



**FOSWAY**  
GROUP

# Skills Building: Getting Serious About Continuous Learning

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*It's time L&D stopped worrying so much about courses vs resources and different types of learning content. Because the reality is that content itself will only ever be part of the answer your people need to upskill and perform at their best. Instead, it's time to focus on creating continuous, action-based development programmes that harness a variety of different content types. But how do you make that happen?*

*This Viewpoint paper provides practical, evidence-based insights on:*

- *Engineering coherent learning experiences that can cover complex goals or topics, but still feel 'easy' to engage with as a learner*
- *Redesigning your learning programmes to suit today's fast-paced, agile world*
- *Supporting ongoing learning rather than one-off events*
- *Focusing on what really matters – outcomes, performance and results*

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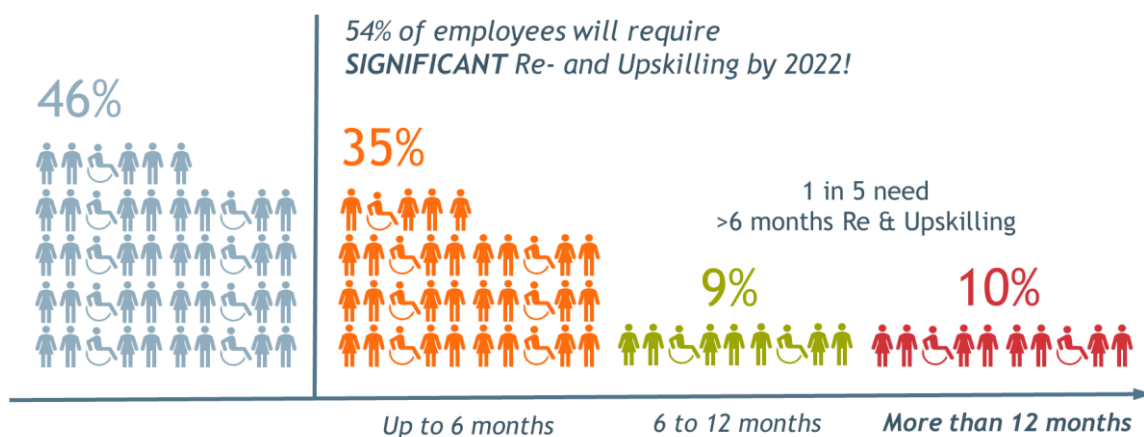
# Why is this important?

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), at least 80 million workers in Europe are mismatched in terms of the qualifications they possess versus the roles they carry out at work<sup>1</sup>. This means workers lack the right level of qualification for the job they have been hired to do, either because they are under or overqualified.

Digitalisation, the transition towards a greener economy, demographic changes, a shifting political landscape are all increasing skills gaps. The European Commission believes there could be three quarters of a million unfilled jobs this year<sup>2</sup> – and that this is a problem set to grow if we don't do something about it.

Fosway research highlights the pessimism of HR professionals in the skills crisis. 87% expect skills gaps to become more significant in the future<sup>3</sup>. Be under no illusion, the pace of change and the availability of skills to address demand is a massive issue. Hiring new people will not bridge the skills gaps alone. Figures from the World Economic Forum show that 54% of employees will require significant re- and upskilling by 2022<sup>4</sup>.

## The Re-skilling Imperative



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<sup>1</sup> Skills for Jobs Database, OECD

