







L&D Vision 2020

Your Business Guide For Next Decade

From the CEO's Desk

It gives me immense pleasure to share with you some details about our recently concluded 'L&D Vision 2020' Delhi Chapter. The rationale behind curating an event to create a shared space for business networking and sharing of ideas and knowledge was driven by the desire to take a step forward from theory to execution. We not only intended to create a networking platform but also drive discussions to ideate solutions to the problems faced by the L&D community. The idea was to co-create and ruminate together, moving towards creating a thought-leadership platform. Perhaps, it comes naturally to us, being a company that has grown as a startup in the tech space where consultations and co-creating are the way forward.

We did not want to preach and educate about assessments and whether or not they worked for companies. We wanted to hear from insiders.

Thus the format of the event ensured that practitioners with decades of experience interacted with industry colleagues to evaluate what was working for them and how they could measure the impact of learning interventions, among others. The rationale indeed was to bring industry stakeholders onto one platform and get them thinking!

We don't want to curate a stand-alone event. It is the first in the series of what is going to be a pan-India, year-round initiative with strong representation from diverse sectors that continue to transform as Al and automation alter existing paradigms.

Taking stock of the challenges faced by the L&D ecosystem, we can broadly categorize them into four categories. They are: aligning with business goals, identification of the skills to invest in, zeroing-in on employees who must be reskilled, and making learning more useful and engaging. We understand that this half-day event will not suffice to adequately address each one of them, and therefore we will continue this engagement henceforth.

We have come a long way from our humble beginnings some nine years ago. With over 2900+ customers across 90 countries, we provide assessments in 23 languages and across three strands of psychometric, cognitive, and domain. We delivered 20 million assessments in 2019, which makes us arguably one of the largest talent assessment companies in the world. These codes are home-grown; each one has been written by Indians. We have been making in India much before the idea gained mainstream currency. We were acquired by Mercer, one of the largest HR consulting firms in the world, in 2018. Our journey thus far has been nothing short of spectacular, and we take immense pride in it.

After the event's success in driving discussions and creating a closely-knit learning space, we look forward to having you on board to be a part of this on-going initiative. It is, after all, an industry-driven undertaking, and we genuinely believe that its quantum of success will depend on industry participation, and ultimately only benefit the industry at large.

This document contains a summary of the event, a broad takeaway of the proceedings for your consumption. We believe that you will find it useful. Let us ensure stronger engagement and work together to drive growth. We will continue to strive to keep providing you value through our collaboration.

See you soon and happy reading!

SIDDHARTHA GUPTA

CEO, Mercer | Mettl



Event Summary

At a time when disruptions have become routine, Al continues to alter organizations' approach towards business, and industries cutting across diverse sectors gear up to brace for changes heading into an uncertain future, L&D has rightly assumed much greater importance among practitioners. The challenge, however, was to align the management to these realities, enabling them to grasp the importance of L&D in the overall growth of the organization. Some wondered about possible strategies and tools to achieve long-lasting results, while others voiced their challenges in using techniques to promote learning in their organization. These were some of the many themes that found favor among the attendees at the recently concluded 'L&D Vision 2020 - Delhi Chapter'.

The event was entirely curated by Mercer | Mettl. It was a closely-knit congregation of 50+ L&D professionals representing diverse industry verticals, ranging from IT, automobile to hospitality, and financial services, among others, for a meaningful interaction on the churn in the L&D space.





The event provided an excellent business networking opportunity as industry insiders shared their perspectives, and informed one another about prevalent concerns and possible opportunities emanating from a rapidly transforming market.



Best Practices & Frameworks to Define a Targeted Organization Planning Strategy











Succession Planning and High Potential Identification



There has been a marginal increase in the budgets allocated for L&D in 2020 vs. 2019.

Deep Dive on Tools and Technologies that Modern Companies are Adopting to Build a Future-ready Workforce

The event featured keynotes, roundtable discussions, and case studies, keeping the audience engaged in the proceedings. That attendees not only listened but actively participated in every session, outlining their concerns and voicing their opinions, lent a distinct character to the proceedings.

