LEARNING
Pivots
eBook

By: Elliott Masie
Foreword: Rob Lauber

12 Learning Leader Chapters
Perspectives from 230 Learners
150 Learning Pivots Quotes

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Welcome to the
Learning Pivots **eBook**

**Click here to watch a video from
Elliott Masie.**

Introduction by

Elliott Masie:

We are publishing this free eBook in October 2020 as a real-time collection of perspectives, impressions, frustrations, innovations, and predictions from learning leaders, learning professionals, business leaders, and learners themselves.

2020 has been a massively unprecedented time. And there is no clear prediction of what our next businesses, careers, and learning futures will be.

I have used the word "pivots" to describe the range of reactions, adaptions, and accelerations these pandemic times have triggered. Learning has been on the forefront of leading, facilitating, and adjusting to these pivots. We believe the range of pivots will expand and evolve in the months and, yes, years ahead.

I want to personally thank the team at The MASIE Center, our colleagues in our Learning CONSORTIUM, and business associates and friends around the world who have contributed to the rapid curation of the content for *Learning Pivots.*

Look forward to more eBooks from The MASIE Center in the time ahead and please keep in touch: emasie@masie.com and www.masie.com.

Yours in Learning,

Elliott Masie

LEARNING Pivots eBook

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Introduction by
Rob Lauber

Rob Lauber
*Former Chief Learning Officer
at McDonald's
and founder of
XLO Global, LLC*

Q: **When you hear the phrase "learning pivots", what does that mean, represent, or trigger for you?**

A: I think for me it triggers the ongoing evolution of L&D. There have been big moments across the years where Learning & Development has had to shift and move its focus or change its focus or adapt to a new focus. For me, that's what I think of when I think of learning pivots. I think of now, for example, the last six months in the pandemic. We've had to pivot again and new practices are being employed, new lessons are being learned, and new approaches are being experimented with.

Q: **Learning pivots are built with many parts, like "where" learning occurs now. What are some of the other dimensions in which you see learning pivoting?**

A: Well, it's funny because I think about learning pivots as the "how" vs. the "where". The mainstreaming of virtual learning is an example of pivoting in Learning & Development in the last year, even though it's been around since the 90s, so it's not like it's a new idea (I remember when Cisco acquired WebEx in the early 2000s). But the mainstreaming of it for me is a pivot because it's a "how" and "where" that those external to the L&D world may have been more skeptical about in terms of its efficacy. The pandemic has forced people to see that it actually can be an extremely effective tool. As a result, I think businesses are pressuring L&D leaders now to engage it much more upfront than maybe before.

Q: **How do learning pivots affect learners? How are they pivoting right now?**

A: Learners' pivots right now are less destination driven - in terms of physical destination - and they are taking another step closer to that on-demand kind of experience that we seem to be pivoting towards, albeit slowly, over time.

Q: **Do you think the learner is excited by, accepting of, resistant to, or overwhelmed by these pivots?**

A: I think the learner is accepting overall. I think it's a function of their experience. I think that the onus is now on Learning & Development to create a development experience that drives acceptance, and I think overall we've done a pretty good job with that. Learning professionals have learned quickly what works and what doesn't work on length of time, on levels of engagement, on "gosh, I really need to learn how to use a breakout room in Zoom". It's those kinds of things that I think make the experience much more acceptable for learners, more so than in the past where it's been straight, one-way delivery: chat your questions in and maybe, if we have time, we'll answer them.

Q: **Is the learner aware that she's in a learning mode? If she is in an environment with lots of resources that may be helping her perform, does she think of it as a learning moment?**

A: I do think there's a move toward a less conscious method of learning. Probably 15 years ago, people started talking about informal learning, but I do think that people are beginning to think about this more in the context of a natural part of the way they work as opposed to a timeout, walk away, go someplace and sit in a room to have an experience and then come back to reality. So, I think the move is closer to but not yet all the way toward happening real time while they're in the context of their work. I think there's still pivot work to do there; that's the opportunity.

Q: **You are and have been a Chief Learning Officer in multiple organizations. For the person that's sort of heading up, shaping, and caring about learning, what's this pivot been like for them and from your own experience?**

A: I think the pivot has really been about making sure that you're tightly connected to what's most important in the business at the moment: for the short term and for the long term. So, when you think in the context of a crisis, either within your organization or within the broader environment (e.g., a pandemic takes over), how is the L&D leader connecting into what's most important for the business right now and, in essence, being very explicit that that is the priority for the L&D organization to address? I don't know that that's necessarily a pivot, because I think good L&D leaders do that as a regular part of the way they work.

But I think the urgency in this particular crisis is really a pivot where people are having to turn on a dime maybe within a day or two days vs. 3-8-week kind of timeframes, and that pivot has been really important. It shows more agility in the organization than maybe traditionally has been seen.

Q:

A:

How do you think the learning professional is needing and choosing to pivot right now?

I think I call it a push to pivot – for the majority. Let's put it that way. I think that they're being forced to pivot. Take the comment I just made about agility, for example. I think it's driving L&D people to a model of, for example, three question analysis, five minutes on design, a day on development, and then it's out the door. I think that's a new normal, particularly if you're a purist at instructional design, for example. It's probably very much challenging your paradigm. And I think it's also forcing execution over perfection, which we know is very important in the L&D profession. People like the perfect experience. I think that's being compromised, but in a positive way, because I don't think the business needs a perfect experience to move forward.

Q:

A:

Is this pivot really just a pandemic-created reality?

There have been moments in my now 30 plus years in Learning & Development - I've been an activist for a long time - that have driven and that have been catalysts to significant change and evolution, where there's evolution and there's revolution. I think that on a large scale, times of crisis create revolution. Probably they accelerate evolution in the feeling of being very revolutionary in our approaches. I think that the advent of desktop computers and the Internet and the birth of virtual learning – these experiences weren't even possible 25 years ago. Moments in time drive them to become really mainstream. I think there's been a lot of evolution and experimentation. The financial crisis back in 2007 forced a lot of people to do things differently. Tight labor markets force people to get very creative and do things differently. So, I think that there are outside forces that have really been catalysts for change.

Q:

A:

What would be your prescription for the skills that our field needs to adopt and strengthen?

I've been thinking a lot about that. I've been thinking about whether L&D really needs to be the distributor of their skills to the rest of the organization. Take, for example, a systems design, which is probably an old but also still current paradigm where I still see internally developed software that requires three-day training classes to learn how to use it. In comparison, I can learn how to bank on my mobile phone in about five minutes because that workflow is obvious. So, I do think that there's still work to do. I think the L&D organization could serve itself better by spreading out its specialization and its experience in its knowledge, becoming more the facilitator and the enabler in the organization as opposed to the controller in the organization. I do think that's still a big opportunity that's sitting out there for the future. L&D can enable that to happen in the organization.

Q: **As part of the pivot, is it an opportunity to focus on data or are we so stressed out that data is a "nice to have someday" objective?**

A: Well, I think it's really important. Data should drive the insights that you need to determine the outcomes that you're going for at the start of something, and data is needed to then sort of measure the impact: did you move the measurement? Did you move the performance of the organization? In terms of the direction that you wanted it to go, all that requires data. I feel like in the time of the pandemic, data has taken a bit of a backseat. You don't see it being talked about nearly as much. I suspect we'll come back to it. I can see 12 months from now lots of articles on what did we actually learn and what is the data. Show us. I think that will pop out pretty loudly and pretty quickly. But I do think that the data conversation continues to be important and needs to be front and center, particularly for me and now in the community. I think it needs much more emphasis on the front end, actually, where most of the conversation today is actually on the back end.

Q: **What do you think may be some of the longer-term implications of these pivots for learning and the business?**

A: From what I've seen, not only where I work but also externally, I think there's a bigger drive on this notion around well-being. For me, well-being is like saying the Pacific Ocean. Are you in Hawaii or Australia or in California? It's three different views! But I do think that this notion and awakening about well-being really matters, especially watching people's well-being erode during the pandemic and executives understanding that it needs to be attended to really quickly. I think it's a lasting piece that will continue to be around, which is a bit of an added dimension from an L&D perspective. It's been out there, but I'd say it's been sort of on the sideline in organizations and really seen as a "nice to have" elective kind of piece. I think it's moving much more towards the mainstream. It's a requirement in an organization, and in a great people-focused organization, it's going to become a requirement that we care not only about organizational performance, but we care about your performance. And I don't mean your performance and getting the numbers. I mean, your ability to perform. I think that piece is an example of one thing that I think is going to have a lasting approach as we go forward that we didn't really see in the mainstream before.

Q: **There is some degree of fatigue in our workforce: fatigue with the pandemic, economic uncertainty, issues around racial injustice, etc. What's your take on the fatigue factor?**

A: I think about fatigue as driven more by uncertainty, when people can't see the end in sight. So racial injustice is a good example. We're all talking about how it needs to change, but nobody's really talking about what the destination looks like, other than sort of adjectives, but not in a concrete way. There's no "here are six actions we need to take and how we're going to change the way we do business". And I think that drives a bit of fatigue: the uncertainty of the duration of how long the journey is immediately creates fatigue for people.

I think about driving 500 miles and 50 miles in I'm like, "Oh my gosh, are we there yet?" Whereas if you're just driving 50 miles, you're like "that's piece of cake". I do think there's a psychological factor there that's actually driving the fatigue because people can't see where the end is for the pandemic and for social justice issues. Those types of pieces feel voluminous and long and don't feel concrete at all. That's creating fatigue for people.

I also think that traditionally we've been very long term focused. All of us think about the longer term: two, three years, whatever it might be. I don't think anyone could give you a good picture of what three years from now looks like. They can prognosticate and speculate on it, but it'll be really interesting to see in December what the 2021 predictions are. I don't think anybody can predict December right now.

Q: How does one project ahead in learning in a time of deep uncertainty?

A: I think staying tied to the direction that your business is trying to go. I look at organizations that I've worked in that I still pay attention to and the directions that they're trying to go: what's on their agenda driving forward. Those things are pretty well articulated. They're influenced by what's going on right now, and there are still lessons being learned, but we're far enough in that some things are obviously going to influence and drive strategy.

So if I take McDonald's as a simple example, the need to drive digital adoption for ordering is higher. It's an obvious thing right now in a pandemic to do, but there's also a big longer-term benefit to doing that as well. I can look inside the organization and I can sit there and say, "Well, that's not going away." We can be focused on that for the long term about how we develop the acquisition of people inside the organization to really understand how to leverage it and drive it, move it, and that can be aspirational in terms of building out a roadmap that's very predictable. So I think you get a balance. You can find the balance by really looking towards where your organization is headed and what the strategy is going to be for the business, because everyone's got one, even if it might not actually come true, or something else might disrupt it. I think your best piece of stability is to tie yourself to business strategy and be thinking about that as you go forward.

Q: What do you think we're going to see ahead in the area of technologies that would impact the world of learning and development?

A: I'll go back to a comment I made earlier around what is going to be outside-driven or inside-the-function-driven. I do think that technology is advancing in ways that will disrupt the traditional model of L&D – the silo of it. It'll be challenged as we go for sure. I do think that technology is going to enable a lot. There are already products that mean you don't need to know instructional design. They provide a workflow for you to plug your content into. I also think that there is advancement with things like AI and augmented reality. Less so with virtual reality but more augmented reality. I think those hold the biggest promise to completely disrupt people's ability to learn in the moment that they actually need it. If I put my future hat on and look ahead 10 years from now, I expect that that will be very mainstream and a big part of how things are made and designed and that people in the workplace will use them.

When the ice cream machine breaks in the restaurant, somebody could put a headset on and press a button to connect into a live expert center. An expert could see what they see and tell them how to solve the

problem right there. The restaurant worker could have little to no training, but somebody could be guiding them through how to fix it. I do think that's a "now" kind of possible reality that could happen in the organization. I think it's a matter of moments until things like that become very mainstream across a lot of businesses.

Q: What is your hope for learning organizations to authentically implement better/deeper strategy or more alignment?

A: The challenge is being viewed by the organization as a partner driving strategy as opposed to just part of the implementation of strategy downstream. My pursuit has been how do we move upstream in that conversation with legitimacy and with value. And I do think that's a challenge in L&D organizations because I know many that are in what I call the "Order Taker" category. They wait for someone to say they need three days of training and then go and create it. And they do a really good job with it, but they're missing out on the opportunity, particularly if the trend I talked about earlier becomes a reality. Someone will turn and say, "I don't even need to go to them. We can just build it this way", and off it goes. And the L&D organization is going to be sitting there saying, "Hey, wait a minute! We're supposed to do that! That's our job!" I do think that is around the corner. If you're the point person for training in your organization, your ability to work upstream on projects and initiatives and strategies is going to become really, really important. Thinking about that and influencing the direction to minimize learning and development, frankly, is probably a really important and valuable skill that needs to be leaned into.

> I've seen a much stronger desire for connection and belonging. Because learning events now bring others together virtually, the tolerance for that modality is much higher and the attention of our learners seems more focused. We've added more interpersonal conversation opportunities as well for our cohorts to build their communities.

- Aimee Windmiller-Wood
Head of Leadership Institute, Amazon

> Throughout the pandemic, learning and development practitioners have been forced to reimagine, realign, restructure, and revise everything we thought we knew. It has forced us to challenge our thinking, our process, and our outcomes. Through this, we have become innovators, leaders, and change agents to set the stage for the future of learning...the time for change is now, and L&D is leading the way!

- Erin DeStefanis
Learning Advocate

> This opportunity has allowed learning professionals to assess if their programs really meet the needs of diverse audiences.

- Carmen L. Henry
Manager,
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

Interview with

Elliott Masie

Elliott Masie
*CEO of The MASIE Center
& Chair of
The Learning CONSORTIUM*

Q: **Why are you producing this eBook? What is your goal?**

A: We are recording this interview at the beginning of October 2020. Probably since about March 5th of this year, my email, my phone, my text messages, my social media correspondence, etc. have been full of a very common question: in this era of pandemic, what will happen to the world of learning and development?

I've been honored to be in discussions and dialogues with literally over 100,000 learning colleagues around the world during the last seven months. It's very key for me to note and now to publish a book that indicates the extent to which learning has had to – on an emergency basis – change what we do and how the world of learning, whether it's corporate or K-12 or higher ed, has had to stretch what digital eLearning technology could be about. At the very same time, it's been very obvious that learning is changing because businesses are changing. Businesses are changing not only because of the pandemic, but they have a new set of needs to meet for their customers, their employees, and their stakeholders.

So, I took a deep breath and said, "Let's publish a book. Let's publish a very, very quick book that would take the pulse of learning leaders, chief learning officers, people who are in the learning marketplace, and learners themselves." We have interviews with over 200 of those learners and what our colleagues around the world perceive about learning changing. I'm going to use the phrase "pivoting" because these changes are radical. Some of them may be temporary, but I'm guessing that some of them may be permanent. This book has been put together and curated to bring the thoughts of hundreds of people from around the world together. It's accurate as of October 20, 2020 and we'll see what it looks like and how learning is pivoting in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

Q: **You've seen a new set of needs from customers, from businesses, and from learning teams following the needs of customers and businesses. What are those changing needs? What needs have shifted since earlier this year?**

A: In ordinary times, most learning would be statutory or triggered by compliance, new hires, or new systems. Learning would be career developing to help somebody take on a new job or help them aspire to and achieve a higher-level job. Learning would be situational, meaning that there was a need to address a social issue or a cultural dimension.

In our current times, the drivers of learning are radically different. What's driving learning is adaption. Suddenly, we have employees who are working from home and they don't have the tools that they had at work. In these times, those things are developed to be structurally changing realities. For example, onboarding always involved "X" number of face-to-face meetings and then we brought people aboard

knowing that the first few days were really for culture and absorption. Now, organizations are hiring people they've never physically met and their rate of starting is much faster. And in these times, the needs of the organization come down to a single big need, which is continuity of performance. At the end of the day, what we're hearing from business leaders is that with all of these changes, how do they continue to support the ability of their workforces to perform, even when all the tools, circumstances, proximity to others, etc. are all different.

There's one other very significant thing that's driving the role of learning right now (and we'll talk about this more), which is one of my most favorite, important, and powerful words: EMPATHY. Our world, our businesses, our employees, our customers, our suppliers, our families, our neighbors, our children, and our parents/grandparents who are in senior facilities are going through a time of shock and of difference. This is creating an enormous need for the organization to deploy empathy – not sympathy – but empathy, recognizing the stressed and difficult realities of all of those people and addressing ways in which the workplace can empathize (e.g., providing IT support to help them adapt). Finally, organizations need to be prepared for helping people who are fatigued, exhausted, and rattled so they can keep themselves together to stay employed at this critical and vulnerable time.

Q: Will you provide a couple examples of pivots that have really struck you as exemplary?

A: One example is when organizations have stumbled on the fact that their teams need some time together. In our organization, for the first few months of the pandemic, we came together every morning in a video room where we could see each other's faces, share stories, hear some of the challenges that people had with their kids or their relatives or their realities. Learning has pivoted to become an emotional support structure in many organizations for many employees. It's not an objective for most learning organizations and there's no good measure of it numerically, but I would argue it's probably the single most important thing that we can do (along with the other things we doing in learning).

A second pivot, which is obvious but let's just say it out loud, is that face-to-face classroom training, for the most part, came to a pause: not only at the workplace, but in K-12, higher ed, music education, religious education, etc. The organization suddenly had to go from doing maybe two or three eLearning modules or a couple of webinars to what became an avalanche or deluge of virtual, new adaption of learning.

One other pivot that I think is really important has to do with understanding the leader's role with a distributed workforce. Our leaders have needed to radically change their behavior at the same moment in which they're doing things they might not have any experience with, and we don't have any great models of that. The leader needs to know how to be connected, how to be managing with feedback, and how to deploy a workforce that is suddenly operating in very different terrain. That includes being able to do retention, promotion, in some cases move people on and in other cases be able to provide the voice of the company, and at the same time, pull their group together. I've seen radical pivots that learning had to make to help leaders with those tasks – or to clean up the mess when leaders have not been able to perform.

Q: You've chosen to make empathy a theme for both the work that you personally are doing, but also as a sort of guiding pillar for the field.

A: I've been in the learning field for 50 years. Along the way, I've been influenced by things like neuro linguistic programming, which argues that we need to look at the environment, even the physical environment, in which people operate to help them succeed. I've been influenced by the work of Ken Blanchard and Paul Hershey on Situational Leadership, which is about how we mediate and moderate what we do based on the maturity to task of the employee and the group. I've been deeply influenced by what Stephen M. R. Covey has done around trust to help us view trust not as some mystical thing, but as an actual skill that's based on people being able to make trusting and emotional connections. All my life, I've been influenced by the perception that learning happens only when the learner is curious and has a healthy degree of optimism that they're going to get the answer they need from the situation they're in.

When I put all of that together and I accept that we need to have good instructional design models, we need to have good models of assessment, we need to have good models to stack content, we need to know how to run learning management systems and learning experience systems – all of the logistics of what we do – the piece that worries me is that if we do all those things really well, but we are not empathetic with the reality of our learners and our customers in volatile moments of change, none of it will stick. None of it will Velcro. For me, empathy is the sauce that allows us to cook the elements. It is the first aid cream to apply to a wound. I think it ultimately respects the humanity of what a learning relationship is.

All my life, I've been drawn into the field of learning believing that it is this combination of an engineering action that we design perfectly and an act of humaneness where we connect with human beings. And we've been doing that since the days of cave people, when we did it around the fire without PowerPoint, and we've done it all the way through elements of on-the-job learning and eLearning. Empathy, to me, is the most fundamental approach that we in the learning field can and should use at this moment. It will provide balance and it will provide the fuel to make it through and beyond our crises.

Q: What advice do you have for people who are in the learning field about how their roles are changing and how they need to change?

A: Let's start at the top. Learning leaders right now must pivot to have a significantly greater set of contact, conversation, alignment, engagement, and collaboration with the business units, the business leaders, and the business realities of their companies. We've always talked about alignment and we've always talked about connection, but this is way larger. This is literally strapping yourself to the business that says, "We're running a restaurant chain and people aren't allowed inside," or "We're in a situation in which we used to go door to door to visit our seniors who we sold insurance to and now we can't knock on their doors," or "We need to move employees who have been working in low-risk areas of hospitals to instead be working in ICUs with COVID patients." In each of those instances, it's not about how good our learning skills are: it's about how good we are at listening, connecting, supporting, and becoming part of the business solution. In fact, it means the metrics of our impact are things like how we have allowed continuity at the business side.

For the people in the world of learning, the big shift has been that learners don't care if it's polished. They don't care if it has cute graphics. They don't overly care if it even smells like, looks like, tastes like, or is called a learning moment. In fact, I would argue that many of them don't want to be students: they want to do the job they're having a little bit of trouble doing right now. We need to accept that we've suddenly gone from being artists who create beautiful learning experiences to archaeologists who are creating flows of content that may not individually be artistic. We're seeing that most of the learning experiences people have right now are not labeled or perceived as classes. Instead, it's about getting together with a subject matter expert, it's watching a video, it might even be listening to a video that was done 10 years ago. Our learning folks need to understand that the mystique and mystery of the learning field is not that relevant, but we've never been more important, because that person who is working from home doesn't have two people on either side of them, helping them do their job. Learning has to figure out how to patch that and how to support that. People's confidence in what they do may be much lower when they are working in a very different situation and don't have the comfort of their co-workers around them.

Let's also be aware that it's not just the pandemic that's a defining force right now. It's also the physical relocation of a large percentage of our workforce in the world. Here in the United States it's an importantly increased awareness about issues of racial injustice. It's the uncertainty about what's happening in the overall economic arena and marketplace. It's our college-age kids who are suddenly interrupting their college by working remotely. What does that mean? Will they get a job at Google or Amazon or Fidelity easily? What we're really dealing with right now is a much broader spectrum. So the answer is not to build a few courses.

