LEADING LIGHTS
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We’ve scoured the internet to bring you the latest and best blog articles from the most inspired thinkers in the learning community.

Curated into this handy e-magazine - these 6 short articles reveal a fascinating insight into the thoughts, aspirations and ideas of the learning world’s most astute commentators.

In this issue:

Social learning and leadership maven, Julian Stodd, examines authenticity and power within the social age. Julian explains that authenticity is more than just words - it is actions; it is more than intent – it’s experience.

The social theme continues in an article from Steve Wheeler, Associate Professor at Plymouth University, who looks at the fact that we are inherently social animals & that most of our learning comes from within the social content.

David James (ex-Disney) investigates how a workforce really learns in 2016 and looks at data from Degreed’s recent report – which has become one of the most shared L&D reports/articles on Linkedin.

Pete Weston of META-LUCID looks at growth mindset and the belief that one can develop one’s own intelligence. Weston looks at Professor Carol Dweck’s research and focuses on how the idea has become of interest to today’s business leaders. (originally published on TrainingZone)

An infographic forms the basis of an article from Simon Gibson which looks at what happens on the internet in a single minute. The focus is on the amount of data that is transmitted and the implications this has for all of us.

Finally Sukh Pabial of One Housing Group discusses performance consultancy and the skills one needs to become a performance consultant. Sukh looks how we can help the business function and transform itself into a learning solution.
In the Map of the Social Age, ‘Authenticity’ is a special location. It’s special because it’s hard to find. Authenticity is almost intangible, and yet easy to spot when it’s missing. It gives you nothing in return, and yet without it you have nothing. Authenticity generates power for Social Leaders and erodes it in organisations that lack it. It can’t be bought, but can be earned. And the best thing is, by getting things wrong, you may well be earning it right.

The birth of the Social Age saw shifts away from formal hierarchies of power, towards a more reputation based economy. What you did became worth more than what you said you would do, because suddenly the communities around us had the almost synchronous ability to organise and comment. Within this democratisation of communication and creativity, sole voices were amplified, whilst the ability of organisations to own the conversation through volume alone was diminished. All voices became more equal, and the ones with greater authenticity became more listened to.
Authenticity is not about glamour or worth, it’s not about media or message: it’s about the platform from which the story is told and the person telling it.

My bank can tell me that they care, but I recognise that what we have is a transactional relationship. There is little that can be truly authentic in this. It’s a relationship in which they hold both power and authority and exert it in a way that leaves me little recourse, because they control the channels of communication too. Or at least they did until Twitter came along, and I was able to claim a conversation on my terms.

Authenticity is more than just words: it’s actions. It’s more than intent: it’s experience.

Within the Social Leadership frame, authenticity is important because it’s a factor in reputation, and reputation leads directly to Social Authority, that form of authority which is granted by the community itself. By acting with integrity, by being authentic in our action, by being humble in how we work and learn, we can be granted reputation and, hence, gain Social Authority.
I read somewhere a simple guide to how good a particular foodstuff is for you is to consider how much it’s been processed: raw fruit is good, tinned fruit is OK. Fruit made into cake is less good. It’s probably something like that when it comes to authenticity: the less things are processed, the more authentic they feel. So wrapping the message up in a glossy corporate story is probably less tasty than a handwritten thank you note. Things from the heart don’t come overproduced.

One space where actions speak louder than words is when we are learning, when we get things wrong. The humble leader is one who narrates her or his actions, shares learning and the process they used to get there. Warts and all. This willingness to share the workings of the story, rather than just the polished story itself, is of great value and contributes to ones reparation as an authentic leader. Recognising that we need rehearsal spaces as well as just performance ones.

It’s not that organisations can’t act authentically, just that ‘authenticity’ itself is more likely to be rooted in individuals, not teams or organisations. Indeed, that’s the very reason why social authority subverts formal hierarchy so effectively.

We need to understand authenticity in order to earn it: because it’s about every aspect of how we operate. And it’s within our control to act in ways that are truly authentic.
Humans are inherently social. We want to be accepted by others. Most of our learning is achieved within social contexts. I can’t recall many examples where I have learnt something significant without the presence of others. From language acquisition, to basic numeracy and literacy skills, to more sophisticated activities such as public speaking, dining out with old friends or driving in traffic - all have been scaffolded and coached through the influence of others. Conversations are some of the richest learning experiences, even in our senior years. Discussions prompt us to consider alternative perspectives which widen our understanding.

