

How to Overcome 8 Common L&D Challenges



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“

I am an eLearning ID.
Not a graphic designer.
Not a videographer.
Not an admin assistant!



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INTRODUCTION

At the DevLearn19 Conference & Expo, The eLearning Guild erected an interactive board where attendees were invited to share their thoughts by writing on Post-it notes.

The question: **What are the biggest challenges in your work today?** drew 297 responses. Upon examination, eight common themes emerged. This eBook examines these eight challenges and offers curated resources to address them.



KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Getting technology/tools to do my job
- ✓ Skills vs. time vs. changing software
- ✓ Connecting info from legacy systems
- ✓ Buy-in from clients on the use of emerging technologies
- ✓ Overload of information
- ✓ Collecting data to prove ROI of training
- ✓ I am too old for this new technology



KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Technology is speeding forward at an accelerated pace and it is harder than ever to keep up. Sometimes the organization or corporate culture is to blame. While an individual L&D practitioner may be open to exploring new technologies, company stakeholders (or even the IT department) may be uncomfortable with change. This reluctance can hold back L&D leaders interested in modernizing outdated systems or approaches. As one attendee noted: My boss does not even know what xAPI is.

L&D professionals today face myriad technological challenges—some general; others quite specific. Challenges cited on the board included everything from navigating networks and managing firewalls to dealing with bandwidth constraints in a global and mobile market. Some struggle with video optimization or how to make a course both responsive and accessible, while others cite translation of training materials as their primary challenge.

A universal concern is data. Many participants expressed apprehension about how to properly gather and take control of data. Many seek further information and best practices on how to compile analytics that measure success or demonstrate the ROI of their training efforts.



**RESOURCES FOR
KEEPING UP WITH
TECHNOLOGY**

Using Data to Fuel Decisions

Learning Solutions, February 28, 2020

Sam Rogers

Data can show us what happened in the past, but it can't say why anything happened. We must overlay our values. We say what matters and why.

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Authoring Tools 2019

Research library, June 12, 2019

Jane Bozarth

The eLearning Guild director of research uses survey data and feedback from vendors, freelancers, and design shop owners to report on current asynchronous eLearning authoring tools.

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KEYNOTE: Lessons Learned from Government AR, VR, and Simulation Projects

Realities360 2018 conference archive, June 28, 2018

Panel discussion featuring Hugh Seaton, Jennifer Murphy, Marcus Anzengruber, and David Kelly

In this video, experts share their knowledge about the opportunities present in emerging technologies. Learn more about AR, VR, and simulation projects for education and training.

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TIME MANAGEMENT

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ So much to do. Where to start?
- ✓ There's not enough hours in the day
- ✓ I'm doing eight jobs in one and wearing too many hats
- ✓ Being over committed by a boss that does not know how to say NO!
- ✓ I'm expected to be a jack-of-all-trades
- ✓ I'm being asked to do more with the same or less
- ✓ Can we take two steps back and plan first?

A photograph showing a round wooden clock with black hands and numbers, and a spiral-bound calendar with colorful tabs and pushpins, resting on a dark wooden surface. A dark blue banner with the text 'TIME MANAGEMENT' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Most L&D professionals are stretched thin. Many admit that their biggest challenge is their ever-expanding workload. One attendee cited pressure from a shortened software release cycle and 30-day deadline for course updates, while another bemoaned the fact that the need for rapid content development leaves him or her time for nothing else. From dealing with bureaucratic red tape to managing mounds of content, L&D professionals have full plates!

Time management skills are essential when one has to meet deadlines and balance competing demands with an often shrinking pool of resources. “I’m being asked to more with the same or less” was a common refrain expressed by participants.

Instructional designers want their bosses to know that creative design takes time, and it is difficult for them to produce innovative, high-quality work when they feel rushed. Some complained about the pace, writing that their organizations expect them to “jump before we can walk when implementing new programs.”

A lot of companies today expect their L&D specialist to be a jack-of-all-trades. This is especially difficult for those who are a team of one responsible for both internal and external training. Many would agree with the Post-it note that said “striking a work/life balance” is a huge challenge.



RESOURCES FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

138 Tips on Saving Time, Money & Sanity in Your eLearning

eBook, January 6, 2014

Karen Forni

In this eBook, eLearning Guild members share 138 creative ideas and insights on how to reduce eLearning costs, save time without sacrificing quality, and maintain your sanity while continually trying to do more with less..

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Building a Project Charter (in 45 Minutes or Less)

Instructional Development Spotlight online event archive, July 20, 2016

Lou Russell

People are managing multiple projects that require multiple stakeholders. Focus is a valuable commodity. Discover the secret to project velocity—the project charter. View the recording and read the handout.