What we need to do is be really good at producing access to content and adapting that content and adding to it. I've said this many times: content, context, collaboration, community, certification, and even conflict, because we know that part of learning is you sometimes fail your way to success. As a learning person, you need to realize that it's going to look and feel different, but your skills and what you know – whether it's from experience, or from a book about how to be a good trainer, or you're mirroring what your third grade teacher used to do – are critically important. It's just that the package of those skills may look very different.

The third element is really important: the people that are thinking of coming into our field. I can't think of a more important place to be if you're starting your career than in the group that is providing support for learning, performance, and empathy. In fact, I don't care whether it's your career. Maybe it shouldn't be your career. Maybe it should be a launching pad for your career, because those skills and competencies will make you a better manager, a better salesperson, a better production person, a better engineer, and the like. Once again, you're not going to just be able to use what you got in your "Learning and Development 201" class. That book was written many years before today, so you're going to have to turn your eyes to see how your kids, your parents, and other relatives are learning. See what is happening right now that contextualizes that. Be drawn into learning because you are in love with curiosity, context, people, support, and solving problems! Wow, what better role is there? I don't know if it's going to be your career, but we can use you! You will get a doctorate in effectiveness by taking this as your job.

> " Authenticity is more important than ever before. Times are very stressful for many people. "Pep talks" do more harm than good. Leaders and educators need to honestly face the hard reality that exists for many people. (This does not apply to all industries. It does apply to many.) Flexibility is more important than ever before. Participants may have to leave what they are doing to check on family members. Distractions abound. We need a "backup plan" for many interactions. Efficiency is more important than ever before. Conferences with leisurely breakfasts and dinners are not happening. Attention spans are short on Zoom calls. Get to the point. If there is a lot of content, schedule more than one session. "

- Marshall Goldsmith
Author and Executive Coach

Q: You have a whole other set of skills and experiences in theater production. Are there any elements that you've drawn on from that world to help the work you're doing in the learning world during this very disruptive time?

A: Being a Broadway producer, there are three words that come to mind. The first is one that you all are very comfortable with: **STORYTELLING**. At the end of the day, whether we're producing a musical, a serious play, or something like what I'm working on now – a 45-minute wonderfully funny musical via Zoom that is all about Santa's elves who are working remotely heading into the Christmas season – it's about storytelling. And storytelling is a skill. It's an art and it's a critical predictor. If somebody is teaching you how to do something and they're a good storyteller, your probability of success goes way up. If they're a lousy storyteller, it goes way down. So, storytelling is one piece.

The second piece is **PRODUCTION**. I love the word "producer". I actually like the term "learning producer" more than learning designer, because as a theater producer, you have to bring designers into the role. They're designing costumes and they're designing music and scenery. The producer is making sure that all those pieces of design fit together to give a gestalt, wonderful experience. We've started to use the word "experience" a lot more in the world of learning and I accept that. I think we need to be producers to actually create those experiences. They're not just designed: they are in many ways a complex assembly.

The third piece of theater that has impacted me deeply is **TALENT**. Some of my best friends are top Broadway stars who have won Tony Awards. My good buddy and "brother from another mother" Telly Leung, who co-hosts our empathy concerts, was Aladdin for almost two years on Broadway. You come to understand the talent a person must have to get up each night in front of almost 2,000 people and sing, making them believe they're watching Aladdin on a real magic carpet. We need to understand talent better. I believe we sometimes hire people into their roles and assume we've screened them for talent, for potential realities. But talent is built, and it is built with hard work. It's built with lots of exercise and repetition. As I mentioned, it also requires some failure. And talent doesn't stop. Let's take a look now at the airlines. Sadly, most of the United States airlines had to stop operating. Many of them are getting back to work now, so what do you do for that flight attendant or pilot that hasn't flown in seven months? Some of their talent is inside of them, but they need to get feedback and they need opportunities for rehearsal. They need opportunities for safe failure.

Finally, as humans, we are open to be moved by the music, the art, and the stream of life around us. I hardly do a speech these days in which I'm not injecting some music or video of an artist. Imagine that we could be on Zoom and literally have thousands of people watching somebody sing from the corner of their apartment. I think there's a lot from theater that comes into learning, and I actually think we need to give ourselves the ability to break a couple of our models. I'm not putting down PowerPoint. It's been around for a while and plays an important role, but I'm not sure anybody says, "I saw a really good bullet on slide 4 and that's helping me survive right now!" I think we have to stretch our images of what powerful storytelling and good production, which get us the talent, are all about.

Q: Whether we call it reboarding or rebooting, what does the future of learning look like after we get through some of these pivots and changes? What do you hope to see?

A: The process of reboarding is one in which we don't have a lot of experience. The learning and development community has had to become enormously smarter about physical health and safety. Organizations are saying, "We're going to restart our office, but you're going to have to wear a mask," or "You're going to be 6 feet from someone else," or "You're not going to be coming in contact with anyone else". During this pandemic, there are people who have stretched out to totally new roles and been doing very effective things, but when you bring them back into their cubicle, they might not be with the group they've been working in. We're going to have to deal with dynamic reorganization.

I think we're re-architecting the way in which some people work and live. There are those who know they can't really be on a meeting between 9 am – 2 pm if their child is learning online. Others start working at 5 am like I do. I think we need to re-architect and re-engineer what workdays look like. We're going to see some fundamental adjustments in what workforce deployment looks like as well. I think there may be more people who work part time. There may be others who choose to take a different route to where they're heading in life. By the way, the whole time we're doing all of this, we're onboarding, we're promoting, and people are choosing to retire (or not). There is a large swirl of activity that's happening.

I will tell you there are some great models of reboarding around. If we go back to empathy, I have a friend who's a Chief Learning Officer at an airline. My friend called me up and said, "I'm getting ready to furlough 18,000 employees." I don't know how anybody wakes up in the morning and thinks about what that really means, but I would argue that this organization is doing it with dignity, with care, with an idea that some people can eventually come back, and that they could be helped getting their next job or role.

We also need to reboot and re-board the learning function. Many learning professionals have picked up brand new skills during these past several months. Maybe you've found some wonderful video presenters who aren't in L&D, but they would be wonderful to include. Maybe you have some new data and need data analytics perspectives about that. I think we must, in some cases, edit or even rip up and rewrite our code of procedures or processes. We need to infuse in that code that this is happening at an amazing political time. We are in the midst of a political moment or chapter, so how do we honor that people will have different political positions as they're working together and organically sharing perspectives? We're at a time when career expectations have been changing pretty radically, so how do we deal with people's ladders or development? Finally, we're at a time when there are some very authentic things we need to do to deal with diversity, with inclusion, with injustice. We're going to have to acknowledge that when somebody sees cruel injustice on their TV screen, they might bring their resulting feelings to work, and that different things might be triggers for them. We've been able to see into the homes of many folks and understand that some of them don't have it as easy as others.

I'm going to end this answer with two words: AMBIGUITY and AUTHENTICITY. When I think about re-boarding or I think about pivots, there are two things we must do. First, embrace ambiguity. We don't know. We really cannot say with certainty what the next six months to a year will be about. At the same time, we need authenticity. We need to be authentic with people about what we know, what we don't know, and what the options are. That's more important than having a perfect Gantt chart of the 19 steps to an unknown or uncertain future. This is our time to reward ourselves as learning professionals and to be enormously open. Listen to your relatives who have been teaching kids from their homes. Listen to learners who are in third grade or ninth grade or their second semester of college. Actually listen to the young people you know and

ask what it's been like for them learning in a virtual space. I went to Stuyvesant High School in New York City and 80-90% of students there voted not to go back to traditional in-person school. They were concerned about their teachers, but they also felt that they could accelerate and take more courses with online learning.

Q: Elliott, what about you? Are you "rebooting" yourself?

A: Yes! The changing times and the PIVOTS of business, learning, and our societies must also be reflected in a personal sense of imagining the now and the future differently.

I am excited to be the young age of 70. I am thrilled that I am now in my 50th year in the learning and development world. I am amazed that the techie/nerd I was at age 16 is still a driver to me, as technologies and connectivity have grown radically. And, I am always looking at creating new chapters in my life – both professionally and personally.

Last year, I completed the sale of my annual Learning Conference. So, it is different to not be producing, marketing, or attending a big learning event in the fall. And then the pandemic hit, and everything is different. I have been keynoting and speaking at a wide range of events, from the comfort of my living room, with great lights, cameras, and sweatpants.

Our Learning CONSORTIUM has also evolved. Rather than get together a few times a year, we went to a fully virtual connection model. I have conducted over 150 briefings with learning leaders and hundreds of learning colleagues since March. Having thirty minutes of wonderful and open dialogue with business colleagues around the world, several times a day, is an amazing honor and will continue.

We've even evolved the physical Learning LAB that we built and used for 20 years, hosting face-to-face seminars with groups of 40 learning colleagues. We can't predict when the medical reality will change, so we are selling the building and our team is successfully operating from their homes in Saratoga Springs, New York City, and other states. The Learning LAB of the future may be more of a personalized eLab.

It is a time of rebooting. I even made up a logo to reflect the sense that Elliott Masie is rebooting!

elliott masie is rebooting

In January 2021, we will be announcing a new and evolved set of learning innovations activities that The MASIE Center and The Learning CONSORTIUM will be creating for global colleagues. I am looking forward to the next decade of working in the learning field. We will be working with senior CLOs and brand-new folks in the learning field, stretching the formats of learning. It will be exciting to help create new ways in which we come together as learning colleagues and leverage rapidly changing smart tech. Age 70 is the perfect time to reboot. I am pumped to be impacted by learning pivots and thrilled to pivot my professional passions and projects ahead. Stay tuned and watch www.masie.com for announcements. And, you can always send me a note to emasie@masie.com

Pivoting in a Pandemic

The learning industry experienced the "digital catalyst" of a lifetime in March of 2020. Learning leaders have been working to influence our organizations to embrace the digital learning environment as a strategy for many years, but not to the level of intensity that began with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many learning professionals had been working to stay in lockstep with the rise in digital delivery in our marketplace. Then, overnight, our workforce transitioned to a remote environment and was expected to deliver service in an unknown territory: the "VIRTUAL workspace".

Our team at Kroger Specialty Pharmacy went into high "pivot" mode working around the clock providing instantaneous resources to develop and upskill our associates in this new workspace. Our team's value was brought to a new level as we ramped up mobile learning, remote set-up steps, and an implementation of MS Teams as the primary communication tool. Our confidence grew as we conquered milestones that we didn't know were possible. I'd heard comments from my team over the years, like "It's not the same in the virtual setting", "Digital does not have the impact we are looking to achieve", "Technology always fails us" – but now it was not a choice! Our team was delivering in this space and doing it remarkably well. Instantly, we were streamlining across our sites. California, Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico were no longer in solo delivery but in unison. Our new hire onboarding became one program instead of individual programs at each facility. Our team recognized a sense of comradery we had not experienced before. We were all on the same virtual playing field and had truly become one.

Another pivot for our training delivery involved our 6-week certified trainer program that was originally a face-to-face didactic learning experience, delivered at each site by our training team. The outcome was a 12-week, interactive virtual program with an amazing graduation that meaningfully impacted participants.

As the remote experience began to settle in, leading in a virtual environment became a new capability expected of our leaders, so our Virtual Leadership Series emerged! Teamwork, collaboration, technical delivery advancements, new knowledge, and new skills have all been part of the pandemic's silver-lining. And, the agility of our learning professionals has demonstrated strength, which has proven tremendously valuable to our organization.

Lisa Cannata

Sr. Director Training
Kroger Specialty Pharmacy

Trudy Mandeville

*CEO and Doctoral Candidate
in Educational Psychology
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Learning Requires Skills… Not Styles

The future of learning and work requires adults who are self-regulated learners: properly motivated, engaged, and equipped with the learning skills they need to succeed in a complex learning environment like the workplace. Regardless of well-designed instructional programs, if learners lack these skills, the requisite knowledge and skill transfer will not occur. These skills are not styles. Learning styles are only comfortable strategies, well-worn, and sometimes ineffective in this ever-changing environment.

Self-regulated learning means that an individual demonstrates the ability to gather, analyze, and organize knowledge and then transform it into professional expertise. For some, this is simply getting a passing grade in a certification exam but for others it involves building complex professional skills. In an academic setting, teachers drive the learning bus. In the workplace, the individual drives their own learning bus, which requires skills beyond just turning the ignition, putting it in drive, and moving forward.

What defines a skilled, self-regulated learner? Efklides (2011), an expert grounded in the work of many, formulated a self-regulated learning model to include motivation, affect, and metacognition. Within this model, metacognition means that when learning a new task, a learner:

1.
Has personal awareness of their feelings and judgments.

2.
Can gather, analyze, and organize the requisite knowledge.

3.
Engages in the appropriate planning, monitoring, and reflection to achieve required outcomes.

The learner carries out these skills either individually or within a social learning experience.

For example, a skilled, self-regulated learner has been assigned use of a new app. They recognize that this learning task involves math, provoking feelings of difficulty. As a result, they identify their knowledge gaps, which they incorporate into their planning, monitoring, and reflection activities. Their resources include individuals with app expertise who can support their learning; and, they add any time needed to build their proficiency. They monitor their learning and change learning strategies as needed, like adding opportunities to practice. Finally, they use self-reflection when beginning to implement the app to help them determine additional required learning.

Therefore, learning skills, just like other job skills, must be coached, cultivated, and nourished. Relying on grade-point averages, degrees, or certifications as a barometer of learning ability fails on many levels. It may mean that this person did well in school, but not that they necessarily learned.

Ever heard the controversial notion that if you throw a baby into a pool, they will learn immediately how to swim because of their innate skills? Experts will tell you that this is not true. What about the notion that if you throw employees into the work pool, they will learn their jobs on their own because of their innate learning ability? Again, experts will tell you this is not true. Both are harmful. The first could hurt the child. The second hurts the economic growth of both employees and employers. This growth requires learning skills for individuals to manage their careers as the organization manages the disruptive waves of technology, climate change, or even pandemics.

Efklides, A. (2011). Interactions of Metacognition With Motivation and Affect in Self-Regulated Learning: The MASRL Model. Educational Psychologist, 46(1), 6-25. doi:10.1 080/00461520.2011.538645

> " This was the moment for Learning – a time we all needed to step up and be leaders in our organizations. L&D's depth of experience in asynchronous, inclusive, and remotely located work practices made us all inherently experienced in the challenges that each organization faced. Learning didn't need to pivot, in my view. Instead, we watched entire organizations pivot toward Learning for best practices and enabling business continuity. "

- Katie Giles,
Director of Talent Management, Humana

> " Creating and implementing learning strategy tactics in health care during this crisis has reaffirmed to me that regardless of how transformative or urgently we are pivoting, we must always remain anchored in empathy. "

- Diane Adams
Chief Learning Officer, Mount Sinai Health System

> " The learning community's pivot to virtual was like Nike's "Just Do It". We rapidly redesigned and redeployed classroom sessions and showed that learning could run at the speed of business. "

- Don Duquette
GP Strategies

The Emotional Impact of COVID on Employees

Brent Colescott
Learning Professional

We are in uncharted waters at this point in our COVID-19 response. My fear is that "social distancing" may be the cure that is worse than the problem in the long term. The result may be an emotional crisis far worse than the virus that impacts our personal and professional lives for years to come. Personal and emotional wellness will be on par for importance with the economic recovery in a post-COVID-19 world. I see five areas that will impact our "return to work" that will stay with us for the foreseeable future:

- **Loss of Human Contact**
- **Job Loss**
- **Loss of Loved Ones**
- **Loss of School and Impact on the Youngest**
- **Loss of our Routine**
- **What's Next?**

Social distancing is necessary to create a buffer for a highly transmittable contagion; however, I fear that the effect of social distancing can be as debilitating as the virus. People crave contact, but in its absence, we are creating new behaviors. The separation and quarantine will most likely contribute to anxiety upon a return to the workplace. The way we work and go about doing so is why HR will be so important in dealing with the post-COVID-19 workplace.

The loss of one's livelihood is devastating. Sure, there are industries that are hiring, which provides a glimmer of hope for those currently unemployed; however, how rewarding is a job that you have no passion for? It can fulfill a need in the short term, but many will long to go back to their calling.

Time to grieve the loss of loved ones is critical. The support of family, church, and/or friends has been taken away and will exact a cost. Families and therefore employees will be carrying a burden of grief that will be unhealthy for some time.

Students across the nation are at home and not at school. From Kindergarten through the highest Ph.D. programs, students are learning online. I fear the impact and lasting effect of this quarantine on the educational and emotional development of our young.

Many of us lost our routines with no knowledge of when they might return. We are "working remote, during a pandemic." Not quite the same as just "working remote." Simple things we took for granted are just gone for now. The uncertainty of when they will return becomes its own burden and grief. Even when we do return to a post-COVID-19 life, it will not be the same.

Who knows what's next! Everyone will be affected in some way. How we deal with these challenges today will aid in our recovery tomorrow. Our Human Resource professionals must emphasize the "Human" in HR. Our personal and professional lives will be tethered tightly together because of the pandemic. Work will continue as the results still matter, but how we go about achieving those results will be forever changed.

The Importance of Being Human:
Your Community of Learners in a Virtual World

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The opinions expressed below are those of the author and not of any organization with which she is associated.

Accompaniment. A relationship. Mutual recognition in each other's unique gifts and capabilities, and a commitment to learn together. It's the relationship that my students establish with each other and with me. Accompaniment is the core of Jesuit philosophy and educational mission.

So, how do you take this centuries' old educational philosophy and apply it to the virtual world?

• **Human-Centered:** Start with the foundation. Keep the human dimension at the forefront of planning and executing each live, synchronous session.

• **Shared Experience:** I exploit the virtual platform – a platform of immediacy. We all become vulnerable and incredibly human, especially when children, spouses, and pets unexpectedly join our "classroom". As students and instructors, we now bring our whole selves to the classroom. We begin to form a bond.

• **Commitment:** We emphasize that we have a learning commitment to each other. It's much easier to hold each other accountable to this commitment during a live, synchronous session because we have to truly stay present for each other to honor this mutual learning commitment.

• **Every-Day Learning:** I teach business law for organizational leaders. Our eight-week experiential learning project uses discussion forums and is a team project. The teams simulate a real-life legal issue, which they solve together. Students are graded on their collaboration, so they are forced to mount the "technology wall" to form the types of bonds that they would otherwise form in an in-person classroom environment.

• **Learning Colleagues for Life:** At the end of the eight weeks, many former students and I maintain that sense of community and belonging, extending our shared learning experience. We stay connected on social media. The "how" of instructing and facilitating education for the adult learner may have changed dramatically in the past twenty years, but what endures is the "why." The human-centered approach to training and education is even more relevant in our digital age.

Interview with
Bob Mosher

Bob Mosher
*Learning CONSORTIUM Dean
& CEO/Chief Learning Evangelist,
APPLY Synergies*

Q: **What is your broad, unstructured reaction to the phrase "learning pivots"? What does that mean for you right now?**

A: For me, it's always about context because of the work that I've been involved in. I think that's what learners always pivot on and we are in a context like never before. People's desire and need to quickly pivot, contextually pivot, and digitally pivot in a more open-minded and, in some ways, desperate way than they ever have before is causing a different change in our industry and the way we serve them.

Q: **How are organizations pivoting?**

A: The obvious pivot is to virtual. There are also the acceleration and opportunity pivots that are going on in a lot of organizations, both in the learning side and in the enterprise. Desperate times make for interesting efforts, so people have been pivoting on the issues of being a bit more receptive and open-minded to opportunities and accelerations of things that were not happening before or that we've had a difficult time getting through. Virtual is one of them. I've heard that repeatedly: people are saying, "I couldn't even get my CEO to get on anything virtual, let alone pay me to buy the platform. And I had to buy one in three days."

I think another pivot that I see very commonly is that managers are managing in a very different way. Without the world of face-to-face meetings, "come into my office for two seconds", "let's go out to lunch", being able to walk through the cubicles and get a sense of the energy and what's going on, how do you manage via distance? We hear all the time that managers are struggling with that.

The last pivot is that reality of the work-life balance of the new workflow of being home. How do you get that to work appropriately, stay a part of your team, get your work done, balance your family life, kids, the whole thing? It's forced a different way of looking at commuting to work and what a workday looks like.

Q: **Considering different learners are at different levels of experience and skill sets, what pivots have you seen them make? What has been difficult for them?**

A: The learner has stepped up in ways that I think would even surprise them. They've been able to not only survive but also thrive through this. In some ways that is going to create a more self-reliant learner than we've ever faced before. They're not going to passively sit back and accept having to wait for a class that will be out in four months. People have been forced into a world of survival that has also empowered them in new ways.

I think there's a struggle. People miss seeing each other. The social side of this is really interesting: the way we look at the classroom and the blend of that classroom coming back is going to be interesting. Why will we get people together? What will we use social time for in whatever we're allowed to do in the coming months or years? People crave and are going to appreciate and utilize the social component of learning in a lot of ways.

Lastly, their infrastructure has kind of fallen apart. Learners I've talked to have been very open about the fact that they didn't realize how many innate support structures they had around them – from Post-It Notes on their monitor to yelling over the cubicle to a co-worker and saying, "Hey, you're the Excel expert. Can you wander over here?" That was ripped out from underneath them in a matter of a day or two, when they got the notice that they couldn't come into work again and then couldn't for months! Reconstructing that support structure around them that they had just become accustomed to has forced some very interesting habits on their part, and also for some very interesting work on the content management and structure side from the L&D perspective. Making those assets available in new ways has been very different.

