Pd Training

L&D Industry Topics

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70:20:10

Why 70:20:10 is guaranteed mediocrity – at best.

# Why 70:20:10 is guaranteed mediocrity – at best.

70:20:10; its guaranteed mediocrity at best. For those L&D professionals among us who want to help their businesses, and be invited to the next senior management strategy table, please stop preaching this stuff (if you haven't already).

If my research serves me correctly, this model is based on some rather loose research that suggests 'this is what happens naturally'. The principal then goes on to infer that you can't manage it, but you can facilitate it, support it, etc.

Surely it's our collective responsibility as learning and development professionals to be more proactive about helping our organisations to develop, grow and improve?  Instead we simply accept the concept that 'if nothing is done, some loose research says this is what happens....so let's aim for that'.

## Let's look at the reality of 70:20:10:

**70**% on the job.... Tough jobs.

Doesn't this mean, I was under skilled, under prepared and learnt most job-related skills through successive failures? In other words, I am making it up on the fly using company time and money.  Is this metric something to accept and facilitate as "normal" in the workplace?

**20**% from other staff; mainly managers.

I have been performing so poorly that I need corrective remedial coaching, which is largely delivered by my manager without any supporting materials, who may or may not be an expert at this particular skill, and certainly has their own way of accomplishing tasks whether they are expedient or not.

Which is interesting because in many well-run businesses, managers shouldn't be technical experts, or more to the point they are supposed to be great managers, NOT technical experts or trainers..... and one would assume they are not properly equipped (or trained) to teach their people the finer points of the job.

**10**% in formal, didactic training courses.....

Seriously, who thinks delivering formal, didactic training courses is what the primary training component of an effective L&D program should be?

**So when people ask 'how do you manage 70:20:10?' the simple answer is 'that is a great question'.**

**The real answer isn't so simple and requires proactive investigation.**

**You find out where 70:20:10 is close to reality and fix it!**

**To find the '70':** Actively seek out the departments where staff are undertrained, under developed and 'working it out' on the job – they'll be fairly easy to spot because they're the departments that perform poorly, give relatively low employee engagement feedback and poor feedback about training, development and purpose in their 360 degree feedback questionnaires.

It's the departments with excess overtime costs, where staff are unproductive because they are working things out on their own, and not getting their jobs done in a timely manner because the more experienced people are investing valuable time supporting their less skilled colleagues during what should be the primary productive hours.

**What do you do next?**

I hope this is stating the obvious, but you help them by reducing or eliminating the waste, inefficiencies and acceptance of poor performance.

You do this by supporting the departments and identifying the skills and behavioural gaps, then providing the professional development opportunities (yes training and reinforcement) that are planned, structured and well documented.

These training sessions work best if they are experiential, practical and based on real world scenarios in the workplace (if you deliver an off-the-shelf, didactic course, you're unlikely to have a positive impact and get a measurable change in behaviour).

Look at the existing recruitment, selection and on boarding processes and procedures, identify role clarity and KPI's and then enable the department to clarify, focus and simplify wherever possible.

During the process it can be quite insightful to allow individual staff members to partake in the exploration and identification of potential improvements. Of course not all ideas can be included, but asking staff to give input can be empowering unto itself.

## Where do I start?

First, take a look at the goals for the department and the goals and KPI's of the job roles, and work with the managers to develop applicable training, professional development and motivation strategies such as gamification or simple internal benchmarks that are visible and reflect the culture and goals of the business.

It's about aligning the departmental goals set by senior management with the learning and development strategies within each department. These L&D strategies should be customised to each job role if possible to attain the highest level of behavioural change or improvement.

## I need a toolkit

Often times learning about Process Mapping, Lean processes, 5S, and clear Scorecard creation and implementation will help you identify where to begin. There is no reason to try and reinvent the wheel with so many proven systems that are available for you to research.

Yes, this may slow down the larger project as you investigate which system is applicable to your organisational situation, but once the most appropriate system is identified, the implementation will be much easier to manage and monitor.

Your toolkit may be a mix of these systems suggested above or a bespoke system developed within your organisation.  In either case, the end goal is to remove the expectation that 70% of learning should be on-the-job and reduce this metric as much as possible.

Once you've decided to reduce the 70% as an acceptable measure of your staff's L&D process, you'll next want to implement the best possible learning activities available for each department.

