

HERE LIES

L&D

The year is now 2036 and the field once known as Learning & Development has evolved into a learner-centered experience called...



Adaptive Immersion.

The industry was transformed in the mid-2020s by applying tools and tech from outside L&D settings along with an experimental learning model of exploring, risk-taking, and socializing.

Adaptive Immersion viewed learners as skilled contributors and reimagined corporate training as opportunities to leverage the group's collective brain power. Educators assumed the role of flexible tour guides who provide relevant content and advise learners along their upskilling journey. As successful outcomes skyrocketed, **peer learning quickly eclipsed the traditional top-down learning model and playing with purpose replaced trivial games and trust falls.**

When connected learning in real-time between educators, learners, and devices became the workplace standard in 2030, it was curtains for PowerPoint. Slide decks were replaced by humans who engaged audiences with eye contact, interactivity, peer learning and visual enhancements. **Likewise, the focus of learning sessions shifted away from the content—which anyone could find online—and toward creating an experience *around* the content.** The extinction of L&D ultimately led to Adaptive Immersion and the holy grail of learning outcomes: engagement, participation, and long-term retention.

Unplug PowerPoint Already

When Microsoft launched PowerPoint as a presentation tool in 1987, there were no smartphones, laptop cameras, or even an Internet. Back then, education happened in-person and followed the traditional sage-on-stage model. **Despite major advances in technology (and decreases in attention spans), the formula for learning hasn't evolved to reflect three decades of change.**¹

Slow adoption of tech in the learning industry may be one reason why PowerPoint is the default program for L&D sessions, but it doesn't make a 60-slide deck any less painful for learners. Evidently, it doesn't lead to positive learning outcomes either: Harvard University research indicates that **PowerPoint presentations reduce learner comprehension because most of us can't simultaneously listen and read.**²

¹ McSpadden, Kevin. "Science: You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish." Time, May 14, 2015. <https://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/>.

² Sweller, J. and Diao, Y. "Redundancy in Foreign Language Reading Comprehension Instruction: Concurrent Written and Spoken Presentations." Learning and Instruction, Vol. 17, pp. 78 – 88. (Australia: University of New South Wales, 2007). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2006.11.007>