Q: **How has the situation of today accelerated, extended, and evolved workflow support?**

A: We went through this back in 2008 when the markets crashed. All of a sudden, the things we were comfortable with and paying for in training were challenged. Now, the human spirit in many ways has crashed and people's feeling of security and comfort has crashed. It's really put a spotlight on the workflow. What we're hearing over and over again that L&D departments are being asked to step up to help with is, "Help us understand what the new workflow is that our learners are in every day. What are the challenges? What are the demands? Where are they struggling? How do we define what the workflow is?"

We ripped the physical classroom out and virtual came along. It's been okay, but I think there have been some challenges. We've had to move things into the workflow in ways that I don't know if L&D was allowed to before, at least in some cases. It's really brought the spotlight to workflow learning: how to orchestrate assets effectively and how to enable a learner to use them vs. just make things accessible. There's a difference!

Lastly, the technologies that support workflow learning – LXP, EPSS, even SharePoint right now – are all being looked at very, very differently from a purchase perspective (this environment has accelerated the buy of many of those). At the same time, the integrity and design of our content repositories is being challenged, because they have been tested and pushed to the limit like never before. It's really bringing these things to the forefront. Frankly, it's been really crazy on a global scale. It is a global problem that we're dealing with.

Q: ### How does the learner have to pivot and prepare for workflow learning?

A: I wish we looked at this from that perspective more often, because one of the first things I learned about moving into workflow learning is you are now on learners' turf. This is their domain. There are two things learners really must shift around on. Number one, they have to be ready. They have to be prepared to be a part of the conversation. They are going to contribute to the assets, they're going to be asked to maintain some of the assets, they're going to be asked to share assets. Content curation is really brought to the forefront by this.

Number two, learners have to be prepared to pull and not wait for things to be pushed to them. They have to be more aggressive and take responsibility for utilizing these things. I get asked all the time how to know if performance support and workflow learning are working. My first answer is, "Well, is it being used? Because, in the workflow, people will use things that are helpful and they run from things that are not." Learners need to take ownership for that but it's at least a two-sided street. You're only going to consume a meal if it's offered to you or if you know where to find it, as hungry as our learners are. It's really causing a more independent and more engaged learner in the content and the assets that they're using.

Q: ### The learner at home right now is under different types of stresses, whether it be isolation or the opposite. How are they pivoting when they're not in an ideal work environment?

A: It goes back to good old-fashioned time management. I was talking with someone who used to have an hour commute. When he got into the office, he went to the coffee pot, talked with a few co-workers, etc. Then, anywhere between 4 pm – 6 pm in the evening, he turned around and did the same thing in reverse. When he started working from home, his commute became a 2-minute walk and suddenly he was done with his workday by 1 pm.

We're also hearing the complete opposite, with moms and dads and two-year-old's and six-year-old's and kids and dogs in the background. Scheduling a meeting at 9 am for a team is very hard, because that's when we send the kids off on the bus or that's when the virtual classroom starts for them and bandwidth drops.

It's not only time management: it's also managing the environment that's around me, where it even gets down to where do I sit in my home? Where do I take a meeting? It's really an interesting dynamic between time management and managing what is around you.

Q: ### Beyond virtual platforms, what are you starting to see or hope to see as tech is used differently in this environment?

A: My bias is around EPSS and the reality of them being brought to the forefront as a way to manage the workflow. They're not our Granddad's pop-up menus in tech anymore. These things are robust content management, workflow management, process management tools that I wish our industry would take a closer look at. I think the LXP is suddenly starting to find its place. It's one of those tools that vendors couldn't even explain, or if I asked five vendors what an LXP was, I'd get five different answers. Now, we're in a very unique position, different from where we were before, and I think that has been a trigger

for that platform to be utilized more, because it just didn't seem to get enough energy or traction around it when work was normal and we had all the tools that surround us.

Lastly, I think there are interesting and emerging peripheral tools that are making the virtual platforms more powerful (e.g., virtual whiteboarding and other meeting applications that lay over the top of virtual tools that allow me to find a cohort, socially gather, etc.). Quizzing software is something as simple as that. When people designed Zoom and other platforms, they were pivoting on meetings – not necessarily pivoting on instruction. I think these peripheral technologies that are enabling both the virtual experience itself and what happens after that ends – when I'm in the workflow – those are ones that are winning the day and that I'm seeing emerging in the work that I do.

Q: **What are the skill sets that our learning and development community needs to accelerate and develop even beyond this chapter of the pandemic?**

A: I'll give you three:

The term "performance consultants" has been thrown around a lot in HR and other industries, but it really is coming back into play under the discussion we've had around the pivot on workflow. What are the performance conversations we need to have within organizations? What are the gaps? What are the deficiencies where people are struggling? Those are performance-based consulting questions that should be asked when you want to understand the nature of what's happening in the workflow and what performance is being demanded of the business.

I think user experience is coming back in a big way. Our first entrée to this was how to make the UI helpful when someone is taking an eLearning course. But I think there's a user experience in virtual instruction, so I think the definition of user experiences is broadening from how we use platforms appropriately to how we attend a virtual session appropriately. And then to the classic design stuff that we see.

Finally, data and data mining. I don't think we've gotten excited enough about it or seen the urgency. If you don't see the urgency now, I think you're in trouble: validating what we do and why we do it, the bottom line, how it impacts the business, etc. Data analysts and these types of folks within an L&D team are more critical than ever because we've got to be sure we are laser focused and effective with the interventions we build and that there is no "fluff". With how accelerated things are right now, if it is "fluff" or if it's not helpful, if we can't defend it with data, I think the ramifications are more visceral than ever because of how extreme things are right now.

Q: **Additional thoughts on learning pivots?**

A: It sounds bizarre, but I hope we do pivot. A friend of mine the other day said that we are in such a rubber band industry: as soon as things get back to "normal", we snap back to what we know. With such opportunity and acceleration, I really hope we emerge differently from this and learn from this, because it's been so horrific. It's been so difficult. I think there have been so many wonderful opportunities and heroic things being done by L&D teams across the globe. I hope we sit back and seize the moment, meet the learner where they are, and emerge a better industry for what we've learned – whatever the new normal becomes.

Pivoting to Virtual Education in the Association for Supply Chain Management

Bob Collins
CPTD, CAE
Senior Director of
Learning and Development
ASCM

How do you pivot hundreds of instructors around the world from face-to-face classes to virtual classes in a few months? Add the complication that they are neither your employees nor professional trainers. This is the problem I faced in late March 2020 as we realized the pandemic was going to scuttle our in-person classes for the foreseeable future.

My team is responsible for managing the courseware and an instructor development program for the Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM), a 40,000-member professional association. ASCM offers three certifications and other educational offerings for supply chain professionals.

We have hundreds of instructors around the world teaching our certification preparation and education courses as contractors for our ASCM partners. These instructors are typically supply chain professionals who have earned one or more of our certifications and discovered they love teaching that body of knowledge to others. They are a very passionate group but have little formal instruction in training.

We did have some building blocks to work with:

1 We have an instructor development program that all our instructors participate in, which includes train-the-trainer and adult education training.

2 Early in 2019, we introduced a Virtual Training License Agreement to our worldwide partners, which allowed virtual training with our licensed courseware.

3 Quarterly instructor webinars were shifted to cover virtual instruction skills in 2019.

4 A handful of instructors had virtual training experience and had already built some great virtual training skills.

With these building blocks, we did the following:

1 We contacted our more experienced virtual training instructors and developed a series of 10 webinars on various virtual instruction techniques, focusing on how to engage learners online and how to use our existing courseware in a virtual environment.

2 We had a daylong instructor development program planned for June, for which Elliott Masie was to be the Keynote presenter. We pivoted to a virtual event and Elliott joined us online to share ways the instructors could better engage their learners.

3 As an L&D professional, I receive a lot of free webinar offers and have access to articles and blog posts about virtual instruction. I began sharing them with the larger instructor community on a regular basis, encouraging them to take advantage of these opportunities.

4 We began piloting new online versions of our instructor training courseware that covers virtual training.

Results have been encouraging. We've been able to meet demand with virtual classes that are being held by our partners around the world, with great reviews from students.

We believe that even when in-person classes are possible again, we will continue to offer virtual classes, and we expect to see growth of hybrid classes as our instructors get more comfortable with teaching virtually.

Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose: AMPlify Your Team!

The learning landscape is changing quickly, requiring skillsets of teams to evolve – often overnight. Leaders are faced with challenges never encountered before, which heightens the need for creativity and innovation. How can leaders unleash the creativity on their teams while building the skillsets of tomorrow? Say hello to AMP Day!

AMP Day Basics
• AMP stands for Autonomy (choice), Mastery (getting better at stuff), and Purpose (meaning). When pulled, these three levers can lead to better performance and greater job satisfaction. (Source: Dan Pink, The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us) Moreover, they inspire creativity and innovation to solve your team's toughest problems.
• AMP Day is a take on Atlassian's approach to innovation.

Jennifer McCuen
VP, Head of Talent Development
Atlantic Union Bank

Bring AMP Day to Life
• Designate your AMP Day and share with the team.
• On AMP Day, allow the team do whatever they want, with whomever they want, wherever they want.
• Encourage team members not to get caught up in what they think they "ought" to do, but rather what they want to do – things that align to AMP: their choice, stuff they're interested in or want to deepen their expertise in, and that which is meaningful to them.
• The next day in a celebratory team meeting, each person must share what they did, including the impact it will have on the team's work and the organization's mission.

Ways to Maximize AMP Day:
• Get out of your day-to-day space.
• Have lunch with someone you haven't seen in a while and share what you're working on or what has your curiosity these days.
• Set up time to reconnect with people in your network or to connect with someone who isn't in your network but should be.
• Start a book that's been sitting on the side of your desk.
• Research something of interest.
• Extend yourself as a resource to someone on the team who may need help solving a problem.
• Set up a flash brainstorming session: invite people from the team to quickly collaborate on a problem or idea.

Benefits of AMP Day
I have held AMP Day once a quarter for the last four years and my team has benefited in several ways. AMP Day has:
• Created the space to learn something new, which developed into a strength for the person and for the team to leverage.
• Deepened team members' expertise and broadened their shoulders in an area that has kept the team relevant.
• Helped in the evolution from a traditional training and instructional design model to a consultative design model.
• Served as an incubator for whacko ideas (yes, some were really whacko) that are now the essence of our work.

If the idea of AMP Day makes you a little uncomfortable, good! Repeat after me: "No growth in the comfort zone; no comfort in the growth zone." AMP Day will require you to give up some control and trust the process. It's an opportunity to experiment, test and improve, research, expand, stretch, and have fun!

Learning's Next Practice

Wendy Palmer
Director Global Studio
Deakin University

The way we develop and consume learning is rapidly changing and the ongoing digital evolution has been amplified by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Options for how we teach and how people want to learn are multiplying while the appetite for learning is also ramping up. EdTech is also quickly expanding, adding to the abundance of possibilities. The ever-expanding ecosystem of educational diversity has led to an explosion of virtual learning opportunities, from video guitar lessons with Carlos Santana to Zoom cooking classes to online degrees via MOOC platforms.

Among this diversity, trying to find the "right" approach for a particular course or learning outcome can be overwhelming; however, the effectiveness of this sought-after approach often depends on the execution, so there is no tried and true single solution. For example, I've participated in many webinars – some that were great and some that were truly uninspiring. One of the best I attended used short, engaging videos interspersed with live presentations, interactive tools like polling, and a moderator to manage lively Q&A sessions. The worst webinar involved death by PowerPoint, with one-way transmission. Hence, good outcomes depend on good usage.

As illustrated in the examples above, good practice is enhanced when developed and delivered by multi-disciplinary teams drawing on wide-ranging expertise. These teams can include subject matter experts, learning designers, graphic artists, multimedia producers, librarians, social media experts, communication specialists, journalists, and the list goes on. As a result, there are several skill sets that are increasing in demand within learning teams to support new and more innovative approaches. Some of these are outlined below.

Curation: Gardening the Wilderness of Information on the Internet

The internet has democratised information and provided unprecedented access, but with limited quality control and fact checking. Rather than develop even more content, good curation helps learners navigate this abundance of information while weeding out inaccuracies and noise.

Moderation: Managing Social Collaboration, Administering Forums, and Stimulating Engaging Discussion

Moderation involves linking people in networks and groups, setting virtual group tasks, and managing access to platforms and online communities. Moderators also need to monitor learner behaviour. I have had oversight of thousands of people from every country in the world participating in online learning forums. From my experience, the good news is that most behaviour is respectful and inclusive.

Authentic Assessment Design: Developing and Managing

As we move away from traditional exams and essays, particularly in virtual settings, there is an increasing expectation that assessment should reflect how we use and apply knowledge in our working lives.

Narration: Telling Stories that Capture and Hold Engagement

Building on a long tradition of using storytelling techniques for informal learning, narrative-based learning design is being more frequently used in formal learning.

As technology expands, learning and the traditional roles of teacher and student are also changing. In response, a growing a range of expertise and experience that contribute to learning is required to support new approaches to online teaching and learning.

Interview with
Richard Culatta

Q: When you hear the phrase "learning pivots" in this last part of September 2020, what does it evoke or trigger for you?

Richard Culatta
Learning CONSORTIUM Dean & CEO, ISTE

A: I've spent a lot of time over my career exploring how innovation happens. It turns out, innovation often blooms on the heels of a crisis. It's a pattern that we see over and over again. Something really disruptive happens and as a result, there's a bloom of innovation. This is what I think of when I hear "learning pivots." A pivot is not usually a planned move. It's something you do in reaction to a change that arises. But it's pivots that lead to some of the most exciting innovations. We have a chance to choose a way forward that is more effective and relevant than the path we were on. The pivots we're making now in learning are opportunities not just to choose a different direction but a better direction.

Q: What are some macro learning pivots that you are seeing?

A: I'll share three categories of pivots that I'm seeing. The first is a pivot to new learning formats. When the traditional face-to-face learning experience was disrupted, it forced us to pivot to new approaches for designing learning activities. These include a whole variety of self-paced learning opportunities as well as informal learning opportunities where the role of instructor and student has become blurred. Some of these new formats have proved more effective than others, but it's a chance to move out of some of the learning ruts that we've gotten into when it comes to the format of learning.

The second pivot is moving away from the overwhelmingly location-based nature of traditional learning. I don't think we realized how physically constrained our learning networks were. Sure, we used online learning materials all the time, but when it came to who we turned to for expertise, we may have relied almost entirely on individuals who were located in close physical proximity. Suddenly, when physical location didn't matter, our expert networks could include anyone in the world. Whether someone with expertise was sitting in headquarters or in a remote location quickly became much less of a determining factor for who we include in our learning networks – and that opens up all kind of possibilities.

The third pivot is related to our relationship with technology. Traditionally, technology was a supplement, an add-on, a fun enhancement. Those are the words that we would hear to describe the role technology would play in learning. But the virtual world has now shifted from being our "vacation home" to being our "primary residence". Many of our most important learning (and life) moments now happen in a virtual space. As that has happened, technology has shifted from an ancillary support to our core learning platform.

Q: Let's shift now to the learner. How has learning pivoted for workers who might be working at home or on the front line?

A: There are some important pivots happening for the learner. One is a responsibility shift. This is the general shift towards taking on the mantle of ownership of our own learning. Effective learners have always had some feeling of ownership of the learning process, but at times there was a wrestle for ownership between the learner and an organization's formal learning programs. With increased need to adapt to a variety of unique and individual circumstances created by the COVID pandemic, learners have had to step up and say, "Here's what I need. Here's how I'm going to get it." And along the way, they are becoming increasingly responsible for the ownership of the learning. It's exciting!

Another learner pivot is related to the learner role. We had become comfortable with fairly rigid roles of experts (instructors) and novices (students). It was clearly established which role each played in advance. You were either the teacher/trainer or a learner/novice and those roles didn't often cross. Now, those roles have blurred quite a bit. In one moment, I may be the novice. In the next moment, I may be the expert – and I switch in and out of those roles constantly throughout the day. Instead of experts and novices, we are all learning to become co-learners.

Q: I'm noticing your DNA here is viewing the pivots in a positive way. What might be part of a learner pivot that a learner or organization feels is not a positive, constructive next chapter?

A: I think it's important that we learn to recognize our biases. I definitely have a bias when it comes to pivots. I view them as moments that are exciting, as chances to try to improve on the status quo. That's not the case for everybody. It's important to recognize that one of the things that we are pivoting away from is a model that is very familiar: a model that is based on much more physical engagement and contact. Many parts of the traditional face-to-face learning model are actually not very effective for learning. But it's a comfortable model. Recognizing this matters because when people are in an environment that is too uncomfortable or unfamiliar, it can become a barrier to learning. On the flip side, learning comes when our ideas are challenged with new information. This is known as cognitive dissonance and it's a good thing. If we're too comfortable, we're probably not actually learning. But getting the right balance of comfort and stretching beyond our comfort zone is a critical element of learning design. If people are pushed too far out of their comfort zone with new approaches and don't have enough support through the pivot, cognitive overload occurs and learning stops. So, we must remember that even though there are great learning benefits through pivots, if they become too unfamiliar or scary, learning will be impacted.

Q: It seems like more and more of employees' time in a virtual world is expected to be in extrovert mode. They may be expected to have their camera on during an online session. Can that be exhausting for some people?

A: That's an interesting observation. I think it points to a bigger problem that we have, which is that we are fairly narrow in the types of opportunities for online engagement that we offer. I talked about formats earlier. So often, learning at work is just series of webinars. And it's great that we can do that as it gives you access to experts from all over the place. But it's just one method, just one approach. One of the things that we know from cognitive science is that having multiple modes of learning for any concept is valuable. Don't get this idea confused with learning styles: there's no evidence to support those. What is solid is the idea that all of us – no matter our learning preferences – learn a concept better if we can learn it through a variety of different approaches. We must be very careful that we don't just pivot from one overused approach (sitting in a classroom) to

another overused approach (sitting in a web meeting). We need to really make sure that we have variety in the formats of learning experiences we offer.

The other related point to note here is that having everyone online can break down some of the traditional barriers when it comes to accessing experts and mentors. And while that is awesome, it can also become exhausting for the mentors and experts. It's totally appropriate for mentors to have times when they say, "I'm not going to be in mentor mode for a bit," as they also focus on their own work.

Q: **Suddenly we're asking people to design learning experiences in a mode that they may have little experience in. They may have never been an online learner before, and a lot of traditions may be challenged by that. Where is the pivot around design or the opportunity for disruption around design?**

A: We need to understand that our ability to design online learning is directly linked to our understanding of the capabilities of the digital tools that are available. I've heard people say that you should design a learning experience before considering which tools should be used for delivering that experience – like somehow if you are focused on the delivery tools too early it will taint the design process. I think that's total garbage! Good learning designers know that understanding the capabilities of the tools that are available for online learning actually shapes the design of the learning experience.   Of course, that doesn't mean you have to use every feature of an online tool just because it's available. But if you don't know what the options are, it will severely limit the types of learning opportunities you create. This is why there are so many online learning experiences that I call "nexters" (where you just click "next" through a series of PowerPoint slides and then take a multiple-choice quiz at the end). Just like a builder or architect may choose to use or not use certain materials, they are able to make that choice because they know what the options are in the first place. I'm really concerned that instructional designers haven't spent nearly enough time really understanding the capabilities of learning delivery tools and really knowing the limits of what the current tools can do. This in turn limits the types of experiences that they will build.

Q: **You've been very involved in the corporate learning world, but in your previous work with the White House and the Department of Education under President Obama's administration, you've also been very involved with elementary and secondary education as well as higher education. Are there learning pivots in K-12 and higher ed that we should be paying attention to?**

A: I actually think we can learn a lot from the pivots that we've seen in the higher ed space. There has been a trend to look at courses as the most important area of focus when switching to an online format. You see lots of colleges and universities recording their course content or spending a lot of resources creating online lectures. The problem is that the course content may not be where the real value is. In fact, the materials presented in the courses may be one of the least valuable parts of the college experience. If you talk to students, they will say the most valuable part of the college experience is the interaction with their peers, which will often turn into a career-long professional network. They will say that the most valuable part of the college experience is working with faculty on projects or in individual conversations. They will point to their internships and fellowships. Those are all the really powerful parts of the college experience. The classes are almost just the excuse to allow all those other learning opportunities to happen.

When the transition happened, online colleges and universities took what they thought was the most important part of the experience and moved it online, leaving behind the parts that were actually most valuable. It's not a huge surprise that you have students choosing not to continue paying huge tuition amounts for access to mediocre online experiences. The corporate learning world should pay attention to this as well. Sometimes as we transition to online learning, we may think the course content is the most important part of a learning experience, forgetting the other interactions that may actually hold the most value.

Q: Any education experience is a collection of activities and processes. College students had time in class, time with their peers, time in the library, time just hanging out, time reflecting, etc. – all of that was the college experience. Are you saying that when we took away all the other pieces and said college was going online, it's actually not college that moved online – just one element of the college experience?

A: That's right. And here is why this point matters so much: if colleges and universities are going to move online, they are now competing with people who know how to make online learning experiences much better than the colleges and universities do! I was on YouTube the other day and saw a video explaining a math concept. Most of the comments were students saying, "This is a much clearer explanation than my professor gave us in our math class." When colleges and universities try to compete on content delivery as their unique value proposition, they will fail because other people know how to do online content delivery much better. Remember, I'm not saying that the higher ed experience doesn't still have value – I think it has great value! It's just not necessarily in content delivery.

Q: Any perspectives on the environmental shifts that have happened in the K-12 world?

