

Creating Learning Impact Goals.

The importance of learning has never been so important to our work.

It can help us to build knowledge and insight enabling us to determine which solutions work, and which don't.

It can develop our skillsets enabling us to be curious and creative, encouraging us to test, fail and test again. And critically it can provide meaningful evidence of the difference our work is making.

So we know learning is unquestionably therefore a valuable tool.

We also understand that learning is a series of *continuous* learning moments – all joining up to keep us moving forward. But measuring the difference *each* learning experience brings can be difficult.

How often have you participated in a great learning experience where you leave feeling energised, full of ideas and intent to make change. Only to find down the line you're your motivation has faded? Or that you rarely use the knowledge you gained? That it doesn't really support what you do on a daily basis? Or that you would struggle to genuinely answer the crucial question of what was our return on the investment in your learning?

If your honest answer is frequently, then you aren't alone!

No matter how great the learning experience, being able to ensure that it adds real value is a common challenge.

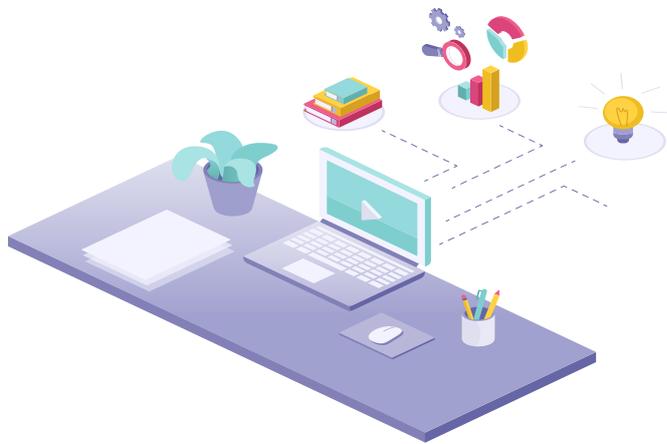
We've learnt, as our work has evolved, the importance of focusing on outcomes to realise long term change. Concentrating on what *really* matters by collaboratively creating a clear purpose and shared value, connecting everything we do to an overarching mission.

Equally we've learnt that a purpose which isn't integrated into strategy or operations will have limited impact. It has to run as the golden thread through all plans and activities to give us the evidence needed to demonstrate wide impact, and, help us fulfil our organisational ambitions.

Learning is no different. So, applying this learning to thinking about how we measure and evaluate learning itself, is the next step. Ensuring that you focus on the *outcome* that you want from the experience as well as the experience itself. Focusing on the impact of any behaviour change, as well as the skills and knowledge that you will acquire. And embedding this learning into the work that you and your colleagues are doing *every day* to achieve your overall goals.



This means turning writing learning objectives into *creating learning impact goals*. An approach which can significantly help bridge any future disconnect between a great learning experience and your real-world day job.



So how do you create learning impact goals?

Unfortunately, there are no simple template solutions to setting your individual learning impact goals.

We are all unique learners with our own needs and styles.

And our organisational purpose and goals should also be unique to the

political, social, economic and cultural dynamics of our local system.

So, our learning impact goals should be different for each of us, no matter if we all participant in the same learning experience.

But setting value adding high impact learning goals is a skill in itself. They require discipline, time and an understanding of what you want to change. As well of course of a willingness to commit to making them happen.

Below though are some proven tips which could help tremendously increase the value of the goals you set.

- ★ **Make sure they are addressing what matters.** Will this learning help you answer your important strategic questions, and if so how? What are you trying to solve and how does this learning help get you there? Make your learning goals significant and bespoke to your work by connecting each of your goals to your personal *and* organisational challenges. Thread them through key strategic plans, and personal development reviews.
- ★ **Root them in your real work.** Set relevant goals which you can see being reached not just in big projects, but in the daily work you do. This can help you start to apply your learning quicker - and see a real-time difference the learning makes.
- ★ **Make them SMART.** This tried and tested practice still pays dividends. Make each goal authentic and give it a frame, scope and boundaries with specific actions, realistic timescales and a measurement. Ensure any goals includes a why, what, how and when. But keep it concise and limited, if possible, to one sentence.
- ★ **Use action words.** Remember that learning is a verb and sticks by applying it, at the right time, in the right environment. Force positive action from your learning by including words which demand it such as create, build, execute, plan, deliver etc.
- ★ **Share them.** Turn the invisible into the visible and keep focus and momentum by putting them 'out there'. Tell your learning story via blogs, case studies or newsletters. Put them into impact reports or learning updates. Help build a learning bank with a supportive network and make it possible for meaningful feedback to be given.

- ★ **Make them a collective responsibility.** Collaboration remains one of the most essential ingredients for using learning to improve performance, so focus not only why this learning it is important to you, but also others. What behaviour will you change? And then seek to change in those you are sharing your work with? Collectively, who will this learning impact on and how?
- ★ **Go outside your comfort zone.** This is where growth happens. Know your preferred style and start with what's strong. But write goals which encourage you to step outside it as well so you adopt a blended approach. Success comes not always from doing new things, but doing them differently. So build learning impact goals which require you to e.g. work with colleagues who challenge you, or work in a way which encourages more thinking. Or practice.
- ★ **Enable yourself to evidence them.** Build in specific activities and behaviour change examples which demonstrate how you will be doing your work better as a result of the learning experience. Construct them to show how they will inform your actions and help both yours and your organisation's performance.

If you need further inspiration, have a look at the following examples of good practice. Translate a limited impact goal illustrated here on the left, to a contextualised high impact learning goal, illustrated on the right.

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| ❌ To develop better relationships | ✓ | Support our organisational goal to develop relationships with our local healthcare partners, by applying my learning to design, host and present at a partnership working event by November 2021 bringing together at least 20 partners from across ABC Trust. |
| ❌ Improve my knowledge of systems working | ✓ | Further explore my learning of system working by creating a local system map for Place A area by June 2021 in order that we can better understand who their community leaders are and help achieve our goal of improving our insight of harder to reach areas. |
| ❌ To build our learning culture | ✓ | Create a learning system in the first quarter which enables my whole team to share creative ideas via clear and easily accessible routes and doubles the number of workable ideas generated. |
| ❌ Be better at active listening | ✓ | I will help deliver our goal of improving our internal communication by creating opportunities to practice my active listening skills through 1-2-1 meetings every week with each member and introducing a dedicated segment on active listening to our weekly team meetings. |

And finally remember learning is a continual process. Plans don't have to be written in stone. They can and should be adapted as learning grows. Yes, keep ensuring you achieve what you intend, but also be flexible to re-shape goals as conditions change and your learning evolves. Keep honing your goals till they provide you with an opportunity to create the highest possible impact.

So embrace all learning experiences ahead. Commit to them and most importantly maximise them with impact goals to ensure your learning doesn't get left on the shelf.

Or virtual screen.

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