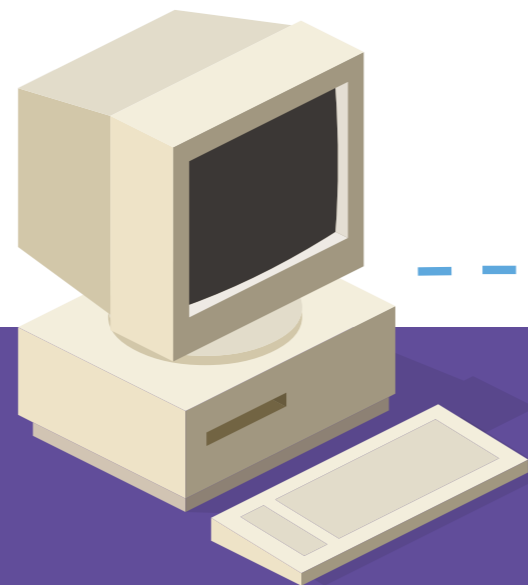
Belief in senior leadership is the strongest engagement driver, with growth and development as the second.

Source — Modern Survey



Redesign Your Curriculum

If you're going to rethink how you deliver learning, you'll need to be prepared to rethink your content and curriculum. It may seem like an overwhelming task, but remember - this is the perfect opportunity to shape the learning to how you've always imagined it.



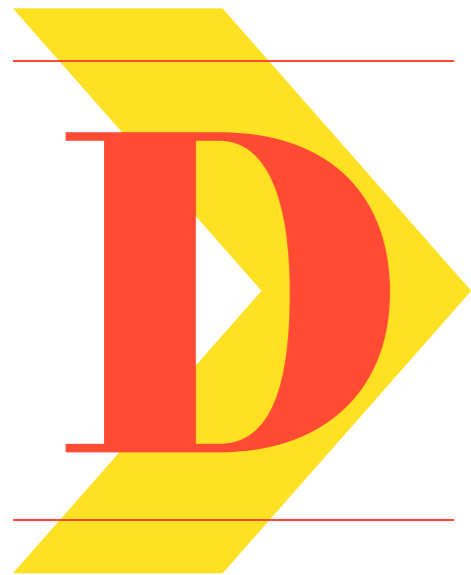
To do this, you could:

- ▶ Use your existing content as a baseline and then recycle, repurpose and reuse the good bits. Break it down into bite-sized chunks and then think about how it can be delivered effectively in your new environment.
- ▶ Let e-learning do the heavy lifting of knowledge acquisition. Scenario-based learning and role play are far better suited to the classroom and instantly make your workshops more engaging and interactive.
- ▶ Focus on the practical skills that enable learners to do their jobs better and more efficiently - in other words, give the learning actual relevance and purpose, rather than just being about knowledge gain and theory.
- ▶ Ensure your content is engaging - think succinct, visual, digestible and accessible.
- ▶ Empower your champions and subject matter experts to scour the web and curate content to map and tag to your curriculum. Give them simple tools to create their own bite-sized content.



But whatever you do, don't just upload your 100-slide PowerPoint presentation and declare it 'job done'. Redesigning your curriculum *well* means putting some effort in, and this is where Thinqi can be an excellent tool to really save you some of the work. Our 'Playlists' feature allows users to bring content from different sources together quickly and easily, combining them into a single piece of learning content. This is achieved through an easy-to-use search function and a simple drag and drop tool, meaning that anyone can become a curator of their own knowledge.

Which makes it all a bit less daunting.



Plan a Phased Rollout (Roadmap!)

Here's some advice - don't try to launch everything on Day One. An effective rollout involves introducing change step by step, limiting variables and measuring success along the way. It may be tempting to roll out everything in one go, but this will only overwhelm the learner (and the admin team!). Think of it as a **roadmap**.



Start by prioritising the big wins to build support as you go, proving the value of each new mode before introducing the next. Make sure the roadmap is aligned with both business priorities and stakeholder requirements and deal with the biggest problems first. After all, it's through solving the biggest problems that you're going to gain the biggest wins.