A: There is a lesson from the K-12 world that is important for us to learn in workplace learning as well. For years we had become very comfortable with the fact that students lived two separate lives. When you were at school you acted like a student and left the person you were at home behind. Many kids even went by a different name at school than at home. The people you interacted with at school didn't know the people you interacted with at home. Nobody from those two worlds ever crossed. Your parents never really talked with your teachers except maybe once a year, and if you ever saw your teacher outside of school it was very weird (didn't they sleep under their desk or something?). There was no question about when you were in which mode because you were in a very different physical location. That has now gone away. We have teachers looking right into the homes of their students and vice versa. They're seeing each other's dogs and cats, parents and siblings. Parents are hearing everything that is being taught. Suddenly, there is one combined life and this can be a very powerful change.

I've had the opportunity to work a bit with Richard Branson's foundation. They have an initiative called 100% human at work. This was started before COVID, but it describes the idea perfectly. They identified that this same problem exists in the workplace: we show up at work as a different people than we are at home. We're just not 100% us. We're like 50% us because the other 50% or more of our lives are the parts of our family and outside-of-work stuff that in the past was never really allowed in the workplace, other than maybe a small picture of my family on my desk. Just last week, my son Eli decided to come in and introduce his stuffed shark to a group of Chief Learning Officers that I was presenting to, but I loved it because Eli is an important part of my life and there is no reason the people I was working with shouldn't know that. The fact that we are forced into the outside-of-work lives of our team members has the potential for some really positive ongoing ripple effects.

Q: **What impact may happen for our students that are either graduating high school or graduating/not graduating college and going into the workforce? Are we going to have a "COVID generation"?**

A: There will definitely be some impact of the COVID experience for the cohort of future workers that are currently in school, but I'm not sure we know yet what that impact will be. We can be sure that a wave of students will come into the workforce with a very different school experience than those before them, though. I don't think that skill set will be better or worse, but it will be different. It will likely be a cohort that is better at seeking out expertise, wherever it can be found in the world, instead of waiting for information to be presented to them in a formal learning course. It will likely be a group that is much more familiar with taking advantage of virtual digital resources. But on the flip side, it will be one that is less tolerant of sitting in a classroom for hours on end being asked to stay in listening mode. Either way, the workplace is going to have a wave of new employees with a very different set of experiences from the employees who came before them. And we will have the challenge and opportunity to adjust how we teach them.

Q: **In this pandemic there has been a significant focus on racial injustice. It's brought the diversity and inclusion conversation to a more public, important, and corporately acknowledged and embraced place. Where do you think diversity and inclusion comes in through this pandemic? Also, there are people who may be at home with no bandwidth. To what extent is digital learning based on privilege? How do we fold in these two important issues to look at digitalization/virtual and diversity and inclusion? What are any connectors that you see?**

A: There are a few elements of digital learning that we need to consider when it comes to equity. One of them is just plain access: do learners have high speed connectivity in their homes? Within the US, we consider electricity and water basic utilities. If you are in a home without water, there are services to help you because we believe that no human should live without water. We don't currently consider internet connectivity a utility; we consider that an optional luxury, like cable TV. I believe that's a fundamental shift we have to make as a country to ensure equitable access to work and learning opportunities. We have to consider basic internet connectivity a utility. The FCC has the legal authority to make that change.

The second element is how the learning experiences themselves are designed. There are all kinds of bias built into our learning designs: bias from our previous experiences, bias from our culture and cultural references, etc. Even the research that has been conducted around learning effectiveness is often done on a biased sample. We have to make sure that as we're evaluating effectiveness, we are doing it in a way that doesn't oversample certain populations.

A third element is how we assess learning. When we are asking people to demonstrate their learning, are we thinking about inclusivity? Are we providing opportunities for them to demonstrate their learning in ways that allow them to best demonstrate what they know? Are we recognizing biases in our evaluation approaches that may not serve a particular individual well?

Q: **Do you believe the employee who is more virtual now will walk away owning these new skills or are they going to blur them into "pandemic haze"? Will the employee walk away feeling more credentialed, ready, skilled, and certified, or just glad to return to their old ways?**

A: I think that depends a lot on what happens in their workplace after this is over. It's clearly going to be a long, gradual transition back to a physical workplace. When that happens, I fear there are some organizations that will say, "Remember everything you've learned in case there's ever another pandemic, but for now let's get back to how we worked before." In those cases, the employees that spent a lot of time learning new skills are going to feel marginalized because all their efforts are not valued. More importantly, the organization will have lost a chance to move forward to more advanced learning opportunities.

On the flip side, other organizations will make sure they take the experience and skills employees have learned during the pandemic and apply them to their future work. Those employees will feel like all the time and energy they spent learning new approaches will have real, ongoing value. But again, that depends entirely on how organizations choose to re-board or reboot, depending on the word they want to use. And it has to be an explicit conversation.

Q: **What are you needing, wanting, hoping, seeing, and sensing as emerging learning technologies coming out of this?**

A: My answer is not a new type of tool or website. My need and hope from the learning technology space is a greater focus on the user experience. Consumer tools and apps that are intended for us to use at home have always put a lot of effort into making sure they are very usable. They are clear and don't require a lot of effort or support to figure out how to use them. When it comes to our learning apps, we've been a bit lazy! We've built tools that are confusing and difficult to use, and we've gotten away with it because we could always force our employees to take training on how to use those tools.   Software training has become a crutch for allowing poor user experience in learning tools and apps. I really hope that this experience – where employees are expected to be able to access and use their learning tools from home – will push us to raise the bar for what we expect when it comes to the usability and the user experience of learning tools.

Q: **I've had multiple conversations in which I've heard, "We've got to shift from three clicks to one click." Three clicks are one or two too many. Would you agree?**

A: Yes, and it's more than just the number of clicks. We have to actually make it clear where people expect to click – or what commands they need to speak – in order to access learning materials. In commercial apps, there's tons of time spent observing how people interface with a tool. On the learning side there's very little of that. We absolutely must make learning tools as intuitive as possible if we're going to expect people to continue to tolerate the virtual learning experiences we put in front of them.

Q: Having now been through over six months of this pandemic as a parent, as an employee, as an analyst, and as a leader in different learning worlds, what is your advice about what we should be thinking about and what we should be ready to do and embrace?

A: There are two things that come to mind. The first is don't be so afraid of failure. Don't be afraid of trying something that may not totally work. We have all been forced into a space where it's okay to try something that's new and uncomfortable, and if it doesn't work out, we can learn from it and move on.

The second thing, which is related, is that the way we react to change is often a self-fulfilling prophecy. I've watched organizations and learning leaders that have taken a very negative attitude about the pivots we've had to experience: "This isn't how we're supposed to do learning! We're wasting time trying to get this tech to work!" In other organizations, I have seen the mode be one of adventure: "This didn't work, so let's try to iterate into something that does!" We see this with some parents supporting their kids in online learning as well. There is a direct relationship between the experience of the learner and the tone that is set by their manager, parent, or teacher. For those that are seeing this as a moment of exploration and opportunity to try new things, virtual learning generally becomes a positive experience. In contrast, those managers, parents, and teachers who are grumbling and complaining about how painful virtual learning is are inadvertently poisoning their own well. They create the self-fulfilling prophecy of having a team that becomes resistant to new ways of learning and problem solving that otherwise could be quite effective.

Q: What do you think of when you hear the word "empathy"? Why is it important?

A: Empathy actually connects many of the things we've been talking about. When we talk about making a better user experience, that's empathy. When we talk about the issues of bias and making sure we're making learning accessible and inclusive, that's empathy. Making sure that we are aware of viewpoints other than our own is empathy. Empathy is a critical element of the design process if we are going to create effective learning opportunities. Learning design processes need to start from a point of empathy. Instead of starting with what information we want to present to our employees, we should instead ask questions about where the people we are teaching are in terms of their previous knowledge, their interest in the learning, and how what we are teaching fits in with other important elements in their lives. As we look at learning through the lens of empathy, we will create learning experiences that our employees don't do because they have to, but transformational experiences that employees will find compelling and motivational.

Pivoting In-Person Leadership Training to a Virtual Experience in 3 Months

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At the beginning of our 2020 leadership program, I never envisioned we would have to pivot to a virtual program in less than three months. Outdated software, a lack of collaboration tools, and no access to cloud computing presented a long list of challenges. The initial response was to follow the decision to place the agency's executive in-person training programs on hold and inform the applicants that the program would be placed on hiatus for the year. Fortunately, Microsoft Teams was added to our arsenal and this opened the possibility to conduct the program virtually. During the deployment of Microsoft Teams, early adopters were invited to join as champions of the implementation. I immediately joined, hoping to gain insight into the capabilities of the tool and to educate myself on any governmental policies and constraints I needed to be aware of.

The decision was finally made to move the 2020 leadership program to virtual delivery using our new virtual collaboration platform. We currently have sixty-two participants and an additional twenty-five senior executives who serve as sponsors and mentors. During the planning stages, I quickly discovered that I would have to invest much of my program development time into technical support for the participants and sponsors. I was not only the program manager and instructional designer, I was also the help-desk support for sixty-two people. I decided to provide help-desk hours during the workday and re-designed the program in the evenings.

As an instructional designer, my course development skills were vital to converting the in-person content to online training. For example, in-person executive shadowing became online mentoring sessions and in-person mock interviewing skills became "how to interview virtually for success". A storyboard and detailed script that included dry-runs and technology testing were created for each event. Other elements of the program, like the experiential learning component, required very few changes since this was easily adaptable to online action learning collaborations.

Part two of the conversion to a virtual experience was supporting the executive sponsors and mentors who we rely on to provide engaging and robust content. I also needed to consider multiple time zones. This meant that the program objectives and content had to be engaging and demonstrate to participants the return on investment of additional time outside of the traditional workday.

Moving to a virtual learning environment has been successful but has also presented challenges. Our lessons learned include:

- **Repeated, detailed communication is crucial.**
- **Assumptions of knowledge can be detrimental.**
- **Technical support resources are critical elements in a virtual learning environment.**

The success of transforming traditional in-person training to a virtual learning experience depends on the agility of the participants, sponsors, and organizational leadership. The success of this program has demonstrated to my organization that a robust virtual program is possible by employing creative solutions, out-of-the-box thinking, and a willingness to move forward with the 80% solution vs. waiting for the perfect solution.

The Pandemic's Impact on Learning in China

At the beginning of the pandemic (February 2020), over 200 million employees in China were using Ding Talk, Alibaba's work-from-home App. All the K-12 schools used the same application for virtual classroom and learning management. Many K-12 students quickly realized that if they gave the App a one-star rating, it would be removed from the App Store (meaning no school!). Millions of students did just that in one night, which created an unprecedented situation in learning history!

Amidst the pandemic, the reshaping of the learning industry in China is underway. While the pandemic has brought new challenges, it has also played the role of an "industry reshaping accelerator". The layout of the traditional intensive/aggregated learning model is already in the process of adjusting. Digital learning methods have advanced vigorously.

One clear impact is that in-person training has been restricted, and the amount of face-to-face training dropped sharply in a short period. This is allowing – maybe forcing – more people to recognize the convenience of online learning and reducing the number of people over the age of 35 who reject it. Employees in this age group are the backbones of their enterprises and their acceptance of online training will accelerate its development.

For many corporations in China, online training is becoming a preferred learning method. During the pandemic, the demand for online training and related services has increased significantly, while offline training may face short- or medium-term suppression. Expect Alibaba, WeChat, and many other big tech companies to start developing corporate learning platforms that integrate personalized learning features into their designs.

For companies that use well-established online learning platforms, the pandemic has increased the effectiveness of their online learning. At the same time, it has also prompted them to accelerate their efforts to curate online resources, iterate existing courses, and develop online learning projects. Even for companies with weak or no online learning platforms, now is an excellent opportunity to promote online learning.

Serene Wang
Learning CONSORTIUM Dean

AI in Learning After the Pandemic in China

The pandemic ignited high demand for online learning in China. Smart technologies like 5G, big data, cloud computing, and AI provide K-12 and corporate training institutions with intelligent solutions for all scenarios.

Federated learning is expected to become the next key AI technology because it provides a better way to address efficiency and privacy. It may also become a feasible solution to the problem of data islands and data privacy. The development of AI depends on large amounts of high-quality data. Still, the data in medical, financial, and other industries is sensitive and scattered, and the problems of "small data" and "data islands" are becoming increasingly prominent.

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37

疫情对中国培训行业的影响

在疫情初期（2020 年 2 月），中国有超过 2 亿员工使用阿里巴巴的线上办公应用程序 Ding Talk 在家办公。所有的 K-12 学校都使用相同的应用程序进行虚拟教室和学习管理。许多 K-12 的学生很快意识到，如果他们给 App 授予一星评级，它将被从 App Store 中删除（意味着没有上学！）。数百万学生在一夜之间做到了这一点，这在学习历史上创造了前所未有的局面！

在疫情中，中国的学习产业正在重塑。新冠疫情带来了新的挑战，但它也起到了"产业重塑加速器"的作用。传统的学习模式面临革新和升级。线上学习和数字学习蓬勃发展。

一个明显的影响是见面培训受到了限制，面对面培训的数量在短期内急剧下降。这使更多的人认识到在线学习的便利性。很多以前拒绝线上学习的员工，尤其在 35 岁以上年龄层的企业骨干力量变得更加接受线上培训。

对于中国的许多公司而言，在线培训已成为一种首选的学习方法。疫情期间，线培训和相关服务的需求大大增加，而面授培训可能会面临短期或中期的抑制。阿里巴巴，微信和许多其他大型科技公司开始开发将个性化学习功能集成到其设计中的企业学习平台。

对于使用完善的在线学习平台的公司而言，在线学习的有效性在短期内得到更大的提高。同时，它也促使他们加紧努力来整理在线资源，迭代现有课程并开发在线学习项目。即使对于在线学习平台薄弱或没有在线学习平台的公司而言，现在也是促进在线学习的绝佳机会。

后疫情时代人工智能在中国培训行业的展望

新冠疫情大大提高了中国对在线学习的高需求。K-12，和企业培训都想依托 5G，大数据，云计算和 AI 来提供适用于所有场景的智能学习解决方案。

人工智能在科技教育发展中成为焦点。人工智能的发展取决于大量的高质量数据处理和收集。目前医疗，金融，教育和其他行业中的数据仍然是较为分散且有很多数据隐私安全顾虑。联合学习有望成为下一个关键的 AI 技术，因为它为解决效率和隐私问题提供了更好的选择。联合学习的发展能有希望提供较好的解决方案。

That Other Pandemic

The CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Capacity Building Branch is tasked with improving the performance of the HIV prevention workforce by increasing their knowledge, skills, technology, and infrastructure to implement HIV prevention interventions and strategies. Our funded recipients primarily deliver intervention training and technical assistance through classroom training, webinars, and multi-day institutes. Following COVID-19, our recipients were challenged with the need to quickly pivot from delivering training and technical assistance through classroom training and conference-like "institutes" to solely virtual delivery.

Here are some of the common concerns and how we have advised addressing them:

- **"It can't be done because virtual learning is NOT THE SAME!"** No, it isn't. That doesn't mean that learning will be compromised and that you can't accomplish many if not all of the same objectives. The delivery will be different, but adapting means going back to the Tao of Instructional Design and making new design choices based on goals, objectives, and audience – but with the virtual platform's features in mind.
  - Use breakouts for small-group discussion and role-play activities.
  - Explore and integrate tools for engagement, such as polls, collaborative documents or games. This will make the session fun and will also provide other forms of interaction.
  - Keep chat open during breaks to enable networking and maybe plan something less formal for a networking session with breakouts to allow smaller mingling groupings.
  - Concurrent tracks can still be run using separate meeting URLs (i.e., rooms) with links provided so that participants can move from one to another (unlike online breakouts).

- **Learner first, technology second.**
  - Beyond virtual delivery, we are not working under pre-pandemic circumstances with dedicated work time and space. Design needs to factor in teleworking issues, including less robust technology and home distractors. Consider shorter sessions, longer breaks, and less bandwidth. Reflect the new reality. For example, change role-play from office visit to telehealth.
  - Think "flipped classroom" – what must be done synchronously and what could be done asynchronously. Offload anything more informational than instructional as downloadable documentation or self-study eLearning. Save the webinar time for interactive presentation, discussion, and breakout activities. This will help reduce the synchronous time needed and keep things more engaging and less didactic during those times.

- **But, technology is technology...**
  - Have a "designated driver" of the platform who is not a presenter or facilitator.
  - Let this person handle the technology, troubleshoot with participants, monitor the chat or Q&A, etc.

- **Have a plan B and C if there are connectivity problems**
(e.g., screenshot slides in lieu of live demo), recording in lieu of live or alternate date.

Sometimes required change or perceived constraints force us to get more creative in our instructional design and delivery. Sometimes what felt like a burden can lead to a breakthrough. No, virtual learning is not the same as classroom training. Sometimes, it's even better.

Karen Kanne Ngowe

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Jeffrey Cooney
Technical Learning Manager
MacAllister Family Companies

Bulldozing into Virtual Learning in the Heavy Equipment Industry

A technician in the heavy equipment industry is a hands-on magician of troubleshooting and repairing behemoth machines. Teaching these mechanical prestidigitators involved hands-on lab time. The lesson plan was a few hours of presentation; then double that in the training bay. Grease and oil were necessary badges of honor.

For seventy-five years this method worked for an equipment dealer organization. A team of five instructors, all experienced mechanics with one-hundred combined years of training practice, worked to keep six hundred technicians across two states up to date in an ever-changing industry. The idea of virtual delivery was bantered about but never seriously considered. There was no need.

In 2020, reality abruptly transformed to a "new normal." On a March Friday it was announced the instructors would work from home effective the following Monday. Face-to-face classroom sessions were suspended indefinitely. Business slowed, but the need for technical learning did not. Meanwhile, the instructors sat at home.

The dealership owned no virtual delivery platform except for common business meeting software. One of the team members had some basic experience with creating videos. The equipment manufacturer with whom the dealer was affiliated provided some online classes and a dealer's web page for posting videos and other media. The instructors were limited and inexperienced in virtual delivery. Armed with the basic meetings program and basic laptop web cameras, they hazarded into a world unknown to the organization: delivering real-time mechanical learning in a virtual bubble.

For a month, the team conducted sessions amongst themselves. Through trial and error, working from their basements, kitchen tables, and spare bedrooms, they replaced their platform skills with virtual timing, pace, and logistics. Finally, in the middle of April 2020, virtual-only sessions were scheduled. Registrations began trickling in. Learners themselves needed instruction on how to even participate!

Two weeks later, virtual delivery was rolling. The team established ninety-minute limits on the sessions. Using a survey app, each participant received a quiz link. Credit for the class was earned only after a successful score on the quiz. By July, managers and learners were fully engaged.

For nearly eight decades the organization delivered learning in the consuetude, everything classroom based and face-to-face. Six months later, the team is now developing a blended learning format for the day when face-to-face sessions are feasible. Cognitive knowledge will be given virtually, and students will be brought together for hands-on lab time. Costs will be reduced, time away from jobs will be reduced, and objectives will be achieved.

Rapid deployment of virtual learning came from five instructors, hundreds of miles apart, collaborating and taking incredible risk. Some team members struggled with the abrupt and somewhat violent change. Others embraced it with enthusiasm and vigor. Through intense teamwork, they all changed. With incredibly limited resources and only basic technology, the organization changed. Oh, they also produced thirty-five short videos for the web page, using that same bare-bones tech. The technical learning for this organization is changed forever. And so are the professionals who deliver it.

The Pandemic's Impact on Learning in Russia

Elena Tikhomirova
CEO and Founder
eLearning Center

Before its collapse, the former Soviet Union had a very strong adult learning culture. All working adults were upskilled and reskilled at least every 5 years. But as the Russian Federation emerged, a lot of proven ways to develop employees were not only forgotten but also considered old, modest, and ineffective. It was only spring of 2020 when learning – especially digital learning – became a necessity and life-saving tool for corporations.

It is now obvious that learning must be quick and "just in time" with the shortest possible time-to-learning and time-to-performance indicators. Many companies are now considering formats that are easier to develop and update instead of complicated, highly illustrated, big courses that were very popular pre-pandemic. As people are working remotely without co-workers at their side for quick answers, job aids and all kinds of performance support are considered effective alternatives to formal learning.

A big gap in adult learning skills has only now been discovered: many people lack self-discipline and the ability to gain new skills and knowledge when learning on their own. Because of this, many companies are starting programs about "learning to learn" and self-motivation. Instead of the "one-time learning events" that were common pre-pandemic, now "learning marathons" are trendy. These are learning sequences lasting from 10 to 21 days, with activities nearly every day; they require a strong commitment from the learner. This form of learning is now considered habit forming, allowing for greater focus and concentration.

From a bird's-eye view, it looks like Russian corporate learning and learning in general is suddenly benefitting from the pandemic, becoming more structured and mindful. Where excessively complex formats and approaches were previously common, more practical and easy-to-use tools are coming. Converting learning from offline to online shows the real quality of content and the necessity to create digital learning more mindfully.

Learning is now being seen as something that companies need in order to survive and thrive! And individuals must understand the importance of being responsible for one's own learning in order to achieve success and stability.

> "We've talked about changing L&D practices for quite some time; yet, pre-pandemic, people were stuck in the past. Now, L&D professionals and learners seem to be grasping the reality of how learning happens in the new environment and are being creative and willing to experiment and try new things. Learners are taking more ownership for their learning in the flow of their busy lives. "

- K. Mary Evangelista
Global Director - Leadership Development, Avnet, Inc.