<sup>2</sup> E-Skills and Jobs in the Digital Age, European Commission

<sup>3</sup> Transforming Talent in the Modern Workforce

<sup>4</sup> Future of Jobs, World Economic Forum



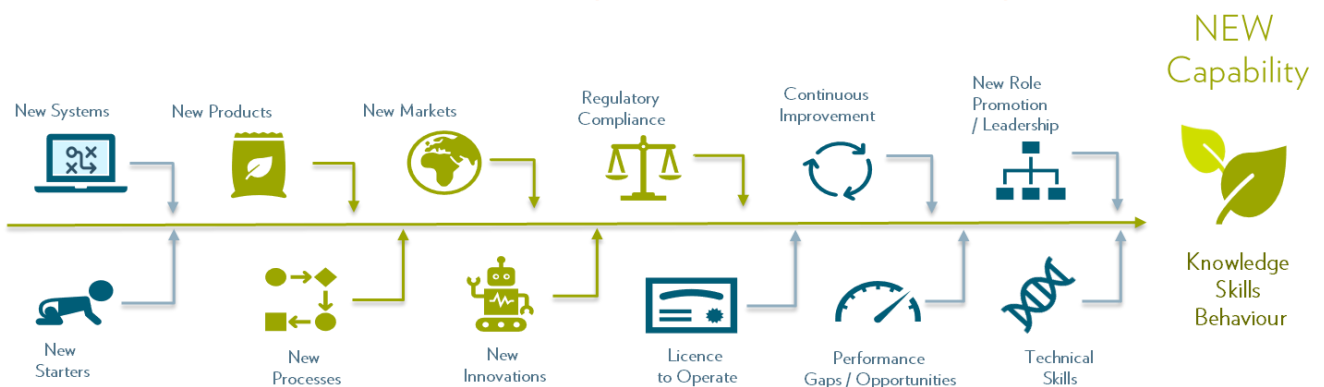
So, how do you take your people and reskill them for the future of work? Both to cope with the continuous evolution of products, services and roles *and* build enough skills to help accelerate ahead of your competitors. The key word here is *skills*. It is not enough for people to merely have surface knowledge – you need people who can actually apply skills with proficiency.

The challenge for learning and development professionals is helping people perform in a world of continuous change. Especially as many organisations are adopting an Agile approach to product and solution development, which in its own right makes change an even greater constant. How do we help people develop the skills they need to navigate the masses of change and also thrive? What do they need to help them navigate and prepare them for success tomorrow? And not just one-dimensional hard skills and soft skills but the joined-up skills that enable people to perform at their highest?

## Stretching beyond the predictable drivers for learning

The traditional drivers for learning in organisations are fairly predictable (see diagram below). And the truth is that they rarely happen in isolation. New products require new processes, new innovations and new compliance etc - and what they all have in common is that they are about *doing*. Forgetting curves are actually not that important because the crux of the matter is that this learning is not about *knowledge*, but about skills and proficiency and ultimately, mastery.

### Predictable Drivers for Organisational Learning



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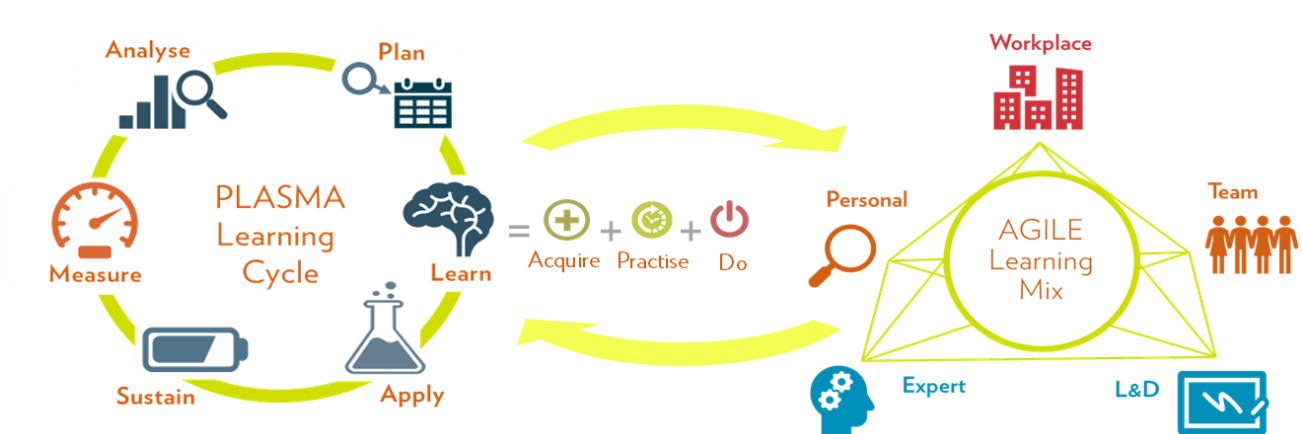
For all the talk of 70:20:10, very few in L&D, are using the full range of channels and opportunities that turn learning from being a formal delivery channel obsessed with content, into a real learning organisation, that powers skills through community and workplace activity. Social learning is still too often poorly understood and weakly implemented. And a more balanced approach to continuous people development is the exception rather than the norm.