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Surviving to Thriving as a One-person Training Team

DevLearn conference archive, November 16, 2016

Bonnie Roberts and Matthew Saavedra

Are you the trainer, instructional designer, coordinator, project manager, and business analyst for your organization, all in one? As a one-person training team, it's common to feel challenged by constant time management, project intake and prioritization, development, delivery, and analysis you have to do on a regular basis. Learn some strategies for success from this conference session slide deck handout.

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Learning Experience Design

June 10 & 11, 2020

Multimedia for Learning

August 5 & 6, 2020

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EFFECTIVELY MANAGING MY TEAM

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Getting everyone on the team onboard
- ✓ Training IDs to be graphic designers
- ✓ Getting the WHOLE team working together
- ✓ Getting the team to change the mindset of “What is Learning?”
- ✓ Instructional designers and trainers are not open to other’s ideas
- ✓ Having a completely virtual team, across many time zones
- ✓ Coworkers understanding that they do not know more than me about L&D!



EFFECTIVELY MANAGING MY TEAM

Managing a team is similar to conducting a symphony. The team leader (conductor) must assure that there is the right blend of workers (musicians) and that they all perform their jobs (play their instruments) harmoniously.

DevLearn participants agree that effectively managing a team is one of their greatest challenges. They must get staffing right, hire talented people, and upskill less experienced members. They are responsible for building camaraderie—as well as a workable infrastructure where people are open to each other’s ideas. They must encourage communication and foster positive relationships, while also answering to upper management and delivering on expectations.

Additionally, they must address apathy, provide resources that help colleagues stay up-to-date, and get everyone on the team onboard when it comes to organizational initiatives and priorities.

A common concern among attendees is how to manage virtual teams, when members are dispersed across various time zones or when teammates in remote locations lack reliable access to communication. They seek actionable strategies and solutions that address these 21st century concerns.



**RESOURCES FOR
EFFECTIVELY
MANAGING MY TEAM**

Activating the Manager’s Role in Supporting Learning

Making Learning Stick online conference, February 19, 2020
Laura van den Ouden

Effective talent development can positively impact employee engagement, innovation, and long-term growth. In this session handout and video, learn how to inspire managers to actively support learning.

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Building a Multi-Disciplinary Team for Creating VR Simulations

Realities360 2018 conference archive, June 26, 2018
Kevin Barrett

If you’re building VR simulators, you need to either scale up your company’s production capabilities or get more productivity out of the staff you have. Here are some tips for how to build a multi-disciplinary team..

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Why L&D Teams Need to Embrace Talent Management Systems

Learning Solutions, January 7, 2019
Pamela Hogle

Modern talent management systems complement the LMS and can play a key role in employee development and retention.

WORKING WITH SMES

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Getting time with SMEs
- ✓ Unresponsive SMEs
- ✓ SMEs who have a fear of tech or mistrust of adapting content
- ✓ SMEs who can't edit the "nice to know" from the "need to know"
- ✓ Getting them to buy off on timelines
- ✓ They don't align with our mission
- ✓ My biggest challenge is the SME who was not told to shut up and listen

WORKING WITH SMES



When working on projects, L&D professionals often rely on subject matter experts (SMEs) for their expertise and advice. Oftentimes these relationships are fraught with tension. SMEs usually come from the academic community rather than from within the organization, and their values or priorities may not align with the company mission.

SMEs, who generally have consulting businesses or other commitments, are notoriously busy and it can be hard to get their undivided attention. A common complaint among L&D practitioners is that SMEs do not give them enough time. Others lament that even after attracting the attention of a SME, it can be difficult to energize or engage with them.

According to L&D professionals at DevLearn, one of the biggest challenges when working with SMEs is getting them to commit and adhere to timelines. Beyond being frustrating, this can contribute to project delays. SMEs are often accused of making a project more complicated than necessary by providing too much information. In the opinion of some L&D practitioners, this creates what it commonly referred to scope creep. They would prefer SMEs be more concise when sharing information.



**RESOURCES FOR
WORKING
WITH SMES**

Practical Tips for Instructional Designers Working with SMEs

eBook, April 30, 2019

The instructional designer and subject matter expert relationship might not always be smooth, but it is important in keeping content up-to-date and exciting. This eBook presents overarching themes, advice, and a few dozen tips for working with SMEs.

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Transforming What SMEs Know to What Learners Need

Making Learning Stick online conference, February 19, 2020
Diane Elkins

Your learners have needs, and your SMEs have knowledge and experience. The two don't always line up. This video and handout offer five key strategies for working more effectively with SMEs.

Who Does What? Setting Expectations in SME Relationships

Learning Solutions, May 20, 2019
Pamela Hogle

A thorough launch meeting and document that sets out roles and responsibilities can help set expectations with SMEs..