Learning Blueprints Help L&D Professionals Pivot to Online Learning

Keith Resseau
Learning Strategist
Global Learning
& Development
PwC

In mid-March, millions of us left work and school for what many thought would be a few weeks. Learning events were postponed. As it became apparent that those weeks were going to turn into months, *PwC was faced with a choice for our learning events: cancel or pivot. Pivot isn't a word you think of when trying to turn an ocean liner or a global enterprise, but that's what we did. With the help of our Learning and Development (L&D) Rapid Response team, we helped our network of 284,000 staff and partners across 157 territories turn on a dime. Our rapid response team's approach was two-fold: help our staff and partners directly, through our global 'working virtually' portal; and help our L&D teams across the globe make the changes needed to serve the new needs of the business, through learning blueprints.

Our learning data analytics cycle was already in place: define our strategy, identify business questions, gather data, analyze to gain insights, take action, and feed back into the strategy. We never expected to need to run through that cycle multiple times a week, but it stood up to the challenge and let us move faster than we ever thought possible.

We utilized data analytics to see what content our people were searching for and consuming, especially in territories like China and Italy that were affected early. In February, we curated multiple learning assets related specifically to the Covid-19 pandemic and new ways of remote working and learning. By mid-March, even before many of our firms had made the difficult decision to close our physical offices, the rapid response team had moved into action and our portal was accessible to every single one of our people across the globe. Launches rose by 2,500% in the first month, which included a 650% rise in accessing virtual-teams content.

Concurrently, we began developing a series of learning blueprints – templates based on leading examples, gathered from over 100 L&D professionals – for converting classroom courses to virtual. We started with the core courses we knew hundreds of L&D teams were already trying to recreate: onboarding, milestone programs, technical training.

Estimated to reduce development time by 60%, the blueprints are built on best practices, crowd-sourced from the virtual classroom specialists across our firms (and a few outside our network). Each blueprint contains tips specific to achieving the business outcomes required, sample timelines, learner personas, and leading examples of how to elevate a virtual "event" to a virtual "experience".

By focusing on what's common across a few types of programs, and embedding crowd-sourced best practices, we've come up with a solution that our L&D colleagues are eager to use. And, as new programs adapt our "pick & mix" activity kits, they give back revised activities, designs, and interactions that continue to raise the bar across our L&D teams. Who knew it would take a pandemic to promote that kind of global sharing of best practices?

Our rapid response team and learning blueprints have enabled us to continue to not only survive, but to thrive in this new normal.

*PwC refers to the PwC network and/or one or more of its member firms, each of which is a separate legal entity. Please see www.pwc.com/structure for further details.

Interview with
Kevin Oakes

i4cp Resources:
www.i4cp.com
www.i4cp.com/company/downloads
www.i4cp.com/solutions/chief-learning-talent-officer-board

Kevin Oakes
CEO of i4cp

Q: What does the phrase "learning pivots" mean for you right now at the end of September 2020?

A: I think it's been pretty evident that companies that have thrived during the pandemic, or that have successfully transitioned, recognize that learning is such a critical component of that. When I think of "learning pivots," I think of how those organizations embraced learning and ensured it's recognized and rewarded from the top down. Our research has consistently shown that high-performance organizations intentionally foster a learning community and a learning attitude throughout their culture, which we've shown is a core element of initiating and maintaining successful culture change. It's very clear that the top companies out there recognize that it's not "knowledge is power" anymore: it's "knowledge sharing is power". The best organizations focus on how to get the entire enterprise to freely share knowledge and ensure that they are both rewarding and recognizing individuals who do that.

Q: What are your thoughts on how learning has been pivoting from the learner's point of view?

A: I think organizations today are trusting individuals to take more control over their development. Luckily, we have tools, platforms, and technologies that are making that easier to do. More and more organizations recognize that they can't be the sole provider of content to the workforce. Smart companies are enabling an environment where workers can access content from a variety of sources, but content that's pertinent to their development. Everybody has different styles, different ways in which they learn overall. I think the best organizations are recognizing that and making sure they've got a variety of choices for individuals to make the most of their time. I also love the partnerships that are happening between colleges and universities and corporations. That's never been more prevalent than it is today and offers employees a real choice in educational opportunities.

Q:

A:

What do you see as the spectrum of learners' reactions as they continue to adjust to this new normal?

If there's one thing this pandemic has taught all of us it's that you need to be flexible, because everybody's situation is so different. I empathize with the working parents, particularly of younger kids, who are trying to juggle everything. I think it's taken its greatest toll – and research has proven this – on working mothers, who too often have had to bear the burden of a number of different responsibilities all at once: their kids' home schooling, managing the family that is suddenly home all the time, maybe even acting as a caregiver to elderly parents…and through it all trying to be present and productive at work. Learning will certainly take a backseat in that whole equation. Then there is the polar opposite – some people have found that they're bored; they've got lots of time on their hands. Organizations have to recognize that there is that wide variety of personal situations amongst their workforce. And how do we accommodate for that? How do we make it easy for everybody? In this remote work environment that we've been experiencing now for months, the key to great learning is to be flexible, and provide learning that fits a multitude of situations.

For many, remote learning can be a little lonely. The learner is often in control of what to access and not access, and sometimes they wish someone else was in control and they could replicate what they experienced in the classroom. But with remote learning, you often don't have that leadership, that camaraderie that you had in the classroom.

Sometimes it's hard to recreate the magic of the classroom. I think organizations have had to be a little creative. One creative example that I love is done through this website: www.cameo.com. A good friend of mine is an investor in that company. I was talking to their business development folks and more and more organizations and leaders in organizations are using that to reward and recognize employees. They have actors, musicians or sports stars shoot short videos to say congratulations for completing that course or congratulations for some other achievement that an employee has accomplished. I think that's a very nice, creative, thoughtful way to just spark something a little unique and different in someone's life. I think that's what it boils down to: we've got to be creative to make sure that we are utilizing that lonely time as best as possible to spark the learner.

Q:

A:

How do you think learning is pivoting around the Diversity & Inclusion question?

I have some very strong opinions on this based on what I've seen work effectively in numerous organizations. There's nothing wrong with bias training to help people understand unconscious bias and the elements of bias. Putting them through content that showcases and helps them understand what that means is fine, but that is far from the most effective way to help individuals understand deeper issues. What has been most effective are critical and tough conversations that L&D is often facilitating inside the organization. Starbucks has been a good example, but others are doing this as well. They organize conversations in a safe environment where employees share their experiences and talk about what they've experienced from a racial inequity standpoint, or just how they've felt in their career as a person of color, or as a woman. Co-workers are generally amazed at the insight they gain from those employees – typically their co-workers – and these conversations uncover insights and feelings that never would have surfaced otherwise.

I think it's very important for L&D to recognize it's not all about creating courses and it's not all about rote content. Often, it's about facilitating those conversations, and that facilitation is happening a lot of different ways. I've seen CEOs get very involved. We had a leader at a Fortune 500 company tell us how their CEO was only supposed to be on the first one of a number of conversations but he thought it was so fascinating that he ended up attending many more. The top talent development professionals are doing a great job at making sure that they've got the right mix of people and that it's a psychologically safe environment to share those true feelings. I think when it comes to D&I, that's an important aspect of what L&D professionals can do.

Q:
Do you have any sense that in the learning field we can move the needle to be more diverse and inclusive?

A:
I think you've got to be very proactive around this. The most effective organizations have set goals for themselves and they measure D&I. Unless you set those goals and measure, it's likely that all your goodwill is going to go for naught. There's no excuse today for not having a diverse workforce when you're in a remote working environment that has opened up the entire world. You should have a diverse slate of candidates if you have openings in L&D itself or in other areas of the organization. But you've got to work at that diverse slate. I know one organization we work with just mandated that for any opening they have, there must be least two people of color in that slate of candidates. I think we're going to see more of those mandates happen inside of organizations, just to try to force that change to really happen.

Q:
How are we going to train in-person employees to work safely in this time of a pandemic?

A:
Folks that have been working remotely but have recently gone back to the office have acknowledged that it's not that easy, particularly if they're trying to conduct a meeting around a conference table and be socially distanced while talking through a mask. Some of them were saying just put me back on Zoom because that's easier. I think it's going to be a process that we've got to go through in organizations. There was an excellent article in the Wall Street Journal showcasing the different viewpoints of CEOs of very well-known organizations about returning to the office. Some CEOs, such as Jaimie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase and Reed Hastings of Netflix, have been very vocal about a remote working environment not being as productive as when employees were physically together. One of the complaints is that they're not being as innovative. Then there are other CEOs who are saying they're going to remote work indefinitely or permanently in some cases. They're getting rid of the real estate, like REI just did selling their new headquarters to Facebook, and shedding expensive real estate.

To me, the answer is somewhere in the middle. It really does depend on the industry that you're in, or the type of company you are…which in turn dictates how quickly you can be returning to the office and whether that's necessary. Also, location really matters. Global companies, for example, are wrestling with issues that are very different depending on location.

You may have seen recently that Boris Johnson just said to the UK and particularly to London that he wants everybody working remotely for the next six months. I was talking to a top financial services organization yesterday and they said, "Boy, that threw a total wrench into what we were trying to do because our CEO has been very vocal that he wants everybody back to the office." When you suddenly get that kind of edict and are wrestling with the fact that you can still go to a pub but can't go to the office, does that mean you can meet some clients at the pub? What are the rules around that? It gets complex!

Q: What are your thoughts on being authentic in times of uncertainty?

A: I think those two words go together. I think you've got to be authentic about the uncertainty. To me, it seems the best organizations are acknowledging to their workforces that they're in very uncertain times and the decisions they're making today might not be right tomorrow, but the workforce should understand the company is trying to make the right decisions for the time they're in. They may end up having completely different policies or procedures or attitudes going forward as events occur and times change. This shouldn't be viewed as a change of heart, but merely real-time decisions.

While there's so much uncertainty today, it's not just around the pandemic. The political environment is adding a lot to this as we lead up to the elections in November. I think every week – every day – leading up to the election, and likely beyond it, is going to be crazier and crazier. Organizations are going to have to be flexible around this and deal with it. There are numerous organizations that have come down hard on any political statement inside the organization based on what employees are wearing. For instance, some organizations have said no Black Lives Matter buttons, etc. Others have said no MAGA hats inside the organization. But, as we've already seen, there can be consequences to these decisions. Trump said, "Don't buy Goodyear tires," based on a leaked PowerPoint from the company that appeared to ban MAGA hats. It's going to be interesting to see how the human capital function and L&D professionals handle this going forward. I think everybody has to pitch in and make sure that they're authentic about the uncertainty and make the decision that's right for the time.

Q: What do you say about the myth that because of the pandemic, there is no hiring, onboarding, promotion, etc.?

A: Oh, that is a myth. We have a talent acquisition board of executives and the top companies have been hiring top talent like mad. It's been a good environment for a lot of those organizations to seek out those passive candidates and try to bring them into the organization. Again, I think the virtual environment we're in opens organizations up to a more diverse slate of candidates, which is great as long as the company is willing to be diverse. There are still some organizations that think locally or geographically. Even though workers are remote, they're still looking to hire people in that geographic region. I think that's a little short sighted given the talent that's out there. But there's a lot of hiring activity and there are a lot of open positions. We've been working with a number of organizations around that. Certainly, in the D&I field there's been an incredible amount of new positions created as organizations try to do better with racial inequity within their workforces.

> "The most remarkable shift I have seen is learning moving into the mainstream as an active partner who can help get the organization back on course. The second is learning as the community manager, bringing a disparate and fragmented group of staff, who have been rapidly dispersed, back into a functioning and engaged community. The third is learning humanizing the online experience and offering alternatives to non-stop Zoom. To sum up, learning is engaged, caring, and committed."

- Nigel Paine
Author, Teacher, Writer, and Broadcaster

Q: What do you see that's new in the tech world, particularly in the talent area? What do you anticipate or predict might be coming around the corner?

A: From an L&D standpoint, I've always been a big proponent of user-generated content and unleashing the knowledge of the workforce. I think the best companies are able to do that. There's still a dearth of easy-to-use tools for the individual employee to create knowledge quickly, to easily know where to post it and have other employees find it. I would really encourage organizations to think about that, because that is the way that you move quickly and create an environment that's less susceptible to change long term. Your employees are going to be on top of things way before your L&D department is (typically) and are going to more rapidly and, in a lot of cases, more accurately create that content. I'd love to see more of that.

I'd love to see more performance-based tools as well. We've been talking about that forever: learning in the moment of need and how we can facilitate that for our workforce. That would be welcome.
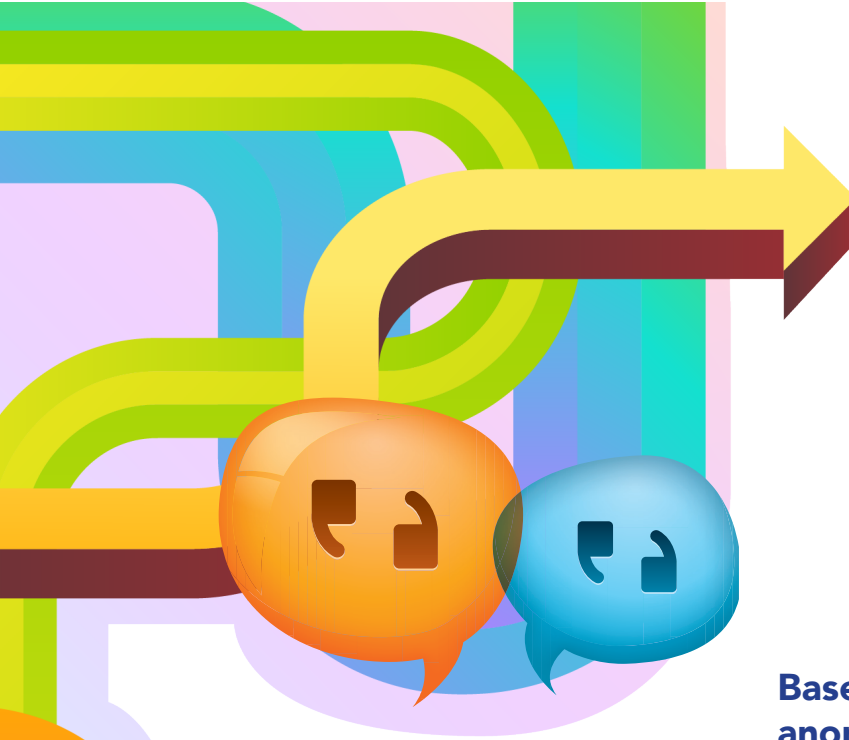
There are so many different innovations happening from a talent acquisition standpoint. There have been a lot of different innovations around using AI to really understand what somebody is saying and to detect whether there is dishonesty in what they're talking about during the interview process. I think those are pretty interesting technologies. Some technology intentionally tackles bias that occurs in the hiring process and eliminates clues into the ethnicity or even gender of a candidate. That's how you get a more diverse set of employees – if you can weed out that bias.

> "The single most important question I've learned to ask myself during this window of change is, "Am I applying old mental models to new ways of being?" As soon as I think, "this exercise won't work in a virtual environment," or "this video won't work if it is over three minutes," I stop myself and ask, "Why won't it?" Question EVERYTHING! The world is evolving and the biggest mistake I can make is to not leverage the opportunity to push back on "accepted" practices and push the limits of possibilities."
>
> **- Joel Lamoreaux**
> **Change Enablement Consultant, Deluxe, Corp.**

> "The fundamentals of learning haven't changed during this pandemic: Context, Relevance, Reflection, and Application are as valid today as ever. What has changed are the platforms for learning, and the need for virtual communities to bring these fundamentals to life."
>
> **- Bob Tweedie**
> **Director of Leadership and Learning, Revantage**

What Learners and Learning Leaders are Saying:

Based on over 200 confidential and anonymous interviews with global learners and over 150 conversations with global learning leaders, these are the key topics, challenges, and issues related to organizational learning in these tumultuous times. Note the duality of perspectives from learners, which demonstrate the need for empathy and understanding of one another's unique preferences and work/learning environments.

1 **Learning during the pandemic has been largely about how to adjust to new ways of working vs. true professional development.**

- **Examples from the field:**

    - Organizations are expanding workers' access to collections of digital learning experiences, for personal and lifestyle topics as well as business related skills. *(from conversations with banking and financial services firms)*

    - Coaching has evolved to include quick support for colleagues about adapting to the virtual setting. *(from conversations with Marshall Goldsmith)*

    - Human Resource and Talent groups are adding a focus on empathy to support the dimensions of employee adjustment during these times. *(from HR managers at i4cp sessions)*

- **The most important learnings for many workers have been about how to work from home, discipline themselves, and redesign their lives.**

    - **Voice of the learner:**

        - Working from home has been her biggest learning: finding ways to stay/get connected and find the personal fulfillment she always got from in-person work. She always managed virtual teams, but this has been unique, and she always had other people in her office to connect with. *(from a financial services worker)*

• Learning how to work from home while her family is there. She had to set up an office space just like what she had at work in order to feel good and settle in. Her family needed to establish a new schedule/normal, which has enabled her to thrive and be more productive at home. *(from an insurance worker)*

• Her biggest learning has been that she CAN work from home, build relationships, survive, and feel like she belongs.
(from a business services employee)

• Discipline is one of her biggest learnings. She can prioritize well and get work done. Also, developing good time management skills, which is ongoing learning because right now she feels like she never turns work off.
(from a government agency worker)

2   **Many workers are seeking out meaningful connections to one another, even if they don't recognize those connections as traditional learning.**

- **There has been lots of activity among workers that isn't historically called learning, but that does help them learn.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    • She is now counting informal things, like conversations or supporting someone else, as learning. *(from a technology worker)*

    • She has been so busy that she really has had no time for [traditional] "learning", but she has done some trial and error learning as she is shifting to be virtual for everything. *(from an insurance worker)*

    • MS Teams is the main way they communicate now. They have created channels for saving information, which allows people to refer to issues and see how to resolve them from someone else's notes. *(from a pharmaceutical worker)*

    • She uses the chat feature of Teams mainly (so she doesn't feel like she's being too invasive when she reaches out), and there is a daily open meeting for staff. She finds she's talking to people now that she didn't normally speak with in the office. *(from an association worker)*

    • She uses Slack channels a lot. They have become the common place for people to post questions and answers often come from outside one's own team. *(from a technology worker)*

    • Their video team meetings sometimes contain training, and he connects informally and socially with others, which sometimes yields learning. *(from an insurance worker)*

    • More use of Teams and Zoom with his team and he sits on more webinars, mainly with organizations outside of his own. He said he doesn't feel that any of this connection is specific to learning in a quantifiable way. *(from a healthcare worker)*

- **Workers are intentionally seeking out meaningful connections to one another, sometimes in broader circles, for learning and networking.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - She schedules one-to-one conversations with colleagues she respects and knows she can learn from and writes loads of notes as they talk. Without COVID, she wouldn't have this opportunity. *(from a healthcare worker)*

    - They use Teams across the business now and she uses it for informal learning with peers - to get questions answered and such. *(from an insurance worker)*

    - She reaches out to fellow live virtual training participants who say smart things (using the org directory after the session ends). *(from a professional services worker)*

    - The knowledge sharing happening among colleagues is rapid and constant, so she feels like she's in more of a cohort now than before. Feels like a big increase in information sharing. *(from a business services industry worker)*

    - She leverages WebEx and Teams for networking with colleagues to upskill - way more than pre-pandemic. *(from a mining industry worker)*

    - They use Teams for video connections, and she does this with internal colleagues and those at other firms for benchmarking and best practice sharing. *(from a financial services worker)*

    - She is seeking different perspectives from her team and direct reports, even going outside her immediate circle. *(from an insurance worker)*

    - She's taking more opportunities to communicate with others via video in various locations (globally) vs. doing structured learning. This is a big shift from short in-person meetings or just telephone calls. *(from a mining worker)*

    - They are on video all day long, constantly calling each other as one another's "help desks". *(from a legal firm worker)*

- **Frustration is high when it comes to relationship building in the virtual workplace.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - Technology doesn't enable relationship building as much as in-person contact. Her connectedness now is the result of relationships she built in person, pre-Covid. She hasn't been able to build new ones since remote work started. Even though so many in-person meetings might not be needed in the future, they shouldn't all be ruled out since in-person contact is crucial to networking. *(from a professional services worker)*

    - Team building is a much heavier lift these days. She learns every day as she has continued to hire (about 10 new people) during the pandemic and try to bring them into the fold, help them feel connected, and create a cohesive team. *(from a business services worker)*

• He felt that working from home is something more for his parents, who are established in their careers and don't need that interaction, networking, or face-to-face teamwork. How to navigate work and learning remotely while still being able to connect with people is new and unexpected.
(from an insurance worker)

• Does not think she will do many virtual events since the networking was a main reason she went, and she thinks networking virtually is very difficult.
(from a health insurance worker)

• She said she is no longer able to learn from her usual networking groups.
(from a food & beverage worker)

• She's new to her role and everything is foreign to her, so she wishes she could be in the office to establish more relationships in person; it's hard to set up meetings with people she's never talked to. *(from a financial services worker)*

3 **Learning is lonely and slower without context, companionship, or conversation; workers miss the ad hoc, informal learning they absorbed in the office.**

• **Workers miss the ad hoc, informal, catch-as-you-can learning they would get at the office.**

- • **Voice of the learner:**

    - • There is no spontaneous or incidental knowledge gathering from colleagues outside of scheduled meetings. *(from a financial services employee)*

    - • Pre-pandemic, he would learn a lot by listening to other tech support folks working around him. Now, he has to go online and look everything up in knowledge bases and documentation (takes longer). *(from a technology worker)*

    - • She imagines that she's missing out on some nuanced information she might gather around the water cooler if she was in the office.
    (from a government employee)