Even when we are on our own, much of our learning through resources such as books and videos is mediated socially - there is another mind behind the resource. Vygotsky’s ZPD theory is often cited at this point. You know, the fact that each of us can only learn so much on our own, but with a More Knowledgeable Other person by our side, we can learn that much more.... Well, our network of friends and colleagues is that MKO - and they aren’t necessarily by the side of us any more.

In the digital age, it is commonplace to connect into a Community of Practice that reflects or represents our interests. In Lave’s terms, the CoP is essential for developing our sense of purpose within our chosen community. It’s not simply about learning all of the relevant knowledge and acquiring all of the essential skills - it’s also important that we assimilate the culture of the community, the hidden curriculum, the social mores and acceptable practices. This is a form of conformity, and those who are maverick in their mentality may baulk at this idea. Yet it is essential if we wish to belong.
There are many social theories that explain our membership of ‘tribes’ or communities. From Maslow to Latane to Festinger, and even taking into consideration the ‘risky’ social experiments of the sixties, such as Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison experiment, or Milgram’s shocking compliance studies, psychology is replete with explanations about how we operate in social contexts and engage within our communities. Bandura’s experiments on learning through the observation of others lend more weight to the conclusion that we all want to belong and be accepted, and learning gives us the social capital to do so.

Teachers therefore need to pay attention to the way classrooms are managed. Is there space for collaboration and communication between students? Do we build time in for discussion and conversation? Are students able to connect with others outside the classroom to extend their discussion and learn more widely? These are questions for all educators, regardless of the age groups they are teaching.

Steve Wheeler is Associate Professor of Learning Technologies at the Plymouth Institute of Education where he chairs the Learning Futures group and leads the Computing and Science education teams. He researches into technology supported learning and distance education, with particular emphasis on the pedagogy underlying the use of social media and Web 2.0 technologies, and also has research interests in mobile learning and cybercultures. He has given keynotes to audiences in more than 35 countries and is author of more than 150 scholarly articles, with over 4,500 academic citations. He is an active and prolific edublogger, and his blog Learning with e’s is a regular online commentary on the social and cultural impact of disruptive technologies, and the application of digital media in education, learning and development. In the last few years it has attracted in excess of six million unique visitors.
Learning and Development - on demand

The image below, taken from Degreed’s *How the Workforce Really Learns in 2016* report, has recently become the most popular item I’ve shared on LinkedIn, by quite some way, and its interpretation has been much debated in the comments section of that post.

What this image represents to me is that for each individual employee, formal L&D touch points are few and infrequent.

You might also challenge whether all employees are being mentored or coached - and even whether eLearning and classroom training are less frequently experienced by workers in your organisation than shown here? In fact, in another study (referenced in The Empowered Learner white paper), only 23% of respondents had completed a course at their company in the last 2 years!
I see an opportunity for L&D to operate more in this top left-hand corner and have greater impact because this is where you continuously influence performance in the direction that the organisation benefits and how you incrementally develop capability towards achieving the strategic goals, supplemented by the less frequent courses and programmes. After all, it’s fair to say we are not transformed in the classroom, we are ‘transformed by our efforts to respond to the demands of our environment’, which is the very definition of evolution, according to Oxford Dictionaries. And if this is the case, then we should be looking for ways to support learning in the workflow and providing resources to help employees when they face their everyday challenges. You could easily do this today by creating digital resources that answer questions that groups of employees are asking or by fulfilling specific needs that are not touched by your formal learning solutions.

For example, we all know that running days long induction to let new starters know all-the-things-they-need is counterintuitive because they could not possibly remember all that information, let alone when they need it to perform their new role. So by identifying the questions that new starters will be asking and answering them in the form of short online resources, designed to get the employee from 'not knowing' to 'doing' in the shortest possible time, can help us to positively influence their performance during their first few weeks at the company.

The same for new managers. There are dozens of questions that every new manager will have when they start in the role, such as:

- What do I ‘do’ now that I’m a manager?
- My work hasn’t gone away now that I’ve been promoted so how do I get that done and manage the team?
- How do I run a 1:1 meeting?
- How do other managers deal with poor performance in their teams?
- How do I manage my P&L?

All of these could be answered in a short resource or two that work like a web search, an article, a blog or a video that equips the employee with enough ‘know-how’ to perform with confidence and with organisationally-specific advice. Not only that, resources can be created and shared in minutes and improved over time, like they have done at ASOS recently.
To be clear, this is not a devalued experience compared to classroom training or eLearning, after all, do we not spend time preparing delegates to take their ‘learning’ back to the workplace? How about not removing them in the first place unless absolutely necessary? I challenge in-company L&D to think of all the things that could be popped into a short digital resource to act like a virtual response to a tap-on-the-shoulder-of-a-colleague who knows and knows-how.