In his opening remarks, Siddhartha Gupta, CEO, Mercer | Mettl, shared the rationale behind undertaking this initiative, suggesting that moving forward from discussions to finding means of executing them was one of the primary triggers. He brought attention to the changing contours of businesses and how the impact of globalization was forcing companies to recalibrate their investment strategies. He also pointed out the prevalent dichotomy between the Indian and the USA Market, noting that while much of the workforce in the USA was favoring gig work, the government in India was making concerted efforts to bring more people into the formal fold. Siddhartha expressed concern on how the Indian industry ecosystem was going to prepare itself for the upcoming changes, slated to occur as early as in three years. It was estimated that as many as 200 million people were going to get impacted, and these numbers were only a rough estimate, he said, referring to an international report on the subject. He also noted that financial challenges were causing inordinate delays in implementing changes on the ground.

Sharing some insights from the yet to be released Mercer | Mettl's 'State of Workplace Learning & Development Report 2020', he informed the audience that only three out of ten companies in India were planning to invest resources for L&D activities in 2020. Also, the lion's share, as much as 80% of the total budget for L&D, was being deployed for entry and mid-level employees, he informed.

Several other insightful concepts were discussed at length too. In the case study titled 'Measuring the Effectiveness of Training by Determining the ROI of the L&D Programs,'

Vikrant Bhatnagar, Head-Talent Management and Development, Vistara (Tata-SIA Airlines), talked about Returns on Expectations (ROE), a new concept that was yet to gain mainstream traction but merited attention from organizations. He also stressed on the need for isolating quantitative and qualitative data, which were key to assigning a monetary value, and hence calculating the ROI.

Speaking at the session titled 'Three Pillars of an Effective L&D Strategy – What to Train, Who to Train and How to Train,' Anirban Barman Roy, Chief Revenue Officer, Mercer|Mettl, presented a case study on Tata Communications. He enumerated concepts such as role-redundancy study, role proximity, learning agility, and reskilling, among others. He also touched upon the prevalent debate on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how there were divergent views on its perceived impact on shaping the future of jobs and skills.

The most suitable time to undertake succession planning was the first question deliberated at length in the Fireside chat titled 'Succession Planning and High Potential Identification: Strategy to Prepare Future and Current Pipeline of Leadership.' It was a brainstorming session to enumerate the challenges and best practices prevalent among different businesses. The session was anchored by Dhanur Oberoi, Director and North Region Head, Mercer | Mettl, and Sonal Kapur Sinha, Chief Human Resource Officer, Modern Foods.

The first learning Gallery, titled 'Deep Dive on Tools and Technologies that Modern Companies are Adopting to Build a Future-ready Workforce,' saw some insightful discussions on understanding the best practices adopted by companies to build a workforce trained in future skills. The session was conducted by Dr. Seema Gupta, Larsen & Toubro, Cluster Head HR (North India), and Deepa Mukherjee, Vice President -HR, NIIT Technologies Limited. They enumerated bottlenecks in the L&D ecosystem and suggested measures to tackle those challenges.

Vikrant Bhatnagar, Head of Talent Management and Development at Vistara, & Dhanur Oberai, North Region Head & Director of Strategic Accounts, Mercer I Mettl, moderated the second Learning Gallery titled 'Best Practices & Frameworks to Define a Targeted Organization Planning Strategy.' Succession planning and high-potential (Hi-Po) identification were the buzz words during the discussion. L&D practitioners expressed interest in finding a guaranteed means of building a leadership pipeline.

The event concluded with a networking lunch and received overwhelmingly positive feedback for its conceptualization and execution.

Much like love, if there is ROI, it shows...

Measuring the Effectiveness of Training by Determining the ROI of the L&D Programs

VIKRANT BHATNAGAR

Head of talent management and development at Vistara (TATA-SIA Airlines)





What started with an amusing anecdote about almonds, believed to have a positive effect on boosting a child's memory, turned out to be an insightful session on calculating the ROI.

He focused on measuring the effectiveness of training by determining the ROI of L&D programs.