With learners calling out for structure and guidance on how to navigate the sea of content now available to them – both internally and externally generated - too little effort is put into curating the personalised pathways and ‘flexible’ journeys that would optimise and accelerate the development of true skills.

## What should you do?

There is momentum from a number of innovative organisations looking to solve the issue of skills development by creating a new type of learning experience. They see the importance of real-world practice and are looking beyond content as the key component of the learning mix.

## Create continuous learning cycles that harness an Agile learning mix



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In this approach, we see organisations thinking about the Agile learning mix, with individuals undertaking short ‘sprints’ as part of a continuous cycle of learning<sup>6</sup>. By adopting the following principles for their technology and as the DNA that defines their learning experiences, they are looking to properly address the skills of their people. Some learning leaders have started to call this ‘Programmatic Learning’.

## Understand the principles of programmatic learning

At its heart, programmatic learning is ultimately a flexible blended programme, where the outcomes and feedback are as important - if not more so - than the classic learning content.



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Unfortunately, finding the right platform through which to power this is not always as easy as you might think.

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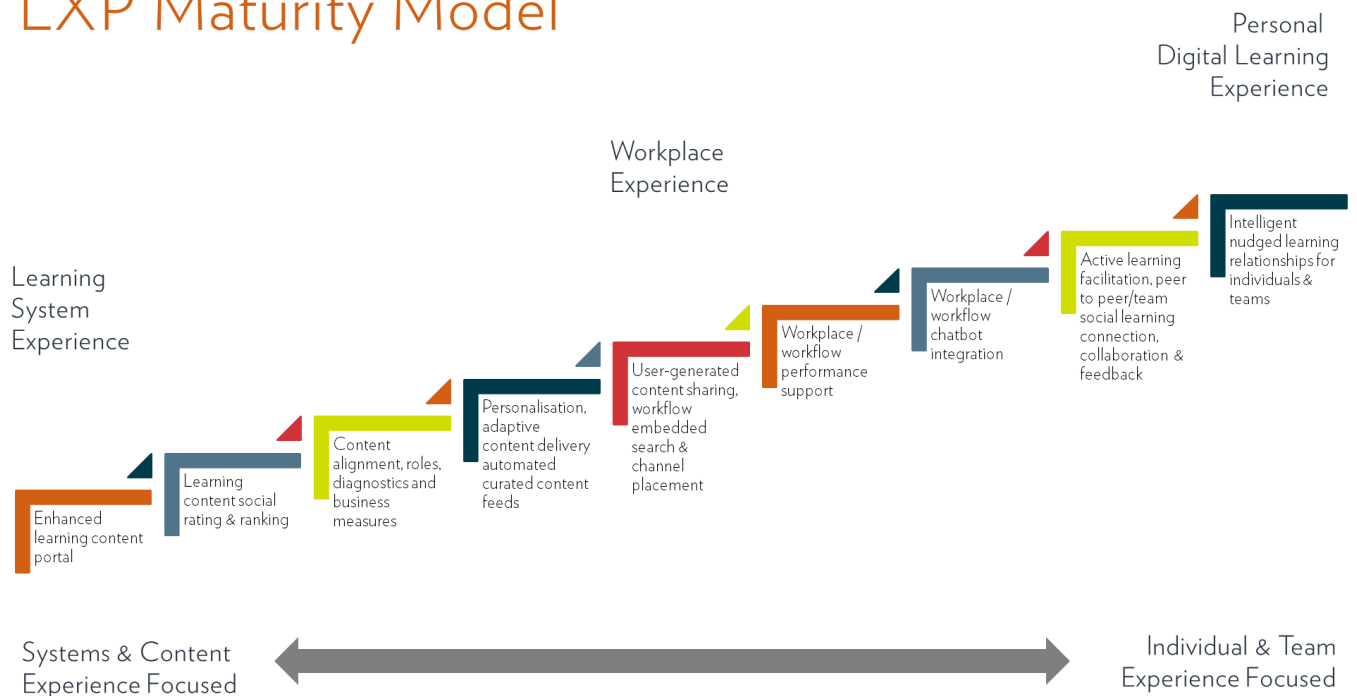
<sup>6</sup> PLASMA Learning Cycle