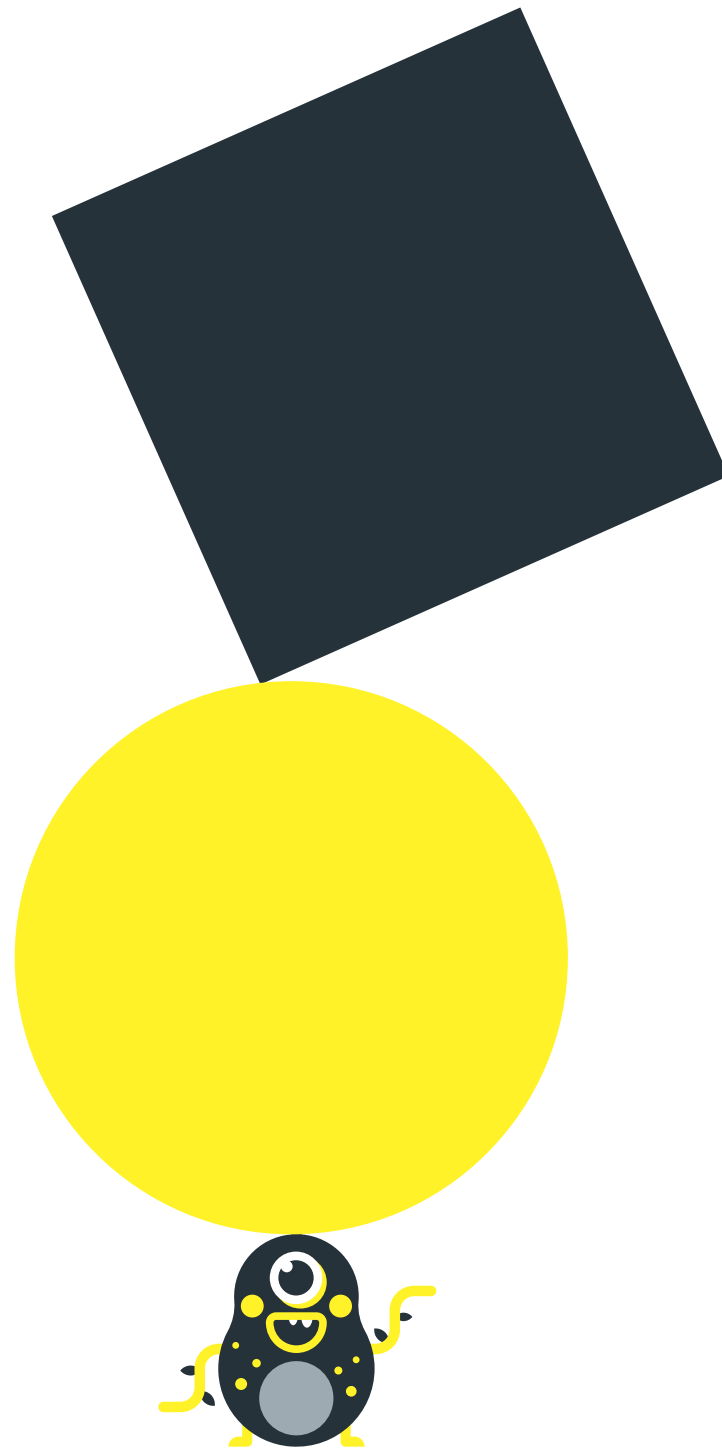


While the goal of PowerPoint is to help us communicate more effectively, it's time to

think outside the slide

for different ways to engage audiences. Imagine if the hours you once spent on formatting could be allocated for better developing your core point—and better ways to articulate it. Or if generic stock images were replaced with graphic choices that expertly convey your message to visual learners. Instead of merely reciting what's onscreen, **we must start connecting with audiences through storytelling, play, analog materials, and other kinds of slide-free interactivity.**

Collaborate with your Class



In most L&D settings, learners are treated like quotas rather than skilled contributors to their organization. Although the educator provides Sharpies and nametags to participants, she rarely learns their names—let alone draws upon their deep expertise during the training. Both the content and learning environment usually follow **a one-size-fits-all-approach with little consideration for the tenure, roles, or perspectives of the learners.**

Neuroscientific research indicates that people in interactive learning environments retain 27% of course material after 24 hours, compared to 2% of material in lecture-based environments.¹ Yet most corporate education programs deny participants a voice or a choice in how, what, or where they learn. The lecture model also discourages learners from asking critical questions in real time, which can thwart learner comprehension and prevent educators from getting an accurate read on how much participants actually understand.

Given how quickly humans forget information—64% after nine hours—we don't seem wired for learning through lectures.² **Educators' must reimagine their role as guides who help learners move through a process instead of monologuing figureheads.** We need to incorporate tools and technology that exist outside the L&D setting and put them to work for better learning outcomes. It's time to move away from the educator's ego and tune into the learners' voice.

¹ Sousa, Dr. David. *How the Brain Learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016.

² Ebbinghaus, Hermann. "A Contribution to Experimental Psychology." New York: Columbia University, 1985.

Be Relevant + Engaging

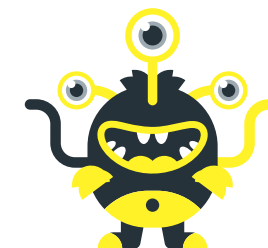
While educators invest countless hours preparing their lessons, a live audience decides in 30 seconds if the content is worthy of their attention.¹ The verdict often depends on whether the audience finds the first half-minute of your content relevant and engaging. Blame it on the Internet, **but today's audiences aren't impressed by deep knowledge unless it's accompanied by context and perspective.**

Lecturing is a centuries-old tradition that remains the default mode in much of corporate education. And while it's possible for people to learn via lecture, the relevancy of the content is the deciding factor. In fact, **research finds that most humans need a personal connection to new material to absorb it effectively.**² Relevance can be established by providing real-world examples of a skill or theory in action. Or by connecting the material to a local incident, current event, or social media trend. Whether the educator engages the audience emotionally or connects the new info with a previous lesson, effective learning in a class setting happens when the learner deems the content relevant to their career or personal life.

To make learning relevant and engaging for audiences, educators must be willing to set aside long-held assumptions about teaching. **This means reviewing your content with fresh eyes — and adapting it for maximum relevance to each unique audience.** It also means that educators need to constantly survey their audience for signs of confusion so they can clarify material in real-time. It means **embracing spontaneous class discussions where you may not know all the answers to the questions being asked.** Providing content that's relevant to your audience translates into the holy grail of learning outcomes: engagement, participation, and long-term retention.

¹ Diane M. Bunce*, Elizabeth A. Flens, and Kelly Y. Neiles. "How Long Can Students Pay Attention in Class? A Study of Student Attention Decline Using Clickers." *J. Chem. Educ.* 2010, 87, 12, 1438–1443. Oct. 22, 2010: The American Chemical Society and Division of Chemical Education, Inc. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/ed100409p?journalCode=jceda8>

² Bernard, Sara. "Science Shows Making Lessons Relevant Really Matters." Dec. 1, 2010: Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/neuroscience-brain-based-learning-relevance-improves-engagement>