He noted that calculating the ROI of an L&D program could be as ambiguous as knowing if the almonds did have any impact on the learning ability of a child!

No discussion on calculating the ROI of L&D programs was complete without acknowledging the two most celebrated models, Kirk Patrick & Jack Phillips, he said. While Kirk Patrick was the go-to model for training evaluation, Jack Phillips went a step further, adding ROI to this model. ROI had been an elusive concept, and Jack Phillips' contribution added a great deal of depth to the model.

Whether calculating the ROI was a work of science or art was a topic of meditation. Yet, Vikrant Bhatnagar believed ROI to be a bit of both – science was in the 'what' of the ROI calculation, and art was in the 'how' of it, he elaborated. He suggested that while it was easy to pinpoint the result in some cases, usually, one needed to plough through a massive amount of data to calculate the ROI of any L&D initiative.

He shared the vital components of how to effectively measure ROI, associate monetary value to various outcomes, and isolate different factors and effects of the training.

Vikrant Bhatnagar shared insights on a training program that ended with a revelation – that the program was, in fact, not required if the KPIs of the employees had been modified to accommodate a minimal change. He stressed on accumulating data to be ever-prepared to calculate the ROI of any undertaken program.

He emphasized on visualizing the endpoint of the training program, listing down expectations, objectives, and business impact right at the beginning of the intervention. This exercise was going to help understand whether ROI was needed to be measured at all. Calculating the ROI of every program wasn't always feasible, he believed. In fact, it needn't be done.

He spoke at length about ROI and ROE, and whether it was essential to attribute a monetary value to every L&D program. Every L&D intervention was unique and needed to be designed keeping in mind its objectives, he added. Every stage of the L&D program should be able to feed data into the final evaluation of the effectiveness and the ROI, he believed.

Every L&D intervention had more than one contributing factor to its success, he noted. An organization needed to distill those factors and define what percentage could be attributed to each one of them. A series of compelling real-life examples throughout the session kept the audience engaged.



Measuring the Effectiveness of Training by Determining the ROI of the L&D Programs

Skills are the currency for the future of work Defining an Effective L&D Strategy

ANIRBAN B ROY

Chief Revenue Officer Mercer | Mettl He opened with the what, the who, and the how of an effective L&D strategy. While one set of organizations termed Al and automation the most significant existential threat to humankind, the other group believed that the future was far more benign. However, the truth was a mix of both. Anirban noted that the future might witness machines and humans cooperating and co-creating the future of work.

Reskilling, thus, was the need of the hour. The first step towards building a future-ready workforce was to stop speculating and gaining an insight into the skills needed in the future, he suggested. These skills were needed to be incorporated into the business strategy so that humans were ready to work alongside technology, Anirban added.

The skills listed by the World Economic Forum, likely to be adopted by industries, were mostly focussed on technology. However, there were other skill clusters such as high order cognition and social and emotional skills that were still going to hold high relevance in the future.

Anirban Roy discussed the key constructs that were pooled together to create learning agility: mental agility, people agility, change agility and result agility.

Skill proximity was yet another concept that Anirban talked about, which could be helpful in an L&D initiative. The farther the skill in a skill proximity map, the higher should be the learning agility of the individual to successfully practice that skill, he said.

Anirban borrowed insights from Mercer | Mettl's 'State of Workplace Learning & Development 2020' report to stress on the importance of measuring learning agility, a future-looking business strategy. He also talked about using skill simulators, assessment centers, and customized development plans for recording higher training effectiveness.

While one set of organizations termed AI and automation the most significant existential threat to humankind, the other group believed that the future was far more benign. However, the truth was a mix of both.