    - • You don't hear conversations that trigger other ideas or questions like you do when you're in the office. *(from a business services worker)*

    - • He wishes he could hear others speaking to clients and get feedback from them about how he's speaking. *(from a financial services employee)*

    - • No "osmosis" from listening to others. Can't interact with co-workers outside of chat because they need to leave the phone lines open for customer calls. It's harder to "read" who is struggling among his co-workers because he can't see them.
    (from a technology worker)

- **Learning is taking longer.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - Learning takes longer! Also, some things she would have learned in teams (in person) are now solo online learning offerings, which require a lot more research and independent work on her part. It's frustrating. *(from an energy worker)*

    - She's still finding it takes her longer to learn - felt she learned much faster when it was hands-on. *(from a government worker)*

    - Her learning has a much longer screen time now than before. And more screens involved as well (laptop, iPad, and phone) because different courses require different platforms. *(from a technology worker)*

4 **Contrary to a persistent myth that workers are diving headfirst into online learning for skill development, widespread roadblocks to remote learning include screen fatigue, demanding workloads, and a lack of balance for parents of young children.**

- **A myth persists that workers are diving headfirst into online learning to develop new skills because they have so much time on their hands.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - She's not seeking to develop new skills: she's just trying to survive!
    (from a technology worker)

    - No time to learn anything NEW; it's been more about sharpening skills with things like virtual technology (e.g., Teams). *(from a healthcare worker)*

    - He feels he's gone backwards in terms of learning. He hardly ever reads anymore because he just jumps straight into work, and he doesn't want to read online content because he's so sick of looking at screens.
    (from a technology worker)

    - Even though his organization offers a plethora of formal learning options and vendors, it's been a really busy time, so he and his team haven't had a chance to take advantage. Instead, their learning has been "on the fly" from each other, including: increased job aids, good old-fashioned Googling, informal learning among the team, podcasts, YouTube, a ton of hands-on experimentation with different collaboration tools (virtual whiteboard, Zoom tools), failing forward, and developing different scenarios and use-cases (e.g., "how would that work?", "what are the exceptions?"). He and his team needed to figure out how to virtually replicate the critical monthly in-person "team time" with leaders from around the world. They invested a lot of time via the means above over the first few weeks of the pandemic and are now a knowledge center for virtual connections. *(from a professional services worker)*

- **Screen fatigue is a roadblock to learning.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - When she's been at her computer working all day, she doesn't want to stay on it longer for learning. *(from an association worker)*

    - Any spare time she has she wants to be away from a computer screen. *(from a mining industry worker)*

    - All learning is online, and even though he gets the nagging emails about completing mandatory training, he can't make himself do it because he's too fatigued. *(from a technology worker)*

- **Workloads can be too demanding to allow time for learning.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - She is so busy! The amount of meetings and calls has increased tremendously with everyone being remote, so she is very fatigued and it doesn't leave a lot of energy/desire for extra learning. *(from a legal worker)*

    - Setting aside time for learning is challenging because he feels guilty that he should be using that time to reach out to more of his team or to do more work. The time he sets aside is Friday afternoons, and often he is shutting down by then anyway, or other things come up. *(from an insurance worker)*

    - The persistence and intensity of work is challenging. Her calendar is so full, and she feels she has no breathing space. Hard to find time for learning. *(from a financial services worker)*

    - A challenge to learning is the exhaustion of "living at work" and never getting enough mental breaks from it. He burns out quicker and has more restless nights. *(from a financial services worker)*

- **Parents of young children are seeking more balance and often finding little or no time for learning.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - She'd like to set aside more dedicated time for longer webinars, but she has no separate time now. She is home with a 3-year-old every day and her husband is essential and works outside the home. *(from an association worker)*

    - Finding time to learn and make that a priority is hard when family and work are always competing. *(from a technology worker)*

- Hard to manage time and prioritize, especially with kids at home. She's on overload and learning as needed: she's not carving out time to learn.
(from a pharmaceutical worker)

- Being responsible for his son at the same time he's trying to work, which was new and rocky at first, is a challenge. It limited the ability to focus solely on work and really embrace self-directed learning, but it's getting better each day/week.
(from a technology worker)

- He has a little more time due to no commute. He uses that time mainly for his children's learning - not his own. *(from a manufacturing worker)*

5. Workers are becoming more proactive, independent, self-reliant learners who explore topics more broadly and deeply on their own schedules.

- **Workers are becoming more proactive, independent, and self-reliant learners.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - Learning virtually has forced him to take a more self-directed approach, which has helped him gain more knowledge and retain it better than he might have via more traditional in-person means. *(from an insurance worker)*

    - During this time, he has had to be more self-reliant, doing his own research since he no longer has the resources of others in the office.
    (from an insurance worker)

    - She's doing more online research on her own (before, she would have called someone or visited a store or business). *(from a media worker)*

    - She has become more resourceful at finding answers to questions so as not to bother others now that she can't just ask someone walking by.
    (from a legal worker)

    - She can take charge of what she researches now and has more time to do it.
    (from a technology worker)

    - Pre-pandemic, she relied on her coworkers a lot for resource and people recommendations when she had questions. Now, she tries to answer questions for herself before bothering others. *(from an association worker)*

- **Learners feel freer to explore more broadly and more deeply.**

  - **Voice of the learner:**

    - She has expanded where she looks for knowledge. She explores more, feels freer.
    (from an insurance worker)

- She has the capability to research and learn independently more now than pre-Covid (when she would ask more questions of in-person peers). That means she learns more deeply. *(from a professional services worker)*

- He has been using YouTube to dig deeper into topics they have been trained on and likes that option to gain knowledge. *(from a manufacturing worker)*

- Being home alone has given her more time to focus on projects and get deeper into things. *(from a pharmaceutical worker)*

• Workers appreciate being able to learn on their own time and schedules.

• Voice of the learner:

- On-demand training from the organization allows her to train on her timeline so she's less distracted and feels like she does more learning. Working from home gives her more time for self-development.
(from a financial services employee)

- It's been helpful to have virtual, online options that she can do on her own time. Feels more relaxed and less pressured. *(from a government employee)*

- Anywhere, anytime online learning is helpful. Any time he has 30-40 minutes free, he goes to YouTube and looks for videos about things he's interested in. He creates playlists and curates videos to watch later. *(from an insurance worker)*

• Learning at home is more focused and deliberate with fewer distractions.

• Voice of the learner:

- Being alone means he's more focused with less distractions. Feels like self-study.
(from a professional services worker)

- He can carve out time for learning more easily at home than at the office (less interruptions). *(from a manufacturing worker)*

- There is a shocking lack of distractions at home - she's amazed by how much more productive she is. *(from a franchised restaurant worker)*

- She used to need to see something AND read about it to really absorb it, but now without the usual office distractions, she can just read and feel like she's learned. *(from a financial services worker)*

- Something helpful has been the isolation that working from home allows when necessary. It's much easier to shut the door and focus.
(from a financial services worker)

6. **There is an abundance of online learning resources but a lack of curation.**

- **Voice of the learner:**

  - There is no shortage of learning resources to choose from. It would take her just as long to research what to use as it would to use it, so she asks people for recommendations to save time when she can. *(from an association worker)*

  - Learning needs to be more targeted to employees to engage them and so they're not overwhelmed by all the platforms, modules, and options available. Unlike her, she says most employees aren't prioritizing learning. *(from a financial services worker)*

  - Too much great content! So much to sort through and the current political and social justice arenas add content in so many different ways. Also, virtual platform overload! So many. *(from a technology worker)*

  - Over-saturation of topics and resources! It's hard to source what she really needs. *(from an association worker)*

  - She is overwhelmed by all the resources being offered and it's hard to narrow down what will fill her needs. There is no real targeting of resources. *(from a financial services worker)*

  - No road map! She had to scavenge through way too many resources (e.g., thousands of tutorials on Excel). *(from a manufacturing worker)*

7. **Empathy abounds for leaders and co-workers, for new technology, and for new learning modes.**

- **Voice of the learner:**

  - It is ALL about people! She's older and feels she's more resilient and comfortable with ambiguity than some of her younger colleagues. But she respects that everyone is in a different place and experiences things differently. She knows people look to work for structure, but right now there isn't much of that, so it's doubly hard. She believes if things take longer and some work doesn't get done, it's ok because it's more important that employees feel safe and cared for and want to stay after the crisis ends. *(from an association worker)*

  - Positive Intent: As an African American woman, she's been learning not to overreact and to uncouple where people are coming from. Plus, how to help others who want to learn from her. *(from a financial services worker)*

  - "Forgiveness": he learned to relax his idea of "normal" work interactions (his own and those of others) because his home became an office, classroom, playground, etc. *(from an insurance worker)*

• Social injustice - Black Lives Matter has always resonated with him, but it has now changed him and the lens he sees the world through. He is seeking out as much information as he can. It's about how all of us understand all of us. He's learned how much he values the company he works for, both for how they've handled the transition to WFH - in a pandemic - as well as how they've addressed Black Lives Matter. *(from a technology worker)*

• Helpful things: support and flexibility from her leaders and the executive team, and business partners who were previously running virtual teams and made themselves available to share lessons learned. HR and executive teams were vulnerable, offered leniency and flexibility as everyone fumbled at first. *(from an insurance worker)*

• There is greater risk tolerance from management and an openness to try platforms in new areas rather than what's always been. *(from a professional services employee)*

• The tech that they have at their disposal has helped mitigate the connection or communication in learning issues. He can still message somebody or call them to ask questions, as well as attend virtual learning sessions through these systems. "Thank goodness for screen sharing - it's about as close as you can get to being in person without actually being there." *(from an insurance worker)*

• He feels that people are less "guarded" now and more vulnerable, and it's opened up new lines of communication and knowledge transfer. *(from an airline worker)*

8. Coaching has changed in the pandemic learning environment.

• **Voice of the learner:**

    • She is mentored via video. *(from a manufacturing employee)*

    • He is mentored via video but was already doing this pre-pandemic.
    (from an insurance employee)

    • She's an executive coach, so she'll use Zoom or Facetime for that sometimes.
    (from an insurance worker)

    • Small-group coaching connects via WebEx are helpful. *(from a financial services worker)*

    • Lots more one-to-one peer mentoring meetings with people she didn't normally connect with frequently. *(from a manufacturing employee)*

    • More Googling and less one-to-one mentoring meetings for learning now (everyone has too many virtual meetings). *(from a financial services employee)*

    • The company has mentors to reach out to; he refers to them as needed.
    (from an insurance worker)

9. **There is stress among different types of learning: mandated/compliance, job- or system-focused, self-directed.**

- **Quote from Elliott Masie:**

    - Workers need to balance and curate an ever-increasing amount of content, context, collaboration, and learning experiences. Before working virtually, they may have attended 1 or 2 learning events per quarter. Now, many have to balance an avalanche of learning options – sometimes 2 or 3 per week. This is creating a Curation Stress around balancing time, curiosity, and focus.

10. **Less time traveling/commuting can mean more OR less time for learning.**

- **Quote from Elliott Masie:**

    - Working from home clearly re-shuffles how employees perceive their time allocations. Some see the lack of a commute as creating new opportunities for self-directed activities, including learning. Some see the workday as being continuous – without limits or predictive time blocks – yielding a sense of always being "on", therefore diluting their sense of availability. Don't assume to know how their learning windows look to them in their new daily schedules.

- **Voice of the Learner:**

    - A big part of how she learned is now gone during the pandemic - listening to podcasts on her commute. She would listen to work ones as well as personal ones for a great way of learning. She still has not figured a time in her day to get these back in. *(from a manufacturing worker)*

    - Normally he would listen to content and podcasts (e.g., Social Talent, LinkedIn Learning) on his commute, but without that time, he spends more time working and less time accessing content like that. *(from a technology worker)*

    - He used to have a one-hour commute where he had down time or could listen to a podcast. He does not have that time for learning anymore. *(from an insurance worker)*

    - It's helpful to have more time at home. No 3-hour commute allows her to focus more on herself. She can create breaks for personal and professional development at her own pace. *(from a media worker)*

    - Using newfound "free time" (in the absence of a commute, travel, etc.) to develop himself both personally and professionally, including taking college courses! *(from a franchised restaurant worker)*

11. Diverse Learner Perspectives

Here are some of the diverse perspectives we have captured!

Biggest Learnings

• He has developed enhanced finance and investing skill sets. He even started a finance Instagram page to share what he's been learning from YouTube videos and a virtual investor group he joined. *(from a financial analyst working for a healthcare organization)*

• She found out from 23 & Me that she literally LACKS the empathy gene! She said she's never been good at being understanding of other people's feelings and behavior, and now she knows why. *(from an operations manager at a legal firm)*

• It surprises her how hard it is for others to work on their own remotely and how much they miss physically being together. She doesn't share that sentiment and prefers being on her own. *(from a financial analyst in a government agency)*

• Differences in vulnerability impact the efficacy of one's ability to lead. She feels she's had a masterclass in what's "shitty" and what's exemplary leadership throughout the pandemic. *(from a learning leader in a technology company)*

• He's learned to read emotion into IMs from his team and to recognize that someone might be in a very different emotional place than he is. *(from a leader at an insurance organization)*

• Sr. Leaders dressing down and not looking so polished/made up has improved business relationships. *(from an HR employee at a mining company)*

• She was leaving her organization at the end of July to start an in-person business school program in Ireland because she just doesn't know what the next two years hold. *(from a business analyst at a financial services firm)*

• She said this really came to light for her within about 2 weeks of things shutting down - the very American concept of busy-ness for busy's sake - the "hustle culture". She saw very clearly that slowing down and pausing can be extremely valuable, and that most meetings can be emails. *(from a communications worker at a government agency)*

Pandemic Learning Style

• She is having to learn new platforms for virtual booths at virtual conferences - different for each event. *(from a marketing employee at a pharmaceutical company)*

• Lots of online conferences (new due to the pandemic - before she had to be in person and sometimes paid for herself), especially international ones. She's an introvert and loves that she can get the content online without the small talk of being in person. *(from a business services worker)*

• She had started a certificate course through a university pre-pandemic. It was supposed to be a hybrid program with in-person Saturday sessions. Those all became virtual, so the class was then totally online and she felt the quality of education suffered: chaotic transition, hard to focus, felt like students weren't putting in as much effort, lots of online fatigue (teacher wanted them on camera the whole time). *(from a legal firm employee)*

• She leveraged an executive assistant network group (made up of people outside of her organization) to test out various virtual platforms each week. This gave them all a lot of confidence in their own roles with their bosses. *(from a mining industry worker)*

• Now that she's using the computer for so much online training, she's taking physical notes on paper and having to develop a "shorthand" for herself. *(from a recruiter at a professional services firm)*

• She's taken one online class (over a series of sessions) and said it's the hardest class she's ever taken because there were 1500 PPT slides vs. a book. Being a hands-on learner, this style of learning was very hard for her. *(from a government agency employee)*

• She has had to take her hula classes online and learning choreography via Zoom isn't easy! Hard for all to stay on beat with interrupted Internet connections. *(from a healthcare worker)*

• He created an Authoring Innovation Group a ways back so he and his team could transition together to a new platform, has since turned it into a platform for sharing best practices, which the group has leaned heavily on during the pandemic as a source of ideas, energy, collaboration, etc. *(from a technology worker)*

• Book Club with team: for team bonding but also to gain skills taught in the book (positive mindset, etc.) *(from a manufacturing industry worker)*

• As a pilot, every time they fly to another country, they have to quarantine there for 14 days, and again when they return (quarantine for 14 days again in their own country). With a lot of quarantine time, learning seems more fun than before because they are stuck in a room and have nothing to do. So, they ended up finishing their company's required language training courses that they could never finish before. Somehow, the quarantine made them want to learn more. *(from a global airline pilot)*

Virtual Connections for Learning

• They use WebEx and Jabber but she gets easily overstimulated by too many people wanting to reach out. Too much engagement! *(from a legal firm employee)*

• Teams crashes 50% of the time, so while they use it for team meetings, for important conversations they usually use a telephone conference line. *(from a financial services worker)*

• They have virtual 1-1's set aside for new people since they can't just easily ask someone the questions people ask when they're new. *(from a financial services employee)*

• More use of Teams and Zoom with his team and he sits on more webinars, mainly with organizations outside of his own. He said he doesn't feel that any of this connection is specific to learning in a quantifiable way. *(from a leader at a healthcare organization)*

• Since the pandemic, all their internal communication and training has shifted to WeChat (similar to WhatsApp). This transition made their personal life mix with work communication. Family and leaders contacting them on the same App is very distracting. They never video chat as a team - just audio - so when they meet with international clients who request video chat, the whole team feels awkward. The way they communicate has totally changed. *(from a global airline worker)*

What's Helped or Challenged Their Learning

• Challenging

- Simultaneous language translations on virtual platforms are not great.
(from a government agency worker)

- She was able to do her standard classes through her agency's video training virtual click-through; however, she found the lack of a physical person she could ask questions of challenging. She still preferred to pull an entire topic offline and take tangible notes to retain the info. The online model leads to less learning; it's more about the points or checking the box.
(from a government worker)

- She's aggravated to be paying a premium for an executive MBA program that was supposed to be in-person and include international travel and assignments at a variety of organizations. Now she feels she's paying a premium for an online MBA and it's not the same. *(from a consulting firm employee)*

- He started a new position in April and feels he knows more about what he's being taught than the people teaching him (who have never done the job). The people he wants to learn from are too successful to want to stop what they're doing and teach.
(from a financial services employee)

- Low morale, anxiety, and high stress make it hard to focus and drain her energy. Even small disruptions impact her more than they normally would.
(from a technology worker)

- As a learner, it's been hard "reading the room" virtually, where before it was easier to know if everyone was on the same page. When classes were in person, if she didn't understand something, she could tell if others were in the same position and pipe up for clarification. *(from an airline worker)*

• Helpful

- Having a ranking system for relevance of webinars for different topics. They have this and it helped not having to sit through things that would not be as relevant to a topic she was learning about.
(from a grocery chain employee)

- He likes being able to learn via video on his own time, without needing to wait for the rest of his colleagues in a class to catch up and all be on the same page. He thinks he learns more and faster this way.
(from an association worker)

- Employee Resource Groups putting out Lunch & Learns. They're one of the few entities putting out opportunities. *(from a manufacturing worker)*

- Because of leadership, his organization was prepared and ready when all of the new procedures had to be rolled out fast. Ironically, in a tabletop exercise he participated in last year with other leaders, they were imagining how they would take action in a pandemic.
(from a leader in the business services industry)

- Amazon resources for EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) twice a day.
(from a legal firm employee)

- She's found that being home, where she is warm, has the lights "low", and is dressed casually/comfortably - being comfortable in these basic ways - has made it easier for her to learn and absorb information.
(from a manufacturing industry employee)

- Their professional development courses are always so popular that they tend to fill up before most people can sign up. Now that everything is virtual, she's getting the chance to sign up for things she's missed out on in the past. *(from an airline worker)*

- The hard stop the pandemic brought gave her clarity and helped her take her role and her training to another level. She said that it's enabled her to meet her customers where they're at NOW, and it's made a huge difference, especially with people who she maybe had a harder time connecting with before the pandemic.
(from an insurance worker)

- He feels there was/is "something different about the data during the pandemic". He equates it to having more time to read and more time to digest data. Before, he'd read an article, but now he's going through the process of looking at and synthesizing the raw data to create his own dashboard and see what he thinks it says. He's enjoying having more time to access data and "let the data soak". *(from a technology worker)*

- The lack of a slant or bias regarding company information that she gets directly from company resources, as opposed to when she'd get information from a colleague or by word-of-mouth, which often had someone's opinion coloring the delivery of the information. *(from a fast-food chain employee)*

Quotes from the Field About Learning Pivots in the Pandemic

At the start of October, Elliott Masie requested perspectives on learning pivots from colleagues in the field. They had the option of how to identify themselves by name, title, and/or organization – or to stay anonymous.

#ImprovingVirtual

The pandemic forced us to find how to bring the human connection to virtual experiences.
- Bruce Baumgarten, Sr. Director of Talent

There were two paradoxical pivoting points in learning during these 5 months. First is a fast transfer of corporate learning to online courses. Second is an obvious slowdown of this process due to low effectiveness of the learning and low impact on business results. Companies and providers realized that it is necessary to teach people how to learn online, to involve managers in this process, and to create the holistic support system (informal learning, social learning, self-directed learning) in order to achieve high learner engagement, performance gain, and behavioral change.
- Elena Pavlichenko, General Manager, Advance Group

This has demonstrated the need to teach people about the available interfaces and how to access content virtually, as well as teach them the skills or information we want to transfer. Ideally, the interface disappears and lets the content be the focus of the learner's attention.
- Learning Colleague

Switch to virtual with focus on collaboration. Engagement is key and helping facilitators understand the listening piece is more important than the talking piece.
- Jacqueline Beck, IMEx Global Training Team, Pfizer

Sometimes when you are forced to do something, you actually determine it wasn't so bad after all. Prior to the pandemic, many of our program sponsors were reluctant to move from face-to-face to virtual experiences. Through designing and delivering thoughtful, brain-friendly virtual learning experiences, these same sponsors are now advocates for virtual. Good design is more important than delivery environment.
- Dana Alan Koch, Institute for the Applied Learning Sciences Lead, Accenture

Creativity and adding a LOT of interactivity online is KEY to keeping learners interested. Things we thought could only be taught in person were successfully taught virtually.
- Synoma Hays, Program Manager, US Foods

I have learned that the visual clues one receives on a Zoom or webinar platform greatly enhance the experiences of both learning and teaching online. It is fascinating that one can pivot to a virtual esprit de corps!
- Martha Margolis, Refined Saratoga Springs Retailer

I feel that learning is evolving through the pandemic. There has been a growing demand for online, on-demand education, and the pandemic has pushed us definitively in that direction. The challenge for educators has been keeping that personal touch – that face-to-face quality that allows the educator to read their learners' reception and adjust quickly.
- Richard Franklin, Director of Leadership Development, HealthEquity, Inc.