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GETTING BUY-IN FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Balancing the needs of business with the needs of learners, and getting everyone to agree
- ✓ Convincing folks to listen to learning science, not myths or hype
- ✓ Convincing the powers that be of the values and benefits of blended learning
- ✓ My organization valuing L&D as a colleague rather than a means to an end
- ✓ Getting the higher-ups to understand the importance of gamification
- ✓ Inspiring the company to support our learning vision
- ✓ People still have no idea just what it is I/we do



GETTING BUY-IN FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Getting the C-suite to understand and value the role of learning and development is a perennial problem. This is true, even when it can directly benefit managers on a personal level. One L&D professional described his or her greatest challenge as “educating executives on why they need development, even in their exec/leader role.”

Sometimes leadership will acknowledge the need for training but reject new or creative approaches to delivering it. L&D professionals get frustrated when the management mantra is: *This is the way we’ve always done it*. Although many in L&D have moved beyond the status quo, getting their enterprises to understand the relevance of gamification, mixed realities, and even microlearning can be a challenge.

Another issue is securing support from leadership. “We are often left out of the conversation, even though it impacts us” lamented one DevLearn attendee. Another individual wished their organization “valued L&D as a colleague rather than as a means to an end.”

Whether it’s convincing their superiors to listen to learning science as opposed to myths or tempering expectations with reality, many L&D professionals perceive a disconnect as to the role of L&D within their organizations. As one attendee noted: People still have no idea just what it is I/we do.



**RESOURCES FOR
GETTING BUY-IN
FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

[Can You Communicate With Senior Leaders in Their Language?](#)

Learning Solutions, December 16, 2019

Marjan Bradeško

Effective communication of ideas to senior managers often requires a different vocabulary. Drop the jargon and the acronyms; match their reality.

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[Building Buy-In: Tips for Pitching New Ideas to Stakeholders](#)

DevLearn 2019 conference archive, October 23, 2019

Derek Brezette

How do you persuade your department or client to share your vision? A successful pitch will show how your idea will come to life and improve eLearning performance. By investing in the effort and correctly framing your pitch with a clear “hook,” you’ll increase your chance of success. In this session handout discover specific strategies..

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[Best Practices: Get Learners and Stakeholders to Adopt New eLearning Technology](#)

Learning Solutions, June 30, 2014

Stacy Lindenberg

New eLearning implementations and their supporting technologies—from learning management systems and learning record stores to mobile devices, social media, and performance support—introduce change in organizational life. End user and stakeholder resistance to change can defeat even the “perfect” system. Here are five key practices to gain the support needed for success..

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BUDGET/RESURCES

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Lack of resources
- ✓ We are constantly asked to do more with less: less money, less staff, less resources, less time
- ✓ Resources vs. priorities
- ✓ I must make do with what I have
- ✓ Launching learning without appropriate admin structure
- ✓ I operate on a shoestring, never quite having what I need or want
- ✓ Time, money, and people ... never enough!



BUDGET/ RESOURCES

Resource management is the practice of planning, scheduling, and allocating people, skills, money, and technology to a project or program. In essence, it's the process of allocating limited resources to achieve the greatest organizational value.

In most enterprises, money is allocated based upon business priorities. L&D professionals bemoan the fact that they often lack the budget and/or resources necessary to create and deliver the type of training they want. It behooves L&D professionals to make the case that continual learning is important, and that inflexible or limited budgets place limitations or restrictions on what can be done.

DevLearn attendees posted notes that read, “We are constantly asked to do more with less: less money, less staff, less resources, less time” and “I operate on a shoestring, never quite having what I need or want.” One noted frustration about launching learning without appropriate admin structure.

Navigating dwindling budgets and dealing with inadequate resources are pervasive challenges. L&D professionals need to step up to this challenge.



**RESOURCES FOR
BUDGET/
RESOURCES**

[eLearning on a Shoestring](#)

Research library, September 26, 2018
Jane Bozarth

Starting with a smaller budget—and always being on the lookout for the best low-budget tools—may not be a bad thing. Jane Bozarth interviews three L&D practitioners with different backgrounds and circumstances who discuss their challenges, solutions, favorite low-budget tools, and the lessons they have learned while being on shoestring budgets.

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[You Have 1 Month and No Money to Create an Online Training Program. Go!](#)

Learning Solutions 2019 conference archive, March 28, 2019
Jessica McLin

In this handout from a case study session, you'll learn how one company made the most of limited resources by repurposing existing content, employing blended learning formats, and collaborating with learners and stakeholders.