With supporting case studies of Tata Communication and Generali where Mercer | Mettl successfully enabled laying the path for a future-ready workforce, Anirban Roy summarized his session with the following takeaway:





WHAT

- Skills of the Future
- Soft Skills
- Scientific Training Needs Identification

WHO

- Learning Agility
- Skill Proximity
- Feedback Tools

HOW

- Employee Experience
- Delivery Model
- Measurability

Fireside Chat •

Succession Planning and High Potential Identification: Strategy to Prepare Future and Current Pipeline of Leadership

SONAL KAPUR SINHA

Chief Human Resource Officer, Modern foods

This fireside chat was a brainstorming session focusing on challenges and best practices prevalent among different businesses. Sonal Kapur Sinha, Chief Human Resource Officer, Modern foods, was accompanied by Dhanur Oberoi, Director, and North Region Head, Mercer I Mettl, who convened the session.





The most suitable time to undertake succession planning was the first question discussed in detail. Emphasizing that planning needed to happen across levels, Sonal shared that she had experienced succession planning three years into her career, so one needed to cover all levels. "You must do that, or you end up playing Jenga, pulling the tiles and hoping the structure doesn't fall," she said, detailing the challenges. She suggested that the process required time and resources, so even if organizations could not afford it, they could have a replacement plan and zero in on the choice of successors.

The conversation proceeded to high potential (Hi-Po) identification and its overlapping nature that often came up with succession planning. Organizations believed that the identification of Hi-Pos was sufficient for succession planning. However, identifying Hi-Pos without preparing them for a position was a futile effort, she believed.

Dhanur questioned the most apt time for leadership experts to help organizations understand the criticality of the succession planning, and not just the identification of Hi-Pos or individual development plans. Sonal noted that the worst time for succession planning was budgeting, while the best time was business growth, exit, and possible PNL review because that's when leadership was thinking about the people. Experts needed to connect with leaders at the time of growth or when the business was not doing well.

Creating a model based on the skills required for a subsequent role was not going to work. An effort was needed to support these potential leaders and understand their needs.



ARUN TANEJA

The fireside chat was now open to a one-on-one conversation wherein the L&D heads could further exchange ideas with fellow attendees. Whether employees thought that companies needed to invest in their career growth was the question. Sharing how TCS was managing to meet the expectations of its employees, Arun Taneja, L&D Development North Region Head, shared:

"To retain employees, we map their career concerning the skills that are becoming redundant and also the upcoming ones. The strategy changes depending on the people that the organization wants to retain." Even as 20% of the workforce was scouting for options to further their growth, it was the other 50% that organizations needed to focus their succession planning efforts on, he believed.

Emphasizing on the need for companies to alter their approach towards succession planning, one of the imminent L&D experts proposed that companies needed to provide employees the opportunity to work on their skill gaps. Employees required to have the liberty to take up training as per their convenience to work on their existing skill gaps, he reasoned.

Sonal believed that succession planning programs should not be run in vacuums. The successors needed to be duly informed about being recognized as high potentials by the company. The typical mindset of L&D departments was that telling the Hi-Pos was going to push them into leaving the organization. However, Sonal's experience suggested that they didn't.

The failure of development plans to meet the desired outcomes was another challenge that found traction. A consensus was reached on the fact that the successor and the current leader both needed to work together. The problem arose when the development plan did not match up to the skills required for the succession to take place.

It was here when the leader, about to vacate the position, needed to come up with a targeted training plan that aligned closely with the skills required for the role going to be undertaken by the successor. The panelist further emphasized on learning agility while shortlisting the right successor. While keeping in mind the past performance of the Hi-Po, the successor needed to be learning agile for efficient upskilling. An agile individual was a high potential, high performer, highly accountable and adaptable, and one with strong social skills.

One of the L&D experts shared her experience of how her organization conducted succession planning by creating a success profile - for instance, the role of a CHRO. The person needed to have 10 years of experience in business partnering and three years of experience in learning and development. From a competency point of view, the L&D department, along with the business leader, could determine the existing skill gaps. If the Hi-Po did not have the experience of managing his/her environment, the company needed to invest in such a way that the individual's development plan focused on that particular skill.



Deep Dive on Tools and Technologies that Modern Companies are Adopting to Build a Future-ready Workforce

The learning gallery aimed at understanding the best practices being adopted by organizations to build a workforce trained on future skills.