## What does best practice learning look like?

Most people find that learning new skills is most successful in a practical and experiential training session with an expert trainer who delivers content that is contextualised to an individual's personal needs.

When this is done well, you can practice and apply these new concepts in a workplace environment before you leave the course, and ask questions that are relevant to your particular situation before getting back to your desk.

In a customised training scenario like this, you should be able to discuss your personal learning needs with the trainer prior to the course, which gives them the opportunity to prepare activities specifically targeting your needs.  This is followed up by having your content, external resources and support network that is always available when you are implementing the training back on the job.

After returning to work, you'll need to be able to review the training resources and your notes, as well as having access to experts and peers to ask for help when you hit roadblocks.  This should provide a much better range of post-course support than simply working it out with your mates back in the office.

The primary goal is to avoid the 70% trap of making it up on the fly; instead get trained and be fully resourced and supported.



**Before Class**
The 5 minute 'Hello' for 8 hours of 'great course!' Answer a few questions online, your trainer will tailor the course for you. '5 minutes well spent!

**During Class**
Activity based training tailored to improve on-the-job performance(enhanced if Connected in Class)

**After Class**
Reinforce & refresh on any device
- Courseware and notes
- eLearning
- Monthly Habit changer email
All via the App or online

**Collaboration & Extension**
Video Library
300 business videos
eLearning
Online Peer Networks
Re-train Face-to-Face
Coaching Sessions
Help Desk

**To find the 20:** Actively identify the departments where the majority of training is limited and specific, such as product or process training.  Often the performance of the team is relatively low with 360 degree feedback surveys and Employee Engagement surveys having higher highs and lower lows.

So the accepted metric in the 70:20:10 scenario is people are learning 20% of their lessons from their manager and their peers.

This may well be the case in the first days in your role with the company.  However, for longer tenured or somewhat specialised staff, let's think about really happens.

Either the '20' in 70:20:10 is as equally a misguided assumption as the '70' component, or it's a true reflection of reality.  But surely, if it is reality, it **only** applies to managers of small departments where all staff perform the same relatively unsophisticated functions.

It's logical that if staff learn 20% from their manager, then the manager must be the technical expert in all functions performed by their staff.  This may work if you're the manager of a small call centre, or the manager of a small sales team selling a narrow range of static products or services.

But what happens in a large Finance Team when the manager has a forensic accountant, financial accountant, tax accountant and quite possibly an AP and AR manager all in their team?

How about an IT department that has SEO, security, infrastructure, web development and application development professionals employed?

Or an HR department with L&D, recruitment, mentoring, coaching, international and virtual teams… seriously think about it; is the HR manager of your department the technical expert in every one of these functions?

I hope they aren't better at every function in the department than the myriad of specialist staff members on the team…. So how did the model of 'you learn 20% of what you learn from your manager' become acceptable?

….. even more of a challenge is how does that work when you're the manager???

If you're one of those specialist employees who is perceived as the "expert", how frustrating can it be when you're continually interrupted by other staff asking for advice on "how to perform" a specific task?

And it's even worse when the other staff don't seem to learn anything when you do show them how to do a specific task, as they know they can just ask you again in a month's time when they have to do that task again, and there's been no supporting content created or formal learning outcomes delivered.

And of course the lost productivity of an "expert" staffer + the efforts off the inquiring staffer has no positive affect on ROI and promotes this concept of a mediocre L&D result.

## What do I do?

First, look at the more comprehensive professional development needed for all staff in each department, especially in their career development plans, and find the high highs and low lows in internal surveys.

Use these resources to work through the broader range of professional development the staff requires, and help them recognise that technical and even process-related training can have a greater impact when it comes from outside their team.

Most importantly is to put together, in a way that is clearly documented, a well-structured training plan that takes into account the different learning needs of these diverse team members.

Encourage them to 'mix it up' with a diverse mix of trainers, training styles and content – this will have a much greater impact on their staff performance and engagement.

When working with managers, it's important to allow them to not know everything.  A great manager will recognise his or her areas of expertise, while also being OK with those skills best delegated to others.

Unfortunately not all managers are "great", and some managers believe that they are the only ones qualified to deliver staff training, which can also cause some frustrations when trying to implement a change in the 70:20:10 standard.

## I need a toolkit

It is very important to make it simple and fast to arrange training that is specific to each team member. Next it must be easy to view and monitor the results.