Despite the plethora of NGLEs (Next Gen Learning Environments) and LXPs (Learning Experience Platforms) that have disrupted the LMS (Learning Management Systems) market in recent years, the choice of platforms that support active learning and a continuous learning cycle are still lacking.

Yes, a lot of the issues of the past around the UX (User Experience) and UI (User Interface) have been addressed but some of the deeper challenges that learning systems have always faced continue to prevail.

# LXP Maturity Model



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## Consider the six demands for a new skills building learning experience

So, what should you be looking for from your system in order to support programmatic learning and a new type of learning experience? The following is a checklist of demands you need to consider.

1. A platform that supports the creation of guided personalised journeys which are unique to each individual based on what they need to be able to do
  - A personalised pathway of activities, content and interactions which acts as map to help navigate individual development goals and deliverables including self-study, reading, assignments, debriefs, coaching and mentoring
  - Personalised notifications, assessments, adaptive recommendations and behavioural nudges to keep learners on track
  - Campaign-based, marketing style triggers within a compelling UX
2. A strong people focus, driving real connection with people who can support skills building – not just content
  - Ways to connect learners to experts, teams, coaches, mentors, facilitators and to help pace virtual, offline and face-to-face interactions
  - Support for active learning sets, group assignments and practical learning projects that can be worked on with others
  - Recommendations, networking, ratings and suggestions handling
  - Vlog, blog, AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) skills assessment with waypoints to trigger people to show that they can do / perform a skill





### 3. An emphasis on real world experiences with practice based on-the-job

- Practical assignments that can be set into the flow of work, with opportunities for observational assessments of real work from peers, assessors, managers, experts, coaches and mentors
- Facilitation of reflection on practice

### 4. Feedback rich experiences from peer, mentors and experts

- Gathers feedback from practice, promotes coaching and expert feedback on real world activities
- Frameworks and diagnostics for peers, coaches, experts, customers and stakeholders
- Facilitation of self-reflection and adjusts the learning journey as expertise evolves

### 5. Energising, engaging and motivating to be involved in – leveraging engagement techniques and gamification

- Supports certification and recognition of achievements including digital badges and certifications
- Stages of attainment to help learners see progress
- Supports leader boards and tracks personal progress through learning journeys – provides nudges to stay on track

### 6. Intelligent solutions, data and benchmark-driven so people know where they are and what they should focus on next.

- Assessment, feedback and observation ratings and semantic analysis to intelligently drive the learning experience – personalising the journey, adapting the activities and resources to optimise the learner journey



- Allows learners to adjust next steps and build their ongoing personal learning campaign
- Uses Machine Intelligence to shape the experience of operational and career development
- Nudges and keeps learners honest through a personal online assistant
- Understands individual motivations and personal triggers
- Dynamically adapts and flexes to the individual

## Summary

The skills imperative is real. Make no mistake that being on the front foot when it comes to helping your people grow and stay relevant in a fast-paced changing world is a key differentiator in your organisation's performance and success now and in the future.