The session was conducted by Dr. Seema Gupta, Head HR, Larsen & Toubro (Cluster North India) and Deepa Mukherjee, Vice President – HR, NIIT Technologies Limited. Dr. Seema and Deepa discussed the various challenges confronting the L&D space. The session was moderated by Anirban Barman Roy, Chief Revenue Officer, Mercer | Mettl.

The discussion was focused on the challenges faced by organizations, the measures being implemented to resolve them, gaps in the process, and how the future of learning and development was panning out.

Learning Gallery 1



Significant Challenges Before the Learning & Development Landscape

When to train

This was perhaps the most critical point overlooked by organizations.

Companies generally trained their employees on the skills required to complete a task in the future. However, whether the skill was going to remain relevant when the employee got that work was the question.

Would the person be equipped to use those skills and put them into practice? Therefore, when to train was the foremost challenge for L&D departments.

Replace Employees

Another problem that companies came across was how to replace employees from their current roles, especially when the organization had invested in training them on future skills, and there was an upcoming project on similar lines. Secondly, for the next project, if the company needed to train employees on the skill, but the employees were engaged in dealing with a client, it was problematic to pull the employee from his/her current line of work and convince the client that the employee was moving on.

Unlearn

Making employees unlearn the skills and tactics that have now become redundant emerged as one of the biggest stumbling blocks to L&D programs. Convincing experienced employees to unlearn, upskill, cross skill, or reskill was a difficult task.

Value of Training

Be it upskilling on soft skills or technical skills, encouraging learners played a vital role in the L&D strategy. There were different kinds of learners. Most of the employees enrolled in a training program because they needed to and not because they wanted to. So, changing the mindset of those who didn't want to, and making them realize that they needed to, was a tussle. The importance of training increased, especially when soft skills were also evolving for managerial and leadership roles.

Soft Skills

Sometimes, companies needed to upskill the people on soft skills, or they might want to encourage someone to become a leader. At times, significant efforts need to be invested in bringing out other aspects of employees' personalities. To make backend techies understand that they need to work on customer-facing skills is a challenge.





Ecosystem

While we are talking about future skilling or reskilling, the number of experts on digitization and automation is debatable. Companies have not clearly defined thresholds in terms of people's journey in the organization. Companies may put employees through a three-day program. Employees are expected to go through training and reach a certain level. But, unless organizations provide an ecosystem, employees will continue to face issues in learning and unlearning.

One-Size-Fits-All

One solution that caters to diverse asks doesn't work in the L&D space. Organizations must understand that all employees are different in terms of job levels, region, function, and other such categories. The lack of strategy across these categories is one of the biggest pitfalls of L&D programs. We think that we can train a group of people. However, the learning style differs from one employee to the other. This is where we need to invest in talent management strategy. One won't be able to calculate the ROI, if one uses 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Global vs. In-house Problems

Instead of adopting only global trends, companies must analyze the training gaps as well. While half the planning can come from global issues, equal emphasis should be given on current skill gaps existing in one's workforce.

Ability vs. Intent

The ability and willingness to learn are two concepts that go side-by-side during learning and development programs. Additionally, the behavioral aspect which drives learning is equally essential. The absence of either of these aspects leads to an ineffective L&D program.

L&D Tools Used by Organizations

To solve these challenges, organizations are using tools for training needs identification through forecasting and assessment. Principally, pre and post-training assessments were also being used by several L&D experts in the room. Meanwhile, companies even opt for traditional classroom training to train their workforce. Organizations are using analytics to gauge the training needs to build a better understanding of their employees' needs. The blended mode of learning came out to be one of the preferred employee development approaches. It was observed that, gradually, organizations were adopting simulated tools over generic MCQs and assessments as simulators created a virtual environment, replicated real-world problems, and thus, better prepared employees to handle the challenges expected in a position of responsibility.

The session culminated with L&D specialists agreeing on adopting more scientific tools to solve the many challenges hampering L&D initiatives.

Best Practices & Frameworks to Define a Targeted Organization Planning Strategy

The discussion commenced with participants listing down challenges faced by organizations while defining a targeted organization planning strategy. Tools and assessments, selection, execution and adoption, and calculating the ROI were the broad categories that challenges were grouped into.