Learn

Corporate education traditionally focuses on the individual learner rather than leveraging the collective brain power of a group session. Participants also tend to resist group learning: a likely result of teacher-centered conditioning and class projects where high-performing students complete a disproportionate amount of work. Despite these norms, the strongest knowledge recall is actually found in learners who put their insights to work immediately by sharing them with others (31%) vs. lecture-based learning (2%) or reading (4%).¹

Why is peer learning so much more effective? When people explain their ideas, opinions, and thoughts to others, they deepen their own understanding. In the process, their peers also gain knowledge. Additionally, peers often draw from common experiences and use an informal shorthand. They're also better at grasping how to apply the knowledge to their work environment than external educators. Furthermore, when participants learn together in small group settings, they're more likely to seek each other out and communicate post-session.²

Collectively



As a first step toward peer learning, educators must normalize small-group activity. Not only do participants—including introverts—report high engagement in small groups, peer learning and interaction increases in this setting.³ Missed a key point earlier? Ask your small group. Don't want to interrupt the larger group with a question? Nudge your peer. From organic networking and breaking down silos to greater engagement and knowledge retention, the benefits of peer learning are now outpacing the traditional top-down learning model.

¹ Sousa, Dr. David. *How the Brain Learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016.

² Bungler, Alicia C. and Lengnick-Hall, Rebecca. "Do Learning Collaboratives Strengthen Communication? A Comparison of Organizational Team Communication Networks Over Time." *Health Care Management Review*. Vol. 43, Issue 1, pp. 50-60. (Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer, 2018). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5311032/>

³ Hurst, Dr. Beth; Nixon, Dr. Sarah; and Wallace, Dr. Randall. "The Impact of Social Interaction on Student Learning." *Reading Horizons. A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*. Vol. 52, Issue 4, pps. 375-398. (Kalamazoo, MI: 2013) https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3105&context=reading_horizons

Show Up for Yourself (+Others)

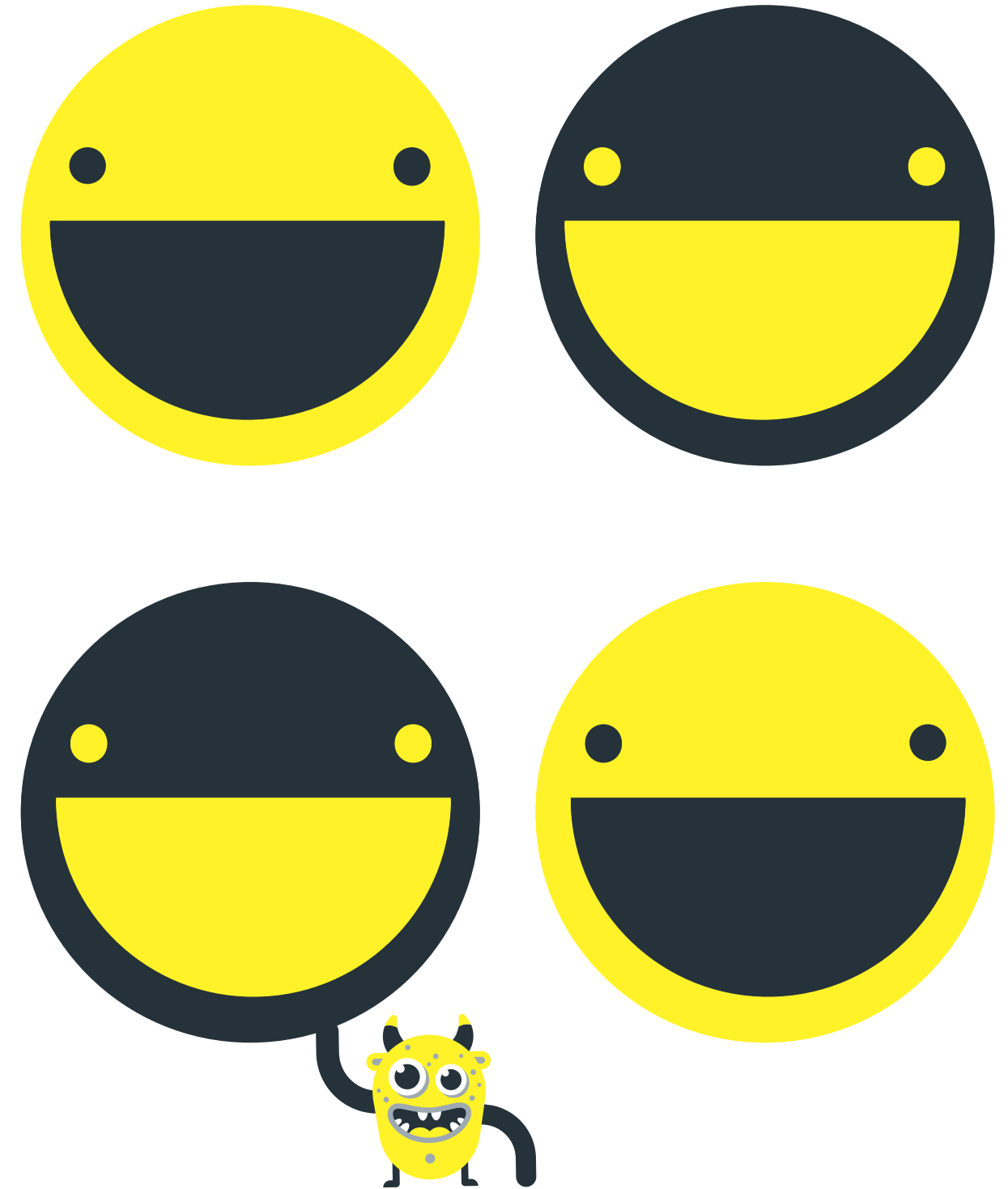
Sadly, most learners don't describe their **corporate education experiences** as valuable, rewarding, or enjoyable.¹ More likely, they're associated with **slide decks, classroom-style seating, and multi-tasking**. Even though each of us brings unique experiences, perspectives, and knowledge into these sessions, we're rarely asked to share these with the group. When learners do have a question, doubt or a lack of confidence can prevent them from speaking up. Also, no one wants to be the reason a session lasts one second longer than scheduled.