Make sure you also focus on measurable phases, such as:

Implementing an informal learning library for digital resources

Rolling out an onboarding programme and measuring the impact on staff retention

Ensuring usage across all staff hits critical mass

Finding the right mix of 'push/pull' tactics³ to maximise return usage

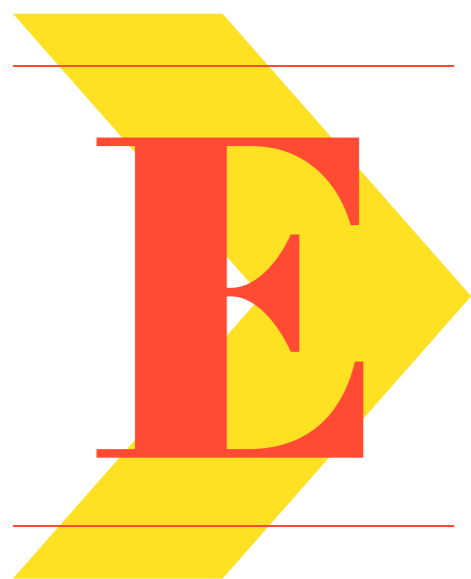


Remember, the highest performing organisations complete and report on pilot projects before rolling out major initiatives. With this in mind, pilot each phase first – and when you do, make sure it's limited to just small and manageable groups.

And finally, to keep improving your programme, you need to be continuously learning from experience. When it's time to demonstrate the business impact to your stakeholder, keep those positive testimonials in your back pocket as feedback to increase the chance of buy-in.

³ Source: 'Push Versus Pull Learning' by MindTools Corporate:

<https://www.mindtools.com/blog/corporate/push-versus-pull-learning/>



Measure Impact

It's important to measure everything, gain insight and provide regular and meaningful reports back to stakeholders. Measurement, when used well, provides a tool for L&D managers to be able to demonstrate the true value of L&D to leadership.



- 1. ROI**
Benefit to Cost Ratio
- 2. RESULTS**
Impact on Organisation
- 3. IMPACT**
Behaviour Change
- 4. LEARNING**
Learning Outcomes
- 5. SATISFACTION**
Learner Feedback

Which model of measurement you use will be entirely down to personal preference, but it's worth doing your research to know what the choices are. There are several to choose from, though the most popular one is currently the Kirkpatrick-Phillips model and is the one we recommend to our Thinqi customers.



Using this model, you can effectively measure satisfaction, learning, behaviour changes, business impact and ROI to provide value to each group of associated stakeholders along the way. Finally, don't forget to use any positive testimonials and case studies to garner further support and engagement from your stakeholders. Done effectively, measurement works.

For more tips on how to measure effectively, see our blog post:

Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 4: Using Measurement to Inform Your Curriculum



08

Summary

That's a lot to take in, so here's a quick summary of what's been covered:

01

Digital and blended learning are now essential

02

Make sure your solution matches the needs of the many, not the few

03

Make your rollout careful and considered

04

Measure everything and share success

So, when it comes to the traditional face-to-face or digital learning debate, why not combine the best of both worlds? Blended learning paves the way to L&D that's accessible, relevant, measurable and still allows coaches and mentors to engage with learners on a more personalised level.

It's learning that's results-driven and efficient right from the start.

**So, if you're taking
the leap...**

...Happy Landings!



09 Contact Details



Visit our website

thingi.co.uk

Read our blogs

For useful resources, articles and case studies, visit:

thingi.co.uk/category/blogs

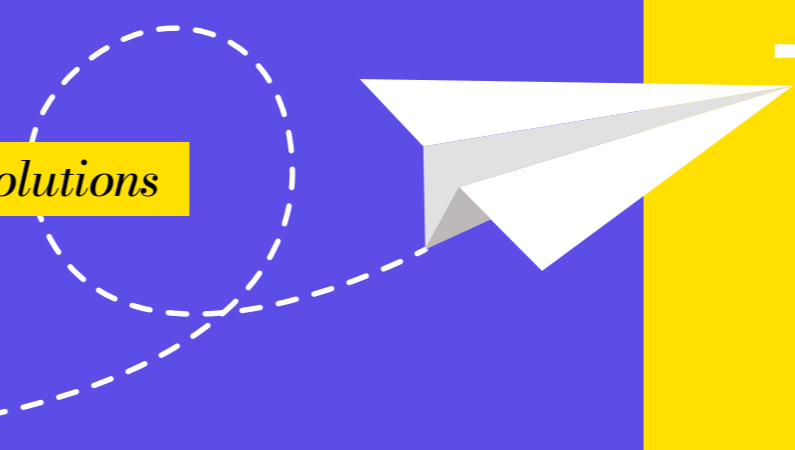
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 [CDSMThingi](https://www.facebook.com/CDSMThingi)

 [CDSM Interactive Solutions](https://www.linkedin.com/company/CDSM-Interactive-Solutions)



Further Reading

5 Key Tactics to Make Digital Learning Work in Your Organisation



Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 1: What Does Modern Learning Look Like?



Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 2: The Value of Informal Learning Libraries



Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 3: Why is Engagement so Important?



Learning in the Modern Workplace Part 4: Using Measurement to Inform Your Curriculum