Ok, so how do you know that ‘learning’ has taken place with short digital resources like this? Perhaps that’s exactly the same for any other type of learning experience but the difference here is that the gap between the employee facing their ‘challenge’ and then ‘applying’ what they have just picked up is so short that learning does not need to occur before application, just read, see, interpret and do. The learning occurs after doing - just like in real life.

There are organisations now doing this on a large scale and taking their flagship face-to-face programmes and flipping them to be ‘resource-first’, recognising that they have a better chance of catching employees when they need the support, and influencing their performance this way, rather than having them wait until they attend a face-to-face programme. They then use live sessions to discuss, question, challenge, debate and practice.
This agile ‘resources-first’ approach is now increasing both the reach and impact of L&D departments, helping them support all employees and solving real business problems as fast as it would take to write an email.

If you’re interested in operating more in the ‘every day’ and ‘every week’ space rather than ‘every now and again’ then read some more about how ASOS are actually doing this and think about how much more impact you could have on your business with your L&D on-demand.

David James is Learning Strategist with Looop and a seasoned Talent Management, Learning & OD leader with more than 15 years of experience in the field. Until recently, David was Director of Talent, Learning & OD for The Walt Disney Company’s EMEA region.
Growth mindset, the belief that you can develop your intelligence, is a popular topic. It’s an appealing theory, it’s beguilingly simple, and it aligns well with many human resource initiatives.

Stanford University Professor Carol Dweck has conducted Growth Mindset research over a number of years in education, looking at how students maximise their potential. Recently the idea has become of interest to business leaders. The result is that organisations are looking to implement the Growth Mindset theory in adult environments.

Is there pressure to add Growth Mindset to your L&D curriculum? Do you already have Growth Mindset assets available for your community, but utilisation and participant response are average? If so, what should be your next steps? We see two important challenges for the L&D professional if your organisation commits to implementing Growth Mindset.

These challenges are related first to a misunderstanding about Growth Mindset. Stop for a minute and consider what you think Growth Mindset is. If you and the rest of your organisation think it’s about belief, you have a good starting position for a successful implementation. In our experience many companies struggle to sustain the definition as the concept is rolled out. If you are looking to influence belief, then it’s sensible to ensure the rest of your curriculum aligns with this belief. Our experience suggests that there is a confusion between Growth Mindset and the tools and strategies used to implement the concept successfully.
This potential confusion has implications for curriculum content and Growth Mindset deployment as well as in other areas of talent management. There are actions you can take now to address the challenges of definition and alignment:

• If the organisation has asked for Growth Mindset in the curriculum, does it know it is about influencing beliefs regarding intelligence? If not, you may need to reset expectations about what it is and what it offers.
• Does your existing curriculum, whether the content is bought in or designed in-house, align with Growth Mindset?
• Do your Growth Mindset assets, or the ones you plan to source (workshops, eLearning, infographics etc.), offer content that distinguishes between Growth Mindset beliefs and the tools and strategies to implement a Growth MIndset approach to working?
• Do your assets use appropriate teaching/learning paradigms to influence belief and encourage application?

It is better to delay introducing Growth Mindset than have a poor implementation as it could make a remarkable impact on how the climate and culture of your organisation works. Rushing to implement will marginalise impact and the idea will soon be seen as a fad with no lasting impact.

**Growth Mindset is about beliefs**
The topic is popular: it is being sold as empowerment, self-efficacy, grittiness, agility, a route to success, and a creativity and innovation tool, all of which misrepresent what it is. It is important to understand why your organisation wants Growth Mindset at all:
Check your own understanding of Growth Mindset by reading some of Dweck’s original peer-reviewed research. Use reputable sources such as material on the Mindset Works site to understand what it is and why it isn’t all the other things
Clarify who in the organisation thinks Growth Mindset is important and understand why they think so. For important powerful stakeholders, meet with them to clear up any confusion about the concept or its application
Develop and promote appealing infographics or infomercials to explain what Growth Mindset is and how it can help organisations. Ensure these assets become the ‘go to’ resources for anyone with an interest in Growth Mindset
If there is interest and demand, consider running some interactive awareness sessions
It’s important to ensure clarity: it will help to distinguish between the Growth Mindset beliefs and the tools to implement activity based on Growth Mindset.
Mixed messages in the curriculum
Do you have material in your curriculum that is sending Fixed Mindset messages? For example, do you have L&D assets that look at developing talent? Does the language convey ideas about innate talent? Do you have a sales force to train? Does any of your course content imply that selling is more about what you are born with?
Audit your curriculum content, identify problem areas, grade them based on the potential impact of the content and fix immediately where possible.
If you have existing L&D suppliers, find out their position on Growth Mindset and encourage them to work with you to communicate Growth Mindset in their content and delivery. (Especially so if you have freelance workshop facilitators or trainers)
Practice what you preach: check your own Growth Mindset and ensure your own behaviour supports a Growth Mindset.