Given these conditions, it's no wonder why most learners tune out during training experiences. But it's a missed opportunity on a staggering scale. From the expense of hosting training events to lost productivity and the price of employee time, **L&D in America costs organizations upward of \$100B annually.**² That level of investment only makes financial sense if it translates into ROI. To achieve this, we must reinvent our approach **to corporate learning and redefine the mindset that we're expecting learners to show up with.**

For the best possible learning outcome, **learners need to be actively engaged for the entire session.** They must focus on finding the connections that will make the content relevant to their daily lives—not expect educators to serve it to them on a silver platter. And if something doesn't make sense, we owe it to ourselves to ask for clarification or explanation. Likewise, if you're a learner with expertise in a session topic, be willing to contribute your perspective to the dialogue. From interns to longtime employees, **it's time for all of us to show up for corporate education ready to think critically and learn actively.**

¹ Carney, Jason. "How to Bridge the Gap in Employee Training." Aug 7, 2018. TrainingIndustry.com. <https://trainingindustry.com/blog/content-development/how-to-bridge-the-gap-in-employee-training/>

² "Total Training Expenditures in the United States from 2012 to 2022." Nov. 12, 2022: Statista.com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788521/training-expenditures-unitedstates/#:~:text=Corporate%20training%20expenditure%20in%20the,mark%20for%20the%20first%20time.>



Don't Shame the Game

Ever entered a meeting space only to be told to wear a funny hat, given a card featuring an animal, or directed to join a human knot of your coworkers? Juvenile activities like these could be why people roll their eyes when asked to pair up or draw an idea. **Although L&D professionals may see these “icebreakers” as a way for employees to forge instant connections, trivial games don’t just insult our intelligence, they imply that our time isn’t valuable.** While facilitators are keenly focused on keeping people off their devices, participants can’t help resenting the hours of productivity they’re losing for the privilege of fiddling with Play-Doh during office hours.

When workplace learning is active and purposeful, however, learners are 28% more likely to retain info than in strictly passive settings.¹ To elevate activities for a higher purpose, educators must approach training from a gamingmechanics perspective by constantly considering how to get learners engaged and keep them engaged over time. According to the experts, it’s by gamifying skill-development.² More specifically, by consciously building elements of motivation, competition, practice, and application into your L&D programs.³

A game-thinking mindset requires educators **to think about how to present the content as relevant to employees and turn learning into a game-like experience.** Likewise, learners must be willing to set aside skepticism around activities that require their interaction and cooperation. As playing with purpose replaces today’s trivial games, learners will no longer cringe when asked to participate. Instead, they’ll come into sessions with positive experiences of learning activities that have rewarded them with deeper understanding, relevance, and skill development.

Distributed by Advantage Performance Group • www.advantageperformance.com
Contact us to bring the learning magic of Rob Cordova to your organization.

¹ Tokuhama-Espinosa, Tracey Noel. “The Scientifically Substantiated Art of Teaching.” Jan. 2008: Researchgate.net. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/36710537_The_Scientifically_Substantiated_Art_of_Teaching_A_study_in_the_development_of_standards_in_the_new_academic_field_of_neuroeducation_mind_brain_and_education_science

² Werbach, Kevin and Hunter, Dan. For the Win: The Power of Gamification and Game Thinking in Business, Education, Government, and Social Impact. Philadelphia, PA: Wharton School Press, 2020.

³ Ibid.

Advantage

We help organizations develop great people.



ROB CORDOVA CONSULTING

www.robcordova.com