The best professional development solution will provide staff with instant access to resources for reinforcement and application back on the job. Providing on-going support will allow your staff to get improved results immediately and guarantee longer term changes in behaviour.

Next you'll quantify the specific changes/improvements you want to achieve and monitor the results to show the value of the investment.  Known as 'return on investment' or ROI, being able to report on the value of training outcomes is a true challenge for most L&D managers.

Identify internal and external training providers that reduce administration for managers, whilst providing them with simple planning processes and measurement tools that help them see real tangible benefits by getting expert trainers to help with a planned and well developed approach to L&D.

We refer to this process as the L.E.R.N. model as shown in the diagram below:

**To find the 10:** When it comes to delivering off-the-shelf, didactic training, don't do it; it's a waste of money and everyone's time. Make sure your training is contextualised to the business, tailored to the individuals and accommodates all learning styles with a strong blend of activity based learning which is readily accessible after the course.

The point the 70:20:10 model makes is that only about 10% of learning occurs through poor training. So in this view of the world the old fashioned '10' shouldn't exist.

People have been known to expire during death by PowerPoint session. Please don't allocate even 10% of your resources to that type of training.

Sadly the industry is still full of training companies all delivering slightly varied versions of "canned" courses.

The emphasis needs to be on identifying best practice across the organisation, and creating a learning and continuous improvement culture through effective targeted training and resources in a format that suits each specific learning style, and are available where and when you need them.

Get involved!

## So what should the revised model look like?

**20**% **on the job** – Spending the time to implement systems that help identify skills gaps early, so gaps in knowledge can be identified quickly and addressed quickly.  This assures that people aren't learning 'how to do their jobs' using actual business deliverables as their sand pit.  People should be provided with sufficient training so that the on the job learning component should be largely adding their own 'personality' to the role and processes. And their on-the-job learning is guided or self-directed reference to job aids and a collaboration network that clearly guides a person to what has been established as best practice.

**40**% **through coaching, collaboration and support, peer to peer or senior to less senior.** And where possible introduce *Coal-Face Insights* where lower level staff have the chance to show their managers the best technical approach they have developed – this one practice can change organisational dynamics and continuous improvement profoundly. This process should also include a continual improvement process that updates courseware, collaboration and strategy on an ongoing basis.

**40**% **through professionally structured, GREAT training from a wide variety of different sources that is engaging, fun and largely activity based.** Even dry technical training such as tax legislation changes can be applied to common scenarios and include an interesting discussion!

## Conclusion

Only through a thorough analyses of an organisation's current L&D processes and strategies can we challenge the supposedly normal 70:20:10 scenario.  To achieve this change from 'normal', we must be proactively involved in the professional development and staff learning process from induction through to retirement.

Any organisation interested in improving the knowledge base and skill sets of its staff must clearly identify any areas of weakness and address these areas in an assertive manner to avoid falling into the trap of accepting mediocre performance as the norm.

A modern training solution should allow personalisation of content with a focus on activity based outcomes, on demand access to a variety of post course support options that meet different personality types and levels of urgency and real world solutions to real world problems – learning and reinforcement should be available at the speed of business.

Most importantly these resources should be on platforms that are already part of people's professional ecosystems like: company intranets, LinkedIn, Team Sites, YouTube, Cloud Storage services, etc.  The content should be wherever people already go.

It is possible to change what's currently accepted as the norm, but it requires tenacity, a vision and support from all levels of the organisation, and you need to find the best and most progressive industry partners.

Ready to get started?

To join the discussion:

Meet with Paul and peers from the L&D community at the next pd training industry event:

**Join us in person at:**

Sydney Event -   Tuesday, February 10th - 5:30pm-7:00pm


Melbourne Event - Wednesday, February 26th - 5:30pm-7:00pm


Brisbane Event - Thursday, February 26th - 5:30pm-7:00pm


**About the author:**

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Paul is qualified in Business with a Major in e-Commerce and Human Resources, is an experienced Certified Trainer, and spent many years as a Project Manager in transformational change initiatives.

Paul is co-founder and Managing Director of the multi-national corporate training organisation 'pd training'. He continues to drive innovation and set new benchmarks for the training industry around the world by designing and implementing strategies that leverage technology and adopt proven methodologies to re-define best practice in corporate learning.