My daughter is in elementary school, and professionally I train acclaimed staff in our field, so I truly notice that over a broad span, we are all looking for creative ways to make online learning more interactive. I love in-person learning, which makes this a difficult transition for me (I miss running groups and in-person laughter). With all that has happened this year, I am extremely thankful for anyone willing to support the community and share ideas on how we can improve remote learning.
- Marshall Irvin, Associate Director of Training, NYSPI at CUIMC

When we shifted from an in-person to virtual conference, some presenters adapted their presentations to embrace viewers using laptops, even incorporating activities you could not do in a group setting. For instance, for a session on human vision and driving, the presenter devised a test where you placed your hand a few inches from the screen to simulate obscured vision as a virtual child crossed the virtual street in front of you. Very effective and engaging to the viewer.
- Mike Fergus, Program Manager, IACP

Manager/leader coaching usually performed one-to-one became virtual. We had to be clever about delivering engaging virtual coaching using short eLearns, videos, and scenario coaching.
- A. Lodato, Lead Instructional Designer

To sum it up, the key learning pivots during the pandemic are: 1) increased effort on the part of facilitators to maximize the virtual environment for learner engagement - synchronously and asynchronously; 2) a heightened learner appreciation for development opportunities; and 3) increased comfort - for learners and facilitators - for virtual development.
- Sean D. Hesler, Director of Learning and Development, University of Iowa

It has been a wonderful exercise in flexibility and creativity working with my clients to pivot their learning experiences. It's not a simple shift to just moving everything online: it takes a lot of care to ensure you are using all the tools you have – from content to technology to timing – to keep your learners engaged.
- Alison French, Alto Solutions, LLC

Many are still in "emergency response" mode. Sending out PDFs to accompany Zoom calls is not good enough for learners and puts the organization's IP at risk.
- Lance Westbrook, SharedBook

After an initial hesitation for virtual training, our experience at SkyeTeam has been that learning has increased its impact for our clients. Our clients tell us that the sessions we facilitated have maintained the sense of team and provided stability during a time when many felt disconnected and unstable. It has resulted in creativity and innovation in HOW we leverage technology to deliver training, which has delivered higher engagement, collaboration, and participation by our learners, and more importantly, transfer of learning back to their teams.
- Morag Barrett CEO, SkyeTeam.com

Because of virtual delivery, it feels like learning opportunities have become more accessible than ever. Yet, we risk making the same mistakes that were made when eLearning first became available: "let's move everything to eLearning". Improving performance still needs to be the focus.
- Rob Stevens, President, Leadership for Now

I think learning methods have changed since the pandemic. I see a lot more digital learning methods that are used, even though a lot of them are badly designed and no use to the learner…when I look around at colleagues there is a lot of misunderstanding in what digital training really means…what about the learner and learning objectives? The one has nothing to do with the other.
- Nicole Taylor, Owner, Knowledge Innovation by Nicole Taylor

We have received an overwhelming number of requests from customers to convert their cancelled F2F classes, workshops, conferences, and summits onto our virtual collaborative organization learning platform. It's not enough to deliver Zoom meetings. Blending asynchronous and synchronous learning with guided-paced-cohorts that include chunked mode shifting every 5 minutes (for a total of 30 minutes daily), combined with time for reflection and dialogue with true peers who grapple with real-world challenges, share ideas, teach and learn from each other and from experts, and capture the new knowledge for sharing across the enterprise leads to the highest impact outcomes…
- Tom Pitts, VP, Enterprise Solutions, CorpU

There are so many creative possibilities available for virtual learning. We recognize the importance of adding movement and play that works in the virtual space.
- Hope Langner, CPCC, MS, MCC, Director - Faculty and Coach Training, Co-Active Training Institute

There is more emphasis on QUALITY of the learning experience. Where webinars were often structured as one-way communication and thinking only of the message, we are more thoughtful of the experience and engagement around the overall learning objectives.
- Molly Dueber, Business Process Analyst

In these challenging times, there are learning groups that are doing more than typical virtual offerings. Some are rethinking how to use virtual in different ways and trimming content to focus on core needs. A great example of pivoting in the face of significant change and creating new solutions for learners.
- Adrian Celentano, Celentano Consulting

The pandemic has put online learning center stage, and the market is now flooded with webinars and other online events, from presentations and workshops to weddings and happy hours to festivals and award shows. Our opportunity now is to go beyond "Zoom fatigue" by developing deep empathy with our end users so we can create meaningful new ways to meet their needs – both online and offline.
- Claudia Escribano, Senior Instructional Designer, C2 Technologies, Inc.

#SupportingBusinessChange

We know that our businesses are transforming at a pace never seen before. Therefore, we need to find a mechanism to support this change and evolve learning and talent at the same time. We can find the short- and long-term solution to transformational support through skills-based development and learning in the flow of work. Yet, in order to make the critical decisions around where we need to develop our people and measure change, we must have Data Driven Decision Making. All three elements work together. If we only focus on one or two items, then we will miss the opportunity to revolutionize the way we develop people and the way we work. This is the opportunity for Learning and Talent departments to lead the way and to care for our people, providing them a future that is bright and rewarding.
- Chris Bond, CEO, Bluewater

Now more than ever, learning professionals are at the center of the changes occurring in their business – enabling business to communicate and educate on the changes to survive, and providing the solutions for their organizations to upskill and thrive!
- Allyson Carter, VP Talent Management, The CARA Group

The pivot to virtual learning has increased the importance of demonstrating that the learning has tangible business and behavioral impacts. In addition, work from home has made it more critical to provide users with content roadmaps so they can tailor the wealth of online learning to meet needs that they don't always know they have. And due to the limited availability of employee time, it has led learning solutions to get to the point quickly.
- Irwin Jankovic, Ph.D., Strategic Program Manager HR, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

As the global pandemic accelerates digital transformation efforts across all industries, learning and development (L&D) teams are supporting their organizations at unprecedented levels to keep employees engaged and skilled. Innovative L&D departments have been scaling hybrid learning experiences at a rapid pace to create a culture of learning for remote employees. Organizations that consider L&D a strategic initiative found that their workforce was more agile and adaptable.
- Emma Hartsfield, VP of Marketing, AllenComm

We are pivoting in more personal ways to support people remotely and on job sites in both content and delivery technologies. The lines are blurring in a good way with communication, education, and reskilling. We are in the belly of the beast for decisions needed based on the rapidly changing business landscapes and what our employees, managers, and leaders need to take care of people.
- Kristi Conlon, Leader of Learning and Development, DPR Construction

Learning & Development (L&D) teams have realized that reskilling, upskilling, and outskilling present the answer to the challenges and opportunities the future of work brings. The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing a rethink on the role of L&D in organizations. An accelerated learning transformation is needed to prepare for a "super-learning" future: centered on skills and capabilities at individual, team, and organization levels; powered by data; and integrating learning in the flow of work across functions and businesses.
- Luc Lutin, Deloitte Consulting & Advisory

Not only are we having to act more quickly, but we're able to better align to the business needs by focusing on performance rather than a robust amount of knowledge. We're trimming the fat on the amount of information we thought learners needed, and really getting to the basics of what they need in order to be successful in role.
- Meghan Castillo, Senior Learning Experience Designer, HubSpot

This pandemic has proved to be the "mother of digital innovation in corporate training." The businesses that will thrive are the ones that are embracing a digital-first mindset by transforming their workforce training to become measurable, data-driven, and individualized, continuously adapting to link knowledge with performance. Only with such a digital-first mindset can business leaders equip themselves to flex and adapt to an environment that is evolving at an unprecedented rate.
- Manoj Kulkarni, CEO, Realizeit

As businesses are pivoting to address the needs of the new normal, learning has to be more effective, more efficient, and more economical than ever before and critically must be aligned with the organization's strategy. Everything we do has to be grounded in enhancing the goals of the business. Marie Kondo would ask, "Does this bring joy?" Learning needs to ask, "Does this bring value?" That's the way we'll prove our worth in the future.
- Lydia Sani, Managing Partner, Redwood Performance Group

#AutonomousLearners

Our world has shifted to a more autonomous learner. Social learning now takes some extra effort for everyone. We rely heavily on our online content, virtual classrooms, and digital connections to get the job done.
- Mark Wagner, VP of Learning, The Hartford

Flexibility, curiosity, and the ability to be a proactive learner were taken to an all-new level during the pandemic and into the future. Assumptions are being challenged daily (if not hourly) and one must be able to absorb new information at lightning speed and make decisions that may be changed as soon as the ink dries. We bob and weave in boxing and these skills carry over in our learning lives.
- Mary Hastler, CEO, Harford County Public Library

Pandemic-quarantine learning has certainly forced me to pivot (as probably most of us have) to be more disciplined and responsible. Now having to work in a virtual environment, I only have myself to account for my process and growth. I have no choice but to be my own teacher and enforcer.
- Alan Ariano, Broadway & Television Actor

There has been a move towards more ownership of personal development and recognition of the need to make time for activities that contribute to personal growth. Another side effect of working from home is that many have become more comfortable with exploring the use of new technology, opening the door for more use of online development. At the same time, it has highlighted the importance of human connection for our overall well-being, with acceptance of virtual online events and webinars growing significantly.
- Linda Al Ansari, Freelance L&D Consultant

The most significant pivot has been what I call "virtual intimacy". I define virtual intimacy as the ability to get *closer* to the learner than ever before. The new reality is that learners can hear better, they have more tools for learning, they can interact better with each other, and different learning tools like cloud-based simulations provide the opportunity to learn-by-doing in a much physically and emotionally safer environment.
- Robert Brodo, Advantexe, President & CEO

If you value "allowing people to learn" more than the effort directed toward "teaching them", I think these last five months have been challenging. Educators probably are better equipped and experienced at structuring environments so that learning can occur. Virtual interactions can be engaging, but they are more easily suited to didactic, traditional teaching.
- Stephanie R Stilson, PhD, Diversified, EMBRACE Strategist

We are still humans. The ways we learn haven't changed much. We have to, however, master new skills, like how to stay productive while working from home, how to combine work and life in the same room, how to survive at work with small children right outside of your camera view, etc.
- Marek Hyla, Senior Learning Principal, Accenture

Will learners who are used to an instructor-led, face-to-face learning environment acclimate to virtual training? The answer is a resounding "YES!" No matter the age (generation) of the learner, I am still blown away by how they will even carry out their role play activities when a facilitator is not present in their "breakout room". It's obvious that they still want to learn!
- Brian Thomson, Manager of Learning & Development, Commercial Metals Company

Pivots include: faster, more open adoption of virtual learning technology; learners' openness to virtual formats, which increases attendance and engagement during virtual sessions; and a higher rate of use for on-demand content, plus openness to longer journeys and reinforcements vs. one-time events.
- Olia Shapel, Learning Leader

The pandemic has intensified workers' hunger for learning. People have time to learn and the changed work environment has shown them things they need to learn. Plus, learning continues to become increasingly accessible outside of a college degree.
- Jaime Fall, Director, UpSkill America

The proliferation of digital working and the ease of having access to information has caused a shift in demand for real-time soundbites and moments for reflection as they relate to learning and development and integrating new ideas, concepts or information into daily use. There is an opportunity to innovate and apply different learning environments than in the past.
- Learning Colleague, NortonLifeLock

#FromF2FtoVirtual

Companies are forced to move to the virtual classroom model after years of holding onto the face-to-face classroom despite little evidence of increased impact. Designing and delivering virtual collaborative learning experiences will not only increase impact, but build community when people are working from home or in far-flung office spaces.
- Bob Dean, Founder, Dean Learning & Talent Advisors LLC

Learning has had to shift to virtual: that is the big pivot in 2020. We've had to update how we present content to ensure that it is still engaging in a virtual delivery mode as well as train our trainers on how to manage remote learning. Not everyone has the skills to monitor a class online and not all training materials were developed for an online delivery. Making these accommodations has been the big pivot in my opinion.
- Jim Poisson, Director of Software Product Management, Learning Sciences International

Obviously, a major pivot, practically overnight, was towards the use of more virtual classroom in place of in-person ILT. Many trainers needed to just make it work and in a hurry, with program design and content only getting a cursory update early on. Fortunately, as the pandemic dragged on, many have seen the benefit of reconsidering what really needs to be delivered synchronously so participants learn from both the SME and their peers together, versus what parts of the former ILT program could be switched to documentation, video or other self-paced media, or provided as performance support instead.
- Tom Stone, Senior Research Analyst, i4cp

Suddenly, everyone had to become comfortable with online remote learning. It was like we all crammed 5 years of corporate evolution into 3-6 months.
- Patrick Wraight, Director of Education, Insurance Journal's Academy of Insurance

My assumption is that this will be an irreversible shift in learning and that educational technology innovation will accelerate the advancement of remote learning in ways we cannot even think of right now.
- Michael Flanagan, Executive Advisor, Fassforward

Clients are now forced to embrace the move from the classroom to the virtual classroom. As instructional designers, we need to ensure the content is being given the right solutions. There are more options, and better options, than just the virtual classroom.
- Nancy Williams, Learning Consultant, Canada Revenue Agency

The pandemic has accelerated and, in some cases, forced the pivot to virtual and blended learning. I think it's been a good thing. I see a lot of resistance to the pivot – change is hard – mostly from our own learning department and facilitators. I think this trend will not go away and will forever change the blend to offer more virtual and less in-person learning, and I think it's upped the game for learning groups to be more prepared and really sort the good from the average.
- A Director of Global Leadership

In my opinion, home schooling started the movement and now with the pandemic, it appears that a percentage of the population will choose to continue this option. I don't have the data, but I suspect research would support this as parent/student choice plus reduced cost will make this class method very attractive.
- Oren Guidry, Retired Resource Manager, Naval Enlisted Aviation Technical Training

Learning in the pandemic has changed learning/education forever. The drastic shift and focus on learning throughout the pandemic have taken learning remotely to a higher platform!
- Pamela Assing, Training Coordinator, Prudential Financial

The shift from in-person training to Zoom or other online methods was/is a curious transformation. I wonder if we will ever return to traditional conferences and training. I miss the in-person ability to see, touch, and be in the physical same space: learning with others in a real room, with ability to hear sighs and laughter, read body language, have the sense of smell, and more. Time will tell how this online training affected our interpersonal world.
- Jon Hansen, President, H-11 Digital Forensics

Perhaps the most challenging aspect was transitioning our face-to-face leadership workshops to a virtual deployment format. The informal networking that takes place in these workshops is difficult to replicate. Not impossible, but certainly challenging.
- Jose Colunga, Learning Manager, Honeywell

Classroom WAS king and virtual has taken the throne and changed the way we approach learning. Our organization shifted drastically to a new model, and in doing so we demystified old assumptions and found our workforce very comfortable and adaptive to the changes. We are keen to offer more micro-learning in virtual and on-demand settings as 'working' is blurred and day-long classroom engagements aren't as useful.
- Maggie Nelson, VP Learning and Development, Lazard Freres & Co

Like others, the pandemic has caused us to shift our thinking around how we design and deliver learning, stretching the boundaries of what will now become the "new normal." Past technology investments in mobile synchronous and asynchronous delivery platforms are starting to pay big dividends as we shift to more distance learning.
- Jon Faulk, Dir. Enterprise Learning & Technology, PG&E

We've redesigned classroom training to fit a virtual environment. It required our facilitators to learn how to make use of technology in WebEx: break-out rooms, whiteboards, annotation tools, polling, chat. Activities like role playing can still involve facilitator observation via camera but need to be scheduled versus having a facilitator roaming the classroom doing observation.
- Judy Myers, Training Consultant, Cigna

Early on we saw many clients who needed to quickly convert ILT to VILT, often overnight or over a weekend. Now clients are being more thoughtful and stepping back to consider what might be the best blended solution. This newly-envisioned blended solution most likely includes a number of virtual and digital components — each intentionally created.
- Lisa Toenniges, CEO, Innovative Learning Group

With the advent of the pandemic I have seen a greater demand in Virtual Instructor Led Training as well as blended eLearning and VILT solutions. I think with the increased use of these delivery models we have touched learners that have not experienced their capabilities and varied learning experiences…as a result, I think we will have a learner audience that will expect and have adopted VILT and VILT blended solutions as future expected offerings after the pandemic.
- Timothy M. Rogers, Manager, Instructional Design, Scouting U, Boy Scouts of America

For our college, learning moved from face-to-face to virtual in March 2020. Summer courses went all virtual and online. Some courses moved to virtual with online adding more courses and some face-to-face courses were added for fall.
- Cheryl D. Green, Professor

Cahoot Learning works in the workforce/professional education space with government and corporate clients. We have seen a significant shift in some clients from a "our future education strategy is predominantly on-ground" mindset to a "our future education strategy is digital" mindset. The majority sit in a middle space where they are now looking at a blend of on-ground and digital. There are still those who want things to go back to the way they were and are clinging on to an on-ground model. These three groups, if graphed, would be a bell curve.
- Anthony Morris, CEO, Cahoot Learning

When our world was hit with COVID-19 and teleworking became the new normal, we immediately jumped into high gear with our digital platform. The pandemic became the catalyst for increased usage and acceptance for online learning. In a 3-month period, we experienced a 372% increase in accesses to our learning management system.
- Karen Gilliam, PhD, Chief Learning Officer

We still learn the same ways as we always have. Virtual learning is simply the channel and format. I have been teaching remotely, as have others, for over a decade. This is not new. What is new is the allocation between live and virtual instruction. People impact and influence our learning and that piece has been minimized – sadly.
- Michelle Tillis Lederman, Author of The Connector's Advantage

As a classroom learning provider, we went home in March wondering if we could survive. We switched all our programmes to live, online, face-to-face sessions, creating real interactivity in Zoom. Our clients and facilitators have been astounded by what is possible and many do not want to go back to the classroom.
- Henry Stewart, Chief Happiness Officer, Happy

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated digitization at all levels of education. Post-pandemic learners will enjoy more integrated and personalized multi-channel learning ecosystems for them to engage.
- Ulrike Klaussner, Senior Instructional Designer, IE University

The pandemic has forced learning to migrate from inside the classroom to virtual. Virtual training is a skill, so it has not been easy. Each learning platform has its ups and downs; however, this is our current reality, so we have to ensure our employees are getting the training that they need.
- Latoya Thomas, LL&D Sr Trainer, Aflac

The pandemic has forced a shift to more virtual delivery and a restructuring of how leadership courses are imagined as the days of 3-, 4- and 5-day classroom sessions are no longer possible.
- Nicholas Bird, Senior Director Talent Development

Certainly, the interest in eLearning (remote learning) has increased significantly. There are perceived challenges of how to translate ILT content to eLearning. Those who currently do ILT are strongly defending it, while eLearning proponents are trying to make a strong case to make the transition. The market within Covid-19 is driving the transition.
- Jose J. Carrasquillo, Founder/CEO, Vistacast

We switched to digital immediately. Now we are pivoting to hybrid/blended: the right methodological mix of a variety of solutions to make learning relevant and effective.
- Anat Jacoby, Ph.D., CEO at ExperTeam - Learning Solutions, Israel

There is an opening with the pandemic for more substantial innovation to take root. Incentives are now in place for both teachers and professors to utilize eLearning tools and resources more abundantly. Learning will become much more highly blended between class time and time online.
- Ron J Stefanski, Executive Director, Centric Learning

On the plus side, classroom training content is getting the fine-toothed-comb treatment. Is this piece of content valuable, or does it just get us to lunchtime? On the minus side, all that great learning that happened during breaks, lunch, and after class doesn't just happen anymore. We have to find ways to get it less organically.
- Greg Smith, Talent Development, Andersen Windows & Doors

In 2020, learning has pivoted sharply to online delivery, even in countries that traditionally relied solely on in-person training. The urgent need for online training globally has made e-learning translation a top priority. How to do that quickly and in the most cost-effective manner is still a question for our highly technical content.
- *Candace Marles, Manager, Digital Learning Development, SAS*

As an independent learning consultant, I built up my expertise on developing and delivering virtual learning and offered this skill to my clients, often at low cost at the beginning of the pandemic.
- *Learning Colleague*

My experience is that while there has been a lot of evolution, there have been some changes that have taken very indirect and even convoluted routes. I think we will find a variety of new and innovative ways to convey knowledge, but I also think that the personal contact that often comes with learning will always be valuable.
- *Scott A. Meyers, Executive Vice President, Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists*

The mass exodus to virtual and the tsunami of new "believers" has produced a sea change in how we present. My fellow owners of learning companies have transitioned literally (almost) overnight and are (mostly) adjusted and actually loving it. The personalization of so many colleagues as well as leaders has been such fun...looking into their homes, noticing their art work, the books on their shelves, and the people and pets in their lives has humanized our interactions and made them so much more friendly.
- *Bev Kaye, Bev Kaye & Company*

A shift from a typical 8-hour learning day to 60 minutes condensed. How we communicate the learning has to be clearer and to the point.
- *Joel Silverstone, founder TFR: This Feels Right*

#AgileLearningProfessional

I have been amazed at the ability of the learning community to find ways to adapt, adopt new technology and ways of working, and explore new and innovative approaches to meet the demand for engaging, effective, digital learning during COVID. Hats off to everyone who has leaned in to help our learners and organizations through this trying time.
- *Leszek Nowosielski, Canada School of Public Service*

