

EIGHT KEY TECHNOLOGIES THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS

What does the future hold for L&D and HR professionals?
Rob Caul outlines the latest technology trends.

The economic landscape is changing. Globalisation, the rise of technology and the ongoing war on talent are making HR and L&D more important than ever. Waves of new technology, from social networking tools to mobile applications and integrated learning and talent systems, continue to change the face of HR and L&D. They present challenges along the way and significant opportunities to improve business performance when harnessed effectively.

Such is the power of technology in empowering today's mobile and social workforce and in engaging, developing, managing and retaining talent, that any organisation ignoring the technological

potential on offer does so at its peril. So what does the future hold? What needs to be at the top of the agenda for L&D and HR professionals?

Here are eight key technology trends that will support future business growth and the prosperity of the L&D function:

1. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policies will become more commonplace and more flexible

Increasingly employees use personal devices in today's workplace. *The 2013 iPass Mobile Enterprise Report* shows that 81% of global companies surveyed now accommodate personal devices in the office and 54% have BYOD policies in place. Furthermore, 70% of e-Learning

Guild members reported using personal devices to accomplish some of their work in 2012.

Increasingly flexible BYOD policies continue to change the device mix in enterprises. HR and L&D functions must keep abreast of these changes and work in partnership with IT to ensure clear policies are in place to take advantage of the proliferation of smartphones and tablets.

The iPass report shows that the iPhone has taken over from the Blackberry as the top device, supported by 77% of companies. Android phones have also shown tremendous growth and tablets such as the iPad, once strictly senior level devices, continue gaining mainstream traction.



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2. Mobile applications and mobile platforms will massively impact organisations globally

Mobile devices will begin to replace the traditional desktop workstation environment. Forrester's new report on the *Top 15 emerging technologies to watch now to 2018* asked global enterprise architects to rate the impact today's technologies will have on their firm. Mobile applications and platforms occupy the top two positions – with both driving the most revolutionary change.

Today, there are more than 1bn smartphones in use worldwide; and by 2016, Forrester estimates there will be 760m tablets in use, almost one-third of them sold to businesses. This means organisations are likely to spend more time and resources this year on developing applications for mobile devices in areas such as recruitment and learning.

3. Multi-platform content development will become an essential part of L&D strategy

The rise of mobile devices in the workplace will drive further growth in mobile learning and the need for cross-platform learning solutions. Unless you choose to focus on one platform only, or can afford to develop different learning solutions for each and every platform deployed by your organisation, having a multi-platform approach will become increasingly essential, particularly for mobile learning.

Clearly, mobile learning is taking-off, with *Towards Maturity's Benchmark Study* revealing that 70% of organisations surveyed plan to implement mobile learning in the next two years. A key challenge for L&D will be finding the best way to ensure that all relevant learning content can be viewed across any device or platform with HTML5 no doubt providing a welcome solution.

4. The use of social networking tools will continue to grow

Social networking tools and the potential they provide for collaboration in the workplace will continue as a key theme. From blogs and wikis to Communities of Practice, these tools play a vital role. They will unite global teams and provide forums for new ideas and initiatives, offering the potential for business innovation and

growth into new markets.

In the quest to improve employee engagement, social networking tools will play an even greater role in learning, performance management and recruitment.

5. More investment in Software as a Service (SaaS)

HR has become one of the key business functions adopting SaaS and this trend is likely to accelerate further as more and more companies explore the benefits of running their HR platforms in the cloud.

Organisations worldwide continue to view SaaS as key to reducing Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). Benefits include more configurable, always up-to-date and functionally rich applications. According to analyst Gartner, SaaS-based delivery looks set to experience healthy growth through to 2015 when worldwide revenue is projected to reach US\$22.1bn.

6. Gamification will become game-changing for some businesses

Gamification is on the rise. The business value of using gaming techniques will become increasingly attractive. Games will start to be a more regular part of employee engagement. This in turn may lead to gamification becoming a larger part of key HR processes, particularly given the influx into the workforce of the newer generations who already value 'experiential learning'. As such, the corporate value of experiential learning will need to be reflected within HR policies and processes for rewards/recognition.

7. Greater integration of learning and talent systems

There is a clear need for a single source of HR information in the global workplace and technology is the key enabler, providing integrated systems with a uniform, enterprise-wide view of critical HR processes and removing silos of legacy and archive data.

High performing organisations increasingly recognise the benefits of talent management software going hand-in-hand with succession planning tools. This is because the most talented people across the organisation represent the managers and leaders of the future. Bersin research

shows that greater business value can be achieved when these systems are integrated with learning and performance.

Integrated systems accelerate accurate talent identification and enable more focused development plans for high-performing employees, helping to close skills gaps. Training budgets can be directed where they are most needed. The ancillary savings in cost and administrative time are an additional and very acceptable bonus to HR, L&D and the business.

8. Metrics won't be optional

Metrics have been traditionally considered an optional part of HR technology. In reality, sophisticated user-friendly dashboards are increasingly used in



configuring to individual needs. HR must maximise the full power of workforce analytics to achieve the optimum payback. In a business culture where ROI is ever more crucial, tools providing metrics to show the board the value of developing and nurturing talent and identifying and growing future successors for the business are becoming ever more essential.

HR and L&D functions have the same budget constraints as all other parts of the business. However, failure to invest in technology advancements will prove a false and perilous saving. When it comes to technology, planning ahead is essential, particularly given that employees entering the workplace today and in the next ten years will be even more sophisticated in their personal use of state-of-the-art technology and social media tools. If it is to remain relevant, L&D must ensure it embraces the evolution of technologies by taking the lead in future-proofing the business.

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