Assessments and tools were significant concerns for the group as they often found the assessment results to be in variance with the common understanding. Several L&D practitioners shared concern about the scientific validity of the tools and assessments used and questioned their efficacy in providing a clear understanding of an employee's performance as well as his/her potential.

Learning Gallery 2



Succession Planning and High Potential Identification were the Buzzwords During the Discussion.

DHANUR OBERAI

North Region Head & Director of Strategic Accounts, Mercer I Mettl

L&D practitioners expressed interest in finding a guaranteed means of building a leadership pipeline. The participants agreed that no one test could achieve this mammoth goal. It had to be a battery of tests along with a 360-degree feedback consisting of a panel of key stakeholders for a holistic practice, leaving little scope for bias.

Vikrant Bhatnagar, Head of Talent Management and Development at Vistara (SIA Airlines), & Dhanur Oberai, North Region Head & Director of Strategic Accounts, Mercer I Mettl, moderated the discussion. Vikrant Bhatnagar noted that a strategy could be commenced by identifying Hi-Pos and landing at succession planning or commenced with succession planning and identifying Hi-Pos. Both these plans of action required an organization to identify critical roles, layout cross-functional competencies, and then begin the identification and training process.

Learning agility remained a topic of interest and importance, while many L&D practitioners raised concerns about the validity of tools used in the assessment process. Mercer | Mettl spokesperson laid their worries to rest by assuring them that their assessments, as well as consultants, were standardized and recognized by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. The tests used advanced analytics to red flag when individuals were answering in a socially desirable manner and hence guaranteed a high validity index.





Performance versus potential formed an interesting divide among L&D practitioners. However, the session culminated with them concurring on taking both the aspects into account.

While 'performance' indicated a consistently excellent track record of getting the job done, 'potential' was more forward-looking and implied aptitude for making an impact in the future.

Dhanur Oberai concluded with the thought that while low-stake development projects could be taken up internally, those with high-stakes needed to involve scientific tools proven for their reliability and validity. They needed to be taken up by external experts to assist organizations in building capacity for the future of work.



This event couldn't have come at a more appropriate time. What excited me particularly was the format: very creative and formative. Generally, the events I attend are more of networking and less of learning. The learning galleries and Fireside chat ensured that there was a lot of interaction between speakers and participants.

VIKRANT BHATNAGAR,

Head - Talent Mgmt. & Development Vistara (Tata SIA Airlines)

A very-well executed, time-bound session, and not claustrophobic like other events. There were a lot of qualitative inputs shared by people and fantastic speakers. It was an excellent takeaway for me as an L&D speaker and I wish to attend more such events in the future.

SHANTUNU TOMAR,

Corporate L&D Manager, Duet India Hotels

Being part of a rapidly growing startup, it is very important to know how L&D is going to be in the future. And that is what was addressed here at the event.

ZEENAT SIDDIQUI,

Regional Training Manager (East & North), Swiggy

The major part that I liked about this workshop was the identification and implementation of Hi-Pos, and then moving to succession planning and vice-versa. First identify the critical talent and then identify the Hi-Pos.

MEGHA BALUJA,

Senior Manager - HR, Max Skill The entire event was pretty simple because Mercer | Mettl was not trying to pitch a product. It was rather more of inclusiveness, where they wanted us to discuss all the tools and applications incorporated by us. It helped me understand what all was being done by larger organizations.

SHALABH SRIVASTAVA,

Vice President - Learning & Development, Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce (Life Insurance Company Ltd)

I am highly impressed with the conference. It talked about what was relevant in terms of thinking of future skills, how and why learning agility was so important for planning, so that we could be effective across different skills.

VANDANA TYAGI,

Head Talent Development and Engagement, Prescient Healthcare Group

L&D 2020, as I saw it, is what we learning professionals need to do to make our industry– the Indian Inc. – a future–ready industry. The speakers did justice to the entire subject matter, especially the important issue of ROI was addressed extremely well.

SONAL KAPUR SINHA.

Head - Human Resources at Modern Foods

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