There's an incredible need to be agile in all that we do. My work is partly equipping our faculty and staff and partly stress management to help keep people from becoming overwhelmed by the anxieties they are feeling. Ultimately, this has been a time when our learning community has become more resilient and supportive.
- *Renee Ford, Penn State University*

Agility is critical.
- *Paul Holba, Manager of Organizational Development & Training, AAF*

Learning and Development is more critical now than ever before. Collectively we are adapting, learning, and leveraging different skills as we adjust to how work gets done differently. We have talked about learning agility for the last decade and the last several months have put that competency to the test.
- *Mark Kaestner, VP Talent Management, Learning & Development, Diversity & Inclusion*

Flexibility. Adaptability. Versatility. Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.
- *Allen Roscoe, Director - Tradebe Learning Academy, Tradebe Environmental Services*

Learning professionals should take advantage of the huge opportunities that this pandemic affords and act quickly. Find creative ways to develop/deliver quality education that helps others to build and apply critical capabilities needed in this new normal. Don't ask for permission – and don't wait for it to be perfect!
- Jill Gardner, Learning Leader, Farmers Insurance

It has been amazing to me how energized and creative staff have become to embark on the "new" journey for instruction and employee learning. Once the rhythm of the remote work was found, staff spent time in personal learning and then hit the ground with ideas for creation. I've seen this as a much-needed spark to create new energy for our organization.
- Kevin W. Bruny, Director and CLO, Chesterfield County, Virginia

During the pandemic, Learning has been forced to focus on those concepts most important to long-term success, while reacting incredibly fast to short-term changes in our workplaces and world in general. How challenging is that? Very! But that type of pivot can be a tremendous opportunity to reshape the way we approach learning into something much more nimble.
- Kris Bickell, Lifelong Learning Manager, ARRL

Learning pivots in the pandemic provided the real-world "test" most learning professionals have been pushing. Micro-learning, creating learning tribes, and a growth mindset are essential to professional and personal growth.
- Ranieka Weston, Talent Development VP

During the pandemic, we have had to work faster and smarter to keep our learners moving with the pace of change.
- Prudential

My three words, which are key to surviving the pivot in our Learning Center, are flexibility, understanding, and kindness. The entire learning community at our University was impacted, so it was important not to focus on our personal needs but the needs of our entire learning community. Students, faculty, and the entire University staff worked tirelessly to solve constantly changing challenges.
- Dr. Diana Garland, Director of the Learning Commons, Missouri State University

We were able to take advantage of the situation to drive many more development initiatives into new delivery methods and have realized many positive outcomes. This has set the stage for taking virtual learning to the next level.
- Amy Ryan, VP Learning and Professional Development, Kindred at Home

Corporate organizations that were resistant to remote working and virtual training were forced to adapt to a new world with restrictions; therefore, learning professionals had to be agile to meet the needs of the business, stretching their skills sets and creativity.
- Jessica Steen, Manager of Instructional Design, Edwards Lifesciences

This pandemic provided a unique opportunity to think differently about our programs, delivery methodologies, and their value propositions. Key questions included: Are we focused on the right topics/skills/strategies? Do we need to adjust? If so, how do we maximize results in this "new normal"?
- Alicine Francois, Eversource

While I find that the delivery medium has pivoted, I do not necessarily feel that LEARNING has changed. Our learners are still our learners. All of us need to embrace the change, reframe, and then move ahead with the business of learning!
- Nancy Mikkelsen, CXO, Keyboard Consulting

We have had to be flexible and fluid, switching hundreds of our offerings from hands-on experiences to remote sessions.
- Adam Diglio, Sales training leader, Zoetis Inc.

COVID-19 is challenging enterprises in unprecedented ways, placing new requirements on employee upskilling and retraining and forcing training programs to adapt in a timely manner across content, users, and format. Many are in crisis-response mode that expose their systems as inadequate to the need for agile and seamless learning…
- Jeremy Auger, Chief Strategy Officer, D2L

Learners, leaders, and learning professionals have embraced the change quickly. Out of necessity, educators and learners have adapted to learning delivery in all different mediums, with a far more open-minded approach. Teaching and learning skill development will need to remain high in our agendas.
- Michelle Gibson

I am struck by the creativity of my colleagues. My organization was strategizing how to move to real virtual options, but the pandemic threw us there. We've pivoted in many wonderful ways.
- Val Boudreau, Learning Advisor & Facilitator

What I've seen over the past few months is how many obstacles have been overcome that were only obstacles in our own minds. How many things that we told ourselves couldn't be done have been done simply because we didn't have any other option? How many new solutions have been discovered and implemented that we never would have even thought to try?
- Manta Kripotos, FIS/Senior Multimedia Training Developer

We've had to learn how to do technical software training remotely. This means a lot more prep work for our facilitators to make sure these new employees can access all the software they need remotely.
- Monique Goodwin, Manager, Learning & Development, Servus Credit Union

"Pivot" describes it perfectly. To continue fulfilling our organizational mission, the pandemic forced us to learn new ways to implement change initiatives and deliver core training and on-the-job coaching. Fortunately, we had a digital business transformation program in progress that allowed us to adapt quickly.
- Dena Riede, Sr. Organizational Change Management Specialist

Pandemics – and other fast-moving and faster-changing crises – seem to require even more learning agility. What we need to know and how we need to apply it can shift day-to-day, even moment-to-moment, so we need sensitive radar to identify where to focus right now. Paradoxically, we also need to invest in core concepts that have the broadest application, like decision-making, character, and leadership, so we're as prepared for the unknown as we can be.
- Bill Carrier, President, Carrier Leadership Coaching, Inc.

The rapid shift to a large work-from-home workforce eliminated many geographic learning obstacles and physical requirements. Ultimately, the pandemic expanded economies of scale for learning, skill development, and individual, team, and organizational growth. Staff learning agility played a significant role in our success.
- Kurt E Koehler, Southeast Toyota Finance

Elliott and his team have been leading the work to help us learn how to be decent educators in challenging times.
- Learning Colleague

#StayingConnected

I find the need for even more communication, connection, and collaboration during this unique time. Getting up to speed on new technologies and platforms is imperative. Engaging learners and leaders in (primarily virtual) new, fun, and effective ways is the foundation for moving learning forward in our organization.
- Lori Moss, Sr. Manager of Learning, Astellas Pharma Medical Affairs

Virtual community connection is a healthy lifestyle.
- Professor Junfei Hu Vox, Scotland, UK

I have been able to maintain a level of connection with teammates that I wasn't sure was possible. Through video calls and an occasional video lunch or happy hour (at the end of the day) we have been able to remain engaged.
- Lisa Robbins, Sr. Instructional Designer, Citizens Bank

We're evolving. The desire to connect is still there. It's just more challenging to reach one another.
- Susan Woods, Facilitator and Research Director

As thought workers, the acceleration of virtual collaboration will leapfrog our productivity by leaps and bounds. We've been witness to a spectrum of pivoting by leaders across the industry. For the most part, the need to collaborate 24/7/365 around the globe has been a condition of our work. Those who failed to embrace empowering their teams to do so have now been left in the dustbin of irrelevancy. Those who have are becoming tomorrow's leaders.
- William P. Corrigan, Chief Learning Officer, Alpha Dawn, LLC

#Empathy&Wellness

There is now a recognition that employee wellbeing – particularly emotional wellbeing and mental health – are critical issues for employers, and talent and learning leaders have a role to play. Creating a workplace environment where employees feel encouraged to share requires leaders with critical human skills such as empathy, problem solving, and positivity. These are learnable skills and L&D must lead the way.
- Pam Boiros, meQuilibrium

Learning in the pandemic requires higher self-empathy and greater self-motivation.
- Deepak Sethi CEO Organic Leadership

Keep calm, don't panic, keep focus. If during normal times we are bombarded by negative news, during the pandemic the negative news grows exponentially, leading many to panic. I think it is important that you keep calm; that takes the right measures that fit your situation, your family, your work. Also, keep the focus on a few things that you enjoy. And despite the crisis, it is important to keep a positive mindset.
- Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez, Author, Thoughtleader, co-founder Strategy Implementation Institute

Initially, in my organization, the mandate around learning was to put it on hold. We then began to focus on training all employees on our pandemic-related efforts. As time went on, we shifted to a great place – Empathy, Stress, Communication – and created a People-Series with these and other topics. Front-line employees and leaders up the chain see the need and have a real appetite for this content.
- Rob, Director of L&D

Love, compassion, and respect for your fellow man combine with treating each and every person with empathy. Understanding that we are all in this together goes a long way to ease our burden.
- Ivon Louis-Letang, Energy Efficiency Consultant, Eversource

The real need is to have a reliable game plan when facing extreme circumstances, and even more important is to have a Good Attitude that carries others through the uncertainty. Caring about others has become the most important ideal and factor to move forward. And, normal is never long lasting!
- Mark Motsenbocker

Shifts are a constant in business and life – especially during a pandemic. Learning to recover is key to every situation. Understanding that anyone can "re-boot" and choose where they start over can be especially helpful with mental health as well as business health.
- Tim Sullivan, Partner, ActionCOACH Houston

In the past 5 months, I have learned the value of emotional and spiritual health. Truly living in the fear, uncertainty, and doubt of daily pivots during the pandemic brings more awareness of the power of responding versus reacting.
- Cathy Reinhold, Business Builder, ActionCOACH Houston

The focus of safety is on compliance with the rules and this is particularly true during the current Coronavirus pandemic. However, the emphasis required for coming out of the pandemic is a change of living: not compliance, but compassion – starting with the senior leaders demonstrating empathy and others following their lead. Micah the prophet says it best: "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God."
- Ray Moos

Continuous learning is about professional development and personal growth. Without this coupling, one will only make oneself obsolete. Finding equilibrium between these two is a step closer to enlightenment.
- Nitin Mallikarjuna, LXD

"Vision, preparation, and personal leadership" has been my mantra throughout 2020.
- Frank Candy, President, American Speakers Bureau Corporation, FOE = Friend of Elliott

#LearningCarriesOn

We are all truly in this together. Learning must go on. We have seen that it is possible to learn at scale in ways we hadn't imagined previously.
- Brandon Hayes, C.H. Robinson Facilitator

Learning, like mostly everything else in this world, has had to change overnight. As learning leaders, we have had to make decisions not only based on the current status, but on how the world will be in the future.
- Greg Brenner, AVP Talent and Organizational Development - University of Miami

LEARNING at its best delivers relevant growth to people: when needed, where needed, and how needed. The Learning Pivot of 2020 is rising up to fulfill that mission, employing all the smarts and caring that are the hallmarks of our profession. Further, we have generously reached out to help each other in ways never experienced before – sharing, collaborating, and supporting each other. And I am confident that the positive momentum of all of us at our best will propel us to even greater levels of achievement and service in 2021.
- Kevin D. Wilde, Executive Leadership Fellow, Carlson School of Business, University of Minnesota

Patience, perseverance, and potential will lead you to success.
- Yasmin Khan, Events Manager

#VideoFatigue

The challenge for eLearning is to avoid video chat burnout. Keep people engaged through chat and polling. Balance live learning sessions with breakouts.
- John Baldoni, Baldoni Consulting, LLC

Leaders are learning that they have to pace themselves with the amount of time they're spending in a video conference. Being on camera can add an element of intimate self-consciousness. Leaders are showing up more authentically (we see your home!) and honestly as their humanity comes forward. For learners, this can be an equalizing experience for people at all levels in an organization.
- Kristin Salada, Principal & Team Coach, New Angle Consulting, LLC

#TechEnablingDigitalLearning

The pandemic forced broad acceptance of digital learning; mature technology has made it possible. Rapid eLearning development and LMS systems are now feature-rich and easy to use, by design, while digital adoption technology enables learning and provides ongoing support in the flow of work, at the learner's moment of need. I'm excited to use these tools to craft better, pandemic-proof learning experiences that replace in-person systems training events.
- Missy Parks, Elixir Business Adoption Lead, HomeServices of America, Inc.

The pandemic has created an unprecedented transformation of learning for which there is no "recipe". But ultimately, it is life changing, and the enormity of it can't be adequately addressed without the human interaction of ILT/VILT. We are seeing that learning organizations are more than ever looking for core technology investments that have strong ROI and immediate payback: technologies that address the learner, but also those that address their back-office as well, and the training professionals who are scheduling and planning learning activities.
- Stephan Pineau, CEO, Training Orchestra

Professionals and leaders are working hard to effectively utilize features in online platforms (e.g., Zoom, Skype, WebEx) that support meaningful interaction regarding content and that allow learners with different styles to get all they can out of presentations.
- Mary Casper, MA, CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow, FNAP, Corporate Rehabilitation Director, ProMedica Senior Care

More digital literacy is required across all learning delivery mechanisms. Training is in competition with the general consumer's experience even more now than prior to the pandemic. Live virtual learning is becoming more refined as a result, while virtual learners are becoming more forgiving of the imperfect experience...as long as it's not a waste of time!
- Marla Noble, Global Head of L&D, Carrier

Opening the mind for the possibilities of digital learning in this time of need. People now more than ever see the need for LXD, learning platforms, and digital learning content (video!).
- Learning Colleague

#AttentiononLearning

The Pandemic created a spotlight on learning, as many scrambled to move learning content online and reskill workforces. Millions of people who had never given much thought about online learning were talking about it on all channels as if it was a new idea brought on by COVID.
- Shannon Davis, Senior Strategist at Qlik

Thrust into the "new" learning model, the nation is on the precipice. We can either ensure the resources both technological and human (teachers, coaches, mentors) are available to all, or face the consequences of even greater educational, financial, and social divide. I am optimistic...
- Josephine Hart, CEO

The rise of organizations demonstrating care, tolerance, and excitement to newer avenues and mediums of learning.
- Mudassir N, Learning Designer, The Emirates Group

#WorkflowLearning

Learning will now truly pivot from traditional classroom and eLearning towards true Learning in the Flow of Work, which goes beyond moving the classroom to Zoom or creating Netflix of Learning Systems. The new "Learning in the Flow of Work" systems will be developed to assist the employees while working, by providing access within 2 clicks and 10 seconds to the right information to be able to perform the task at hand in the most effective and efficient way. We will finally see the world of true Workflow Performance Support systems become a reality!
- Alfred Remmits, CEO, Xprtise

In these pandemic times, I observed a more physically isolated workforce, which demands employees' ability to perform job duties more independently, and a more socially connected support environment. To adapt to these changes, I see the increasing need for Performance Support systems and Workflow Learning, as well as frequent use of online video conference for learning purposes.
- Kangmei Yang, Retired Learning Colleague (currently working as a learning consultant for a faith-based organization)

What I'm seeing with my clients is movement away from traditional courses (eLearning, ILT) and toward other just-in-time, just-what's-needed performance resources using the Lean Startup methodology of Build-Measure-Learn.
- Joe Dunlap, Owner, Continuous Learning Experience

Back in March, learning moved more to "just in time". New processes were quickly put in place. Employee learning on adapting to the new processes moved totally online and there were more one-on-one sessions to focus on specific requirements.
- Barbara Stanley, Corporate Trainer, Fillmore Riley LLP

Learning in the moment. Just-in-time learning. Digital is not the same or as effective as in person.
- Mo Kasti, CEO, CTI Physician Leadership Institute

#Etc.

Having and maintaining trust with business partners has never been more important. COVID has required that we accelerate processes and practices. Most of the time that acceleration is uncomfortable, but the right amount of trust makes it possible.
- Miguel Caraballo, Mid-market Director Learning and Development, Alight Solutions

The Covid pandemic has been a catalyst for significant changes in medical education, including changing roles for the teachers and students, greater collaborations, increased use of technologies, and a review of approaches to assessment.
- Professor Ronald M Harden, Association for Medical Education

During the pandemic, healthcare providers have suffered significant trauma and moral injury by being on the frontline. Therefore, by utilizing simulation and debriefing skills, we have increased our scope of learning to not only include procedural skills and medical knowledge, but also emotional capacity building.
- Jane Kim, MD EdD

As a result of the pandemic, there is far greater reliance on providing remotely delivered instruction (eLearning, self-paced trainings, job-aids, etc.); however, there has been a parallel movement to also dig more deeply into not just the LEARNING, but the application of learned content…role plays, case studies, and collaborative work done remotely by team members have come to the fore as resources. Lastly, applications that also provide just-in-time coaching through video exchanges, scoring, gamification, leaderboarding results, etc. have all led to a deeper appreciation of how comprehensive training COULD and SHOULD be moving forward.
- David Zahn, President, ZAHN Consulting, LLC

I believe that the key pivot during this time has to do with a greater emphasis on data-driven measurement. Maximizing our resources and people became paramount as we moved into and through the pandemic, requiring us to work smarter. Adding the right data to our decision-making created confidence in outcomes as well as our ability to act with agility when we didn't receive the results we were expecting. We need to make every person, every decision, and every outcome count if we are to weather the difficulty and successfully navigate this most unique "season".
- Dave Seligsohn, Bluewater

Due to remote work, we need to onboard our new colleagues in a planful way. Networks and exposure to leaders in our company is critical, yet they don't occur organically in the COVID world. For me to develop talent, I must be creative and help my team members super-power their networks.
- Tacy M. Byham, Ph.D., CEO of DDI

For us, the pivot was around onboarding more efficiently and safely while training the entire organization on the new safety procedures. It required using some new tools (like Zoom), shrinking the number of participants we could handle (for appropriate spacing), and adding sessions.
- W. Keith Pomeroy, Oneida Nation Enterprises

Learner experience is one of our top concerns and where to pivot for the greatest impact.
- Mara Lawler, Red Wing Shoe Company

Pivoting is the key word where we are being forced to revisit elements of our work life that were taken for granted or, even worse, cemented in routine. I think the current workforce and younger generations will be greatly impacted by this reality and it will also change their perspective about their upcoming career decisions and negotiating power. The next 10 years are going to be interesting. How will large companies be able to adapt?
- Kony Trudel, MEd, Assistant Director, #LearningLab, Canada School of Public Service

EMPATHY! Concert

Hosts: Elliott Masie & Telly Leung

Click here to watch a preview from Elliott Masie & Telly Leung!

Elliott Masie and Telly Leung have been hosting a series of Empathy Concerts since March 2020, featuring Broadway and television performers, learning leaders and business leaders, and a variety of perspectives on the importance of Empathy in these changing times. Areas of focus have included the pandemic, racial injustice, the power of laughter, the importance of voting, a tribute to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and much more!

Previously Featured Performers include:

Gary Adler	Justin Guarini	Megan McGinnis
Major Attaway	Ann Harada	Lindsay Mendez
Kate Baldwin	Celisse Henderson	Crystal Monee Hall
Jennifer Barnhart	Marcus Paul James	Alan Muraoka
Declan Bennett	Caitlin Kinnunen	Patti Murin
Liz Callaway	Beth Leavel	Laura Osnes
Colin Donnell	Gavin Lee	Hunter Parrish
Melinda Doolittle	Raymond J. Lee	Adam Pascal
Eden Espinosa	Telly Leung	Courtney Reed
Ali Ewoldt	Michael Longoria	George Salazar
Mandy Gonzalez	Julia Mattison	Chris Sieber
Tamyra Gray	Isabelle McCalla	Wallace Smith
Angela Grovey	Michael McElroy	Jessica Vosk

visit masie.com to discover our next broadcast!

Elliott Masie

Elliott Masie is one of the key innovators, analysts, and convenors in the world of Learning. Over the past four decades, Elliott has been focused on exploring changes in how our employees (and customers) learn, and pushing the envelope on new formats and technologies for the next waves of skilling. He is acknowledged as the first analyst to use the term "eLearning" in the early 1990's and has advocated for a sane deployment of learning and collaboration technology as a means of supporting the effectiveness and profitability of enterprises.

He heads The MASIE Center, a Saratoga Springs, NY think tank focused on how organizations can support learning and knowledge within the workforce. He leads the Learning CONSORTIUM, a coalition of global organizations cooperating on the evolution of learning strategies.

He is the editor of Learning TRENDS by Elliott Masie, an Internet newsletter read by business executives worldwide, and a regular columnist in professional publications, including CLO Digital Magazine. He is the author of 13 books, including ASTD/MASIE Center's *Big Learning Data* and this *Learning Pivots* eBook. In the next eight weeks, Elliott will publish an *Empathy!* eBook with Telly Leung, a Broadway actor.

Elliott's professional focus has been in the fields of corporate learning, organizational performance, and emerging technology. He has developed models for accelerating the spread of knowledge, learning, and collaboration throughout organizations.

Elliott is known as a highly approachable speaker and trainer, blending humor, applicable stories of best practice and high levels of audience involvement. He has presented programs, courses, and speeches to over 3,500,000 professionals around the world. He lives in Saratoga Springs, owns thoroughbred horses, and is a Tony Nominated Broadway Producer of shows including: *Kinky Boots, An American in Paris, The Prom, The Cher Show, Anastasia, The Play that Goes Wrong, SpongeBob SquarePants: The Broadway Musical*, and *Seared*.

Brooke Thomas-Record

Brooke Thomas-Record works with Masie Learning CONSORTIUM members throughout the year, conducting interviews on trends and challenges in the learning field, facilitating member connections, and coordinating communications and online gatherings.

Since March of 2020, her entire focus has been on how learning and learners have been impacted by the pandemic. In the past 6 months, she has spent most of her time interviewing learning leaders and learners from a variety of industries, helping shape the content and contributions for this *Learning Pivots* eBook. Brooke has also been the program manager for many years of Elliott Masie's Learning Conference and edited several other eBooks and publications for the MASIE Center, where she has worked since 2005.

LEARNING Pivots eBook

By: Elliott Masie
Foreword: Rob Lauber

12 Learning Leader Chapters
Perspectives from 230 Learners
150 Learning Pivots Quotes

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