Beliefs versus tools
Business leaders want results, they want empowerment, self-efficacy, grittiness, agility, routes to success, creativity and innovation and all the other things that drive results. They don’t want Growth Mindset alone. The challenge is to demonstrate that tools, methodologies and strategies are worthless unless people learn how to use them and use them well. We want them to be used by individuals who see challenges and obstacles as part of the job, that willingly accept feedback, and that change their behaviour and enjoy the success of others.
Without this capacity, teaching employees how to successfully use new tools, methodologies and strategies comes down to luck and randomness. Growth Mindset elevates everything else, but is nothing in of itself.
While you need to explain Growth Mindset, it is not really a separate curriculum topic, it is not a just training course. Growth Mindset drives the effectiveness and execution of tools, strategies and methodologies.

Learning paradigm
If you are looking to help learners examine and change beliefs about Growth Mindset, it is probably a good idea to develop a mix of behaviourist and constructivist interventions. Growth Mindset is a validated theory: it has specific characteristics and the learner needs to understand what they are. This is particularly important as our experience suggests that Growth Mindset can be easily misinterpreted and deployed wrongly.
Growth Mindset drives the effectiveness and execution of tools, strategies and methodologies. Infographics, eLearning, directed-learning assignments and publicly available video material from Carol Dweck and other reputable Growth Mindset practitioners will allow your learners to gain a clear understanding of the theory.

This is only half the learning story. If you want your learners to examine and develop their Growth Mindset, it’s important for them to explore the implications of taking on the belief over time. This is a core adult learning principle: it must make sense, have context and be useful. This normally means some form of discovery learning programme and an extended period of personal-work-based application, peer groups interactions and personal ‘sense making’. You should weave these opportunities into as many aspects of your curriculum as you can.

A few final thoughts

An effective implementation of Growth Mindset requires the organisation to go beyond updating the L&D curriculum.

Over time it will impact many different areas of the talent management cycle. A training course should be only one facet of a Growth Mindset implementation.

A good Growth Mindset implementation offers the chance for everyone to find a route to maximise their potential. This will lead to a more engaged workforce and improved productivity. The idea has relevance across the whole gamut of human resource management activities.

For example, implementing the theory will help transform initiatives such as diversity and inclusion and succession planning into sources of competitive advantage.

The experience you build implementing Growth Mindset into the curriculum should be a source of expertise for the whole organisation. The knowhow you develop should offer you influence well beyond the confines of the L&D department.

Expertise in B2B sales enablement, much of it gained working with global organizations. Pete’s work involves training (and training trainers), training design and development, facilitation, consulting and sales executive coaching. As a result of establishing a successful global learning and development business, (with others), and taking responsibility for strategy and product development, Pete has considerable experience in areas such as strategy development and implementation, learning product design and development and all things related to setting up a quality sales and marketing capability.
What happens in a “work” minute?

I was really struck the other day by the latest infographic on - “What happens in an Internet Minute 2016”. From what I can work out the graphic was produced by a U.S. company called Excelacom.

I’m gob-smacked (unusual for me I know) by the amount of data this one minute is producing on these huge, international platforms...seriously it is crazy!

Here are the stats on what happens every internet minute:
What happens in a “work” minute?

701,389 logins on Facebook
69,444 hours watched on Netflix
150 million emails sent
1,389 Uber rides
527,760 photos shared on Snapchat
51,000 app downloads on Apple's App Store
$203,596 in sales on Amazon.com
120+ new LinkedIn accounts
347,222 tweets on Twitter
28,194 new posts to Instagram
38,052 hours of music listened to on Spotify
1.04 million Vine loops
2.4 million search queries on Google
512,222 Tinder swipes
2.78 million video views on YouTube
20.8 million messages on WhatsApp

So then, when I took a few days and let it sink in I was slightly worried by the "data". A couple of things burst out, firstly e-mail seems to remain the no. 1 digital communication channel. Now in this disrupted, highly collaborative world of work does that sound right?