The challenge in the market today is that the obsession with content as the answer to learning's problems still prevails. As a result, not enough solutions have focused on supporting *action-based, programmatic learning* well. Too many platforms remain little more than enhanced content portals, so, the real choices available to organisations are limited.

If you're serious about skills, search out the systems that do bake this richness of experience into the solution and enable organisations to switch from content heavy learning, into real learning experiences that build skills and mastery - not just share knowledge.

Ultimately, building skills is about powering continuous learning and providing the scaffolding needed to properly help support people in their journey. And this makes your search for the right solutions that focus on this, more important than they have ever been.



# Recommended Fosway reading

For further Fosway analysis relating to this topic, please see the following papers or resources.

- [Digital Learning Realities Research](#)
- [PLASMA Learning Cycle](#)
- [Fosway 9-Grid™ for Learning Systems](#)
- [Webinar: Beyond Content - Creating Continuous Workplace Learning Experiences](#)

## Accelerate and De-risk

To talk to us about our research on learning and talent systems, or to discuss what it might specifically mean for your organisation please contact us directly.

We will use our independent expertise to provide you with the guidance you need to accelerate and de-risk your decisions. We have a wealth of experience, tools, research and profiles at our disposal. We don't have any products to sell and we have no vested interest to bias your outcomes. We concentrate on pragmatic, independent advice.

## Accuracy of Information and Warranties

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## About Fosway Group

Fosway Group is Europe's #1 HR Industry Analyst focused on Next Gen HR, Talent and Learning. Founded in 1996, we are known for our unique European research, our independence and our integrity.

For over 20 years, we have been analysing the realities of the market, and providing insights on the future of HR, Talent and Learning. Fosway analysts work extensively with our corporate clients to understand the inside story of the challenges they are facing, and their real experiences with next gen strategies, systems and suppliers. Our independent vendor analysis also provides a vital resource when making decisions on innovation and technology.

And just like the Roman road we draw our name from, you'll find that we're unusually direct. We don't have a vested interest in your supplier or consulting choices. So, whether you're looking for independent research, specific advice or a critical friend to cut through the market hype, we can tell you what you need to know to succeed.

**Example clients include:** Alstom, Aviva, Boots UK, BP, BT, Centrica, Deutsche Bank, Faurecia, HSBC, International SOS, Lloyds Banking Group, Novartis, PwC, Rolls-Royce, Royal Bank of Scotland, Sanofi, Shell, Swiss Re, Telefonica, Thomson Reuters, Toyota Europe, and Vodafone.

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## About Brightspace

Brightspace is a cloud-based learning platform that makes online and blended learning easy, flexible and smart. Brightspace is a quantum leap beyond traditional Learning Management System (LMS) – it is easy to drag-and-drop content to create engaging courses, supports all mobile devices, has industry-leading up-time, and is built with accessibility in mind for all learners. Plus, Brightspace enables the future of learning with a gaming engine, adaptive learning, video management, intelligent agents, templated interactives for course design, full support for outcomes or competency-based learning, and actionable learning analytics. D2L's Brightspace was recently named the #1 LMS for Next-Gen Online Teaching and Learning by Ovum Research and #1 in Adaptive Learning by eLearning Magazine. In addition, Aragon Research included D2L in its highly coveted Hot Vendors In Learning list. To learn more, visit the Corporate page on our website.

## About D2L

D2L believes learning is the foundation upon which all progress and achievement rests. Working closely with organizations globally, D2L has transformed the way millions of people learn online and in the classroom. Learn more about D2L for schools, higher education and businesses at [www.D2L.com](http://www.D2L.com).

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