

L&D: A Vision for the Future

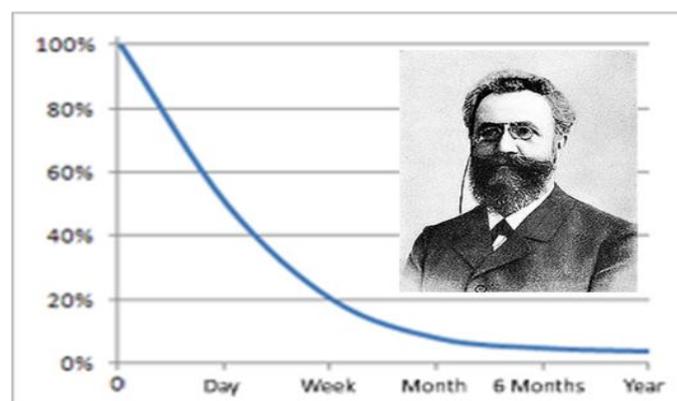
“Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn”
(Benjamin Franklin)

The above quotation by Benjamin Franklin effectively sums up the path in Learning and Development Elephants don’t forget have been striving to forge since its inception in 2012.

For over two decades, the loss of employee knowledge retention after a single training intervention has been a thorn in our side and with employees representing potentially the largest asset a company can have, the outcomes were, and continue to be, of too much importance to allow us to stand idly by. With the average employee spending only 1 per cent of their working week on training and development, the expectation of efficiency and effectiveness is high, the results, however, tell a different story.

The Science of Knowledge Retention

Over 100 years ago, the German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus published his discovery of the *forgetting curve* and the *spacing effect* where he discovered the extent of human beings’ poor ability to learn and retain knowledge from a single exposure. He discovered that humans will forget 60 per cent of what they are trained within the first 24 hours thus, simply ‘telling,’ promptly leads to forgetting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this percentage increases to 80% within 28 days if no interventions are made.



Hermann Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve

Despite all of our advancements in the last 100 years and the advent of the Information Age which has transformed the presentation of materials to be learned, our brains are still wired to simply forget such large quantities of learning presented to us in one sitting.

When applied to the workplace and training interventions, there is little doubt as to why 56 per cent of managers felt that employee performance, productivity and competency would not change or improve if L&D were eliminated completely (Jefferson 2013). How can this be improved? And more importantly, how can this improvement in employee knowledge retention enhance the recognition of L&D as a strategic partner in the overall management of the business?

Put simply, the information obtained from a single training intervention needs to be filed in such a way that it can be readily called upon and retrieved when required. Forgetting is essentially about the brain's inability to accurately and instantly codify and file data and the most active way to combat this is through **repetition**.

However, repetition presents its own challenges, the most pertinent of which is that it rapidly becomes boring and time consuming. So how do we involve employees in activities of repetition that will engage and motivate them to learn?

The easiest way is through the gamification of learning, the Trojan horse of L&D whereby game-design elements and game principles, particularly self-testing, are applied to educational materials to improve user engagement and thus boost knowledge retention.

Clever Nelly, our unique and engaging software application, enhances your current training system and ensures that the knowledge is retained following training interventions to enable training to become learned and consolidated into long-term memory. How? Nelly sends users multiple-choice questions based on the training materials supplied every working day to employees. Initially, a new user will receive two questions every day for approximately 40 days, after which her AI kicks in and Nelly has enough data points to adjust the volume and subject matter of the questions depending on how many questions the employee has answered correctly or incorrectly. Any incorrectly answered questions will be repeated after 14 days and before 28 days have elapsed, this ensures that the information moves beyond the individual's short-term memory. Best of all, the questions take less than one minute to answer per day and employees are given the opportunity to answer them whenever they choose. Thus, involve employees in their own learning, and not only will they learn, they will also enjoy it.

Involve Management and they too will Learn

According to the Deloitte Human Capital Trends 2017 report, 83 per cent of executives surveyed stated the learning and career development of employees were important issues to the business, however, the low rate of knowledge retention amongst employees suggests differently, why?

Up until now, L&D professionals have failed to engage the C-level executives, management and shareholders by failing to consider what members of the boardroom are most interested in seeing, namely return on investment and business strategy. Thus, involve management using the language, vocabulary and data they value most and they too will learn and recognise the value of L&D.

What CEOs Want	What CEOs Get
1. Alignment	8%
2. Impact	4%
3. Awards	40%
4. Application	11%
5. Learning	32%
6. Participation numbers	94%
7. Efficiency/Cost information	78%
8. Participation satisfaction with training	53%

(Jack & Patti Phillips, Measuring What Matters: How CEOs View Learning Success 2009)

For example, rather than measuring and proving return on investment in terms of participation numbers and participation satisfaction, management want to know how the training is helping the organisation to develop products, systems and services that increase profitability through a more competent and productive workforce.

Indeed, instead of showing how many people were trained and the cost per person of learning activities, management desire to know how this training reduced compliance risk and how learning reduced operating costs.

Conclusion

At Elephants don't forget, our mission is to fix L&D's biggest Achilles' heel, which is that what they train is not learned and employers are unwilling to invest time, effort and money in traditional knowledge retention activities. Equally, few employees are willing to participate in the levels of 'retraining,' necessary to learn through traditional methods. By fixing this, we aim to help L&D understand how they can effectively leverage this transformation from trainers to performance improvers. In short, the business needs to involve L&D at key board meetings to such an extent that it becomes the learned response by management to reduce risk and improve performance.