Secondly, the fact the next big hitter was an instant messaging service (WhatsApp)...sounds like more of the same to me! As someone who is passionate about workplace development and how it can help companies of all shape and size, what, if anything, is this data telling our broad profession?

Thirdly, wow are we appearing as mega distracted..I need to buy something, I need to get somewhere...I need to tell people where I've been...I need to take a picture...I need to listen to music whilst doing it...where am I going next? I'll search it...whilst waiting I might play a game...

I feel it just re-enforces the need to continue to help people and organisations have the right conversations at the right time and that maybe, just maybe, the ability to talk face to face and have a real open, honest conversation is becoming a dying art. You can tweet, e-mail, Snapchat or message me your views or we could meet up at some point and discuss in more detail face to face...

(PS - apologies, this should take you about 1 min 30 secs to read!)

Simon has a strong track record of delivering high profile, leading-edge L & D/OD, Leadership/Talent Management and Change/Transformation projects within varying organisational complexity - from single business unit level to multi-national geography. He is passionate and curious about learning how things work and trying to make a difference. Simon is a Learning & Organisational Development Leader with a fresh and challenging outlook & has a keen interest in collaboration, innovation as well as using digital in the workplace whilst being passionate about people development and the right organisational fit.
In the world of L&D there has been a move to talk more about this concept of performance consultancy, and it's an interesting concept. The LPI even run a masterclass where you can learn the skills needed for being a performance consultant. Essentially, if all L&D is about improving performance, so says the concept, therefore all L&Ders should be performance consultants not L&D consultants. In other worlds, this is sometimes called business partnering.

I get it.
Except, it's quite a challenging assertion.

Most L&D practitioners are expert in what they do and what they know. That’s why they’re doing the work they do. What they tend not to be experts in is how to provide consultancy to the organisation they’re part of or working with.

It requires a very different approach to the work we do, and arguably is completely alien to most L&Ders. Sure we know how to help a business function take various forms of knowledge and transform it into a learning solution of some description. Some of us are even learning how to use digital technologies to deliver learning in ways which are different and unique. Some of us are taking life even further and designing learning solutions which are supportive of self-directed and autonomous learning.

Being a performance consultant asks for a different approach to what L&D is used to. It requires us to revisit how we approach the design of solutions by changing the way we understand the problem we’re presented with. Instead of approaching it and thinking ‘how do I create a learning solution to help fix this’ the approach needs to be ‘how can I support you to create a solution which you develop yourself’.

It means saying – a learning solution might be what’s needed to help with your problem, but actually you might need to consider a mix of solutions such as internal comms, performance management, transparency of information and changing the way you run your meetings. A learning solution might help support how some of that happens, but those other options mean that we need to be savvy about how to have conversations that are focused on performance improvement. By proxy you’re also probably taking care of L&D / engagement / management / leadership needs, but it tends to be correlational as opposed to causation.
What is “Performance Consultancy”?

This approach kind of causes issues for practitioners who have specialisms. For example, if you’re an Instructional Designer, and that’s the work you do, why do you need to have conversations about performance? (Answer: You don’t, that’s not your role). It also causes angst for practitioners who provide quite niche content. For example if you’re a Customer Services Trainer, does what you provide support performance? (Answer: It does, and suddenly you need to learn a whole new language about performance support once your training has been completed). And if you’re an internal practitioner, it means that your world of operating from learning needs analysis is fundamentally changing to being one where you have to learn how to consult with business leaders on what their operational world looks like, because that’s where the performance support is needed – not in the learning environment.

As we are starting to understand more and more, the world of L&D is being turned flip upside its head. Many practitioners are feeling lost in this new world, others are carrying on with their heads firmly the sand, more are arguing the toss about why they need to bother, and others are trying to learn about this new world so that they can support learners in ways that make sense for them.

I’ll be honest with you fellow L&Ders, it’s a seriously challenging time for the modern L&D / OD practitioner. I don’t lay claim that I can do all of the things written about in these spaces. I do take the time to understand the various positions and where I need that personal support is when I rely on those in my #PLN (Personal Learning Network). They help me to understand concepts better, and help me to know how I can use that thinking to inform solutions I think can be developed and delivered as well as those which I can’t and shouldn’t do anything with. Where possible, I apply the thinking and challenge needed which supports design and development of learning solutions which are focused on performance support, and focused on delivery of learning solutions that meet a clear learning and business need.

Sukh is an occupational psychologist by profession and am passionate about all things learning and development, creating holistic learning solutions and using positive psychology in the workforce.
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