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[6 Useful Tips for Designing on a Budget](#)

Learning Solutions, October 30, 2018
Susan Jacobs

Many designers must deliver eLearning on a shoestring budget. Here are 6 useful tips..

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CREATING CONTENT

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Too much content to create, and not enough time to devote to it
- ✓ Requestors who want training on incomplete processes and cannot articulate vision or set clear expectations
- ✓ Multiple state requirements
- ✓ Trying to find a single solution for a global company
- ✓ Quantity training being valued over quality
- ✓ Allowing user gen(erated content) in a risk-averse culture
- ✓ How to sustainably extend learning



CREATING CONTENT

Developing, delivering, and even storing content is a big concern. In terms of developing content, L&D practitioners cite a variety of challenges. These include requestors who want training on incomplete processes and cannot articulate vision or set clear expectations, as well as requests for training that practitioners don't deem necessary.

They struggle with stakeholders who “expect them to develop amazing content in 10 minutes” and those who value quantity training over quality training. They wonder how to balance learning versus compliance, how to shift clients away from “death by PowerPoint,” and how to sustainably extend learning.

Some expressed frustration about content that must meet multiple state requirements, be WCAG accessible, or pass a stringent government approval process, while others complained about having to abide by strict branding guidelines. Some routinely wrestle with global concerns—such as finding a single solution that is appropriate for a global enterprise or ensuring the quality of translation in bilingual courses. A common concern is the lack of feedback L&D professionals receive on new training content.

When delivering content, a common concern is how to distribute it to a geographically dispersed staff. Some debate whether they should allow user-generated content in their risk-averse culture. Others worry about facilitating quick and easy access to content.



**RESOURCES FOR
CREATING
CONTENT**

KEYNOTE: Digital Storytelling Doesn't Have to Be Boring

Learning Solutions 2019 conference archive, March 26, 2019
Baratunde Thurston

There's too much content in the world; getting people's attention is hard. In this video, Baratunde Thurston discusses how to tell stories in fun and empathetic ways. It will transform how you see digital storytelling in your own work.

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How to Create a Content Strategy that Resonates with the Modern Learner

DevLearn 2017 conference archive, October 25, 2017
Stuart Grossman

Learning leaders need to rethink how they create, manage, and deliver content to meet the needs of the modern workforce. In this session handout, learn about the key elements of content strategy and the shifts in mindset required to move from a course-driven approach to an object-based approach that enables any type of learning, in any context, on any device.

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Diversify Content and Structure to Create Global eLearning

Learning Solutions, December 20, 2017
Pamela Hogle

Creating global eLearning entails more than translating content. Awareness of cultural differences can help presenters avoid misunderstandings.

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ENGAGING LEARNERS

Some of the actual posts:



- ✓ Knowing our diverse set of customers' journeys and learning needs
- ✓ Creating connected experiences
- ✓ Reaching learners without device access or information literacy
- ✓ Getting people to commit to starting—and completing—training
- ✓ Appealing to older learners and younger learners, all at once
- ✓ Earning learner engagement
- ✓ Learners wanting to be paid for every minute of learning



ENGAGING LEARNERS

Enterprises expect their corporate training and development initiatives to narrow the skills gap and enhance performance. In order to deliver on this, L&D professionals must first capture the attention of learners. This can be a struggle when much of the workforce is busy or apathetic.

“Getting end-user buy-in for eLearning is tough,” wrote one DevLearn attendee. “It’s hard to reach the people who won’t even look at training,” admitted another. “People are lazy and distracted” noted a third.

Enticing employees to commit to starting—and completing—training is an ongoing challenge. Part of the blame is subject matter that is uninspired or dull. How, for example, can one make finance systems or compliance training fun and engaging?

One L&D professional wrote about “earning” learner engagement, which is an interesting concept. Some strive to achieve this by “knowing our diverse set of customers’ journeys and learning needs” or creating connected experiences. Another earns learner engagement by “keeping up with learner expectations, and constantly upping the innovation.”



**RESOURCES FOR
ENGAGING
LEARNERS**

[In Real Life: Don't Forget the 'Person' in Personalization](#)

Learning Solutions, March 20, 2018
JD Dillon

It's easy to lose sight of the individual "person" in personalized learning.
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[Creating Engagement When Content Is Untouchable](#)

Learning Solutions conference archive, March 20, 2014
Ben Kobulnicky

In this case study handout, discover how one organization's L&D department increased new employee consumption of industry-standard, vendor-supplied eLearning using an engaging, game-based approach.
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[Transform Your LMS into a Veritable Buffet of Learning](#)

Learning Solutions, February 22, 2019
Joanne Astorga

If you transform your LMS into an easy-to-access buffet of learning loaded with easy-to-consume courses, employees will eat it up and hunger for more..
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