

THE HILL-MODEL IN PRACTICE - High Impact Learning that Lasts:

TIPS AND GUIDELINES

WIBRAN DOCHY & FILIP DOCHY, 2018.

These tips and guidelines are building upon the High Impact Learning that Lasts (HILL) model.

Read more about the HILL model, so the ultimate goal of HILL and every building block is clear. This document then can support your implementation of the building blocks.

After an analysis of your training programme (with the HILL proof-tool), you can decide to work your way with your team to increase the impact of your programme through focussing at one or more HILL building blocks that are still not fully developed or lacking, or otherwise by focussing at one or more HILL building blocks that you want to strengthen as the core profile of your learning programme or module.

I recently visited an organisation that did strengthen all the modules of its core L&D programme, based on three HILL building blocks: increasing hybridity of all modules, implementing collaborative learning, and intensive coaching in the modules; and focussing at more action and knowledge sharing throughout the courses. In many of these modules, trainers planned clear sequences of online work and FtF meetings to increase hybridity, the FtF meeting largely consisted of authentic work in small teams with a high level of interaction and many occasions and events (also online) to share information within and across the teams. It looked like a small revolution for the learners, trainers and the organisation, but experiences with the new modules led to a lot of enthusiasm and high satisfaction.

We can derive several concrete guidelines for strengthening each specific HILL building block. Based upon the research findings we analysed and summarised as well as our own experiences in many programmes, we provide you in this chapter some support in translating the building blocks into real actions. Not to say that the tips below are exhaustive, they only want to serve as a source of inspiration that you can go through to check what actions do fit your organisation, or to come to other actions that are better suited to the culture of your teams.

Of course, creating impact will be largely facilitated by the context and the learning climate in the organisation.

For example, a shared vision on learning, the programme and the organisational strategy will surely foster the impact. Such a shared vision should be short, holds not more than 3 clear issues, can be expressed in one sentence, should be composed through many iterations of interaction between the different organisational levels, should then be repeated over and over again when spreading, and finally should be a core message in the organisation's learner marketing.

In our own research, we have seen (when analysing organisations' shared vision) too many organisations without a vision, or without a shared vision. I still remember that our interviewees came back from several organisations where the director or CEO told a nice cohesive story, meant to be the organisation's general vision, that did not coincide in any way with what was written on their website. Or even worse CEO's giving an explanation of the organisation's vision, that later on seemed to be contradictory to what their website said. Also, some managers tried to sell us their "shared vision", while employees admitted they had never heard about it or admitted that they know that "such things go always top-down here".

According to Senge, having a shared vision and people that master 'systems thinking' are really needed for an organisation to learn. Systems thinking means looking at the organisation from a distance, taking different perspectives and how this influences each other in order to understand the patterns beyond the problems faced. It helps you not to draw in quick and dirty solutions for daily problems. System thinking helps to define the L&D agenda on a long term, with a portfolio of learning activities aiming at dealing with upcoming challenges in a sustainable way.

Also, bringing the learning close to work, to authentic situations and to the real problem of the organisation that the learner himself can 'feel' definitely will enhance impact.

Mostly, a change in mindset and way of acting will be stimulated when we change our jargon. We advise organisations, training institutes, programmes, etc. to stop using classroom language such as 'teachers, lessons, or teaching', but to create a whole new vocabulary that clearly expresses the target of creating impact, such as 'knowledge creation labs, change labs, transformational labs, coaches, work sessions, just-in-time expert lectures, just-in-time webinars, HILL sessions, discussion meetings, wrap-up sessions, knowledge sharing meetings, basic knowledge trainings, act & perform sessions, pitch and present meetings, etc.

Before we present some tips and guidelines, we like to stress that the HILL model is based on research mostly performed in Western countries, meaning that some of the building blocks will not match straight with Asian, African or American cultures. This implies that for non-Western organisations as well as organisations working with employees with non-Western backgrounds, a careful reflection on how the proposed building blocks are experienced by their employees is necessary.

Urgency, gap, problem

This first building block can be described as a clearly argued problem, an experienced challenge, a gap or problem that creates a sense of urgency for an individual or a group. This sense of urgency is an ideal starting point for a learning process.

While the other building blocks of the HILL model concern the learning process itself, we take off by asking ourselves where it all starts. Why would anyone learn something? What can - or should - be the starting point of a learning process that results in - or rather induces - high impact learning that lasts (HILL)?

Any learning process that aims to strengthen the potential to HILL, in our opinion has to start from a clearly substantiated problem, an experienced challenge, or an item that creates a certain sense of *urgency*. Such a sense of urgency can originate from an explicit experience that a certain problem needs to be solved urgently (e.g. a nurse encountering a certain logistic problem over and over again), from strong argumentation (e.g. a written argumentation sent to you by a client), from the power of persuasion from a problem owner (e.g. a client requesting consultancy), or from a feeling of strong interest in a certain phenomenon (e.g. an employee highly interested in the phenomenon of 'supply chain management').

Triggers such as these push a learner to step into a learning situation with maximal commitment and intrinsic motivation. This 'state of flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1979) arises when there is an optimal balance between the task requirements for the learner, and his/her previously acquired competences. When the task is a routine task or frequently occurring problem, the potential that a state of flow will establish will be low. Such a routine problem can probably be solved on autopilot. For the

learner, it would be a quick fix, and on to the next issue. There would be no reason to reach high impact learning. However, the case where the level of competence of the learner is highly insufficient to tackle the problem or challenge is also not a rich environment that would stimulate commitment and intrinsic motivation within the learner. In other words: when a supervisor aims to stimulate an employee to invest in learning, s/he has to take into account this balance. When new roles or tasks need to be taken up, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to carefully consider which employees might be suitable, given their current competence profile, and which support they need to further develop the competences needed.

From theories on motivation, interest and learning processes, we know that motivation and interest are strong drivers for efficient learning processes. Interest and motivation can be seen as necessary but insufficient conditions to lead to impact. *Insufficient*, because learning progress is influenced by a combination of the learner, the coaching, and other contextual factors. *Necessary*, because without motivation a learning process wouldn't last or even start. Reading things just-in-time, being able to immediately spot the added value of the things you learned, having the opportunity to frequently apply what you learned in a project or daily activities, etc. are necessary triggers that spur the learner. Starting from an experienced mismatch between the learner's competences and the expectations or requirements of a task, creates a sense of urgency that can motivate the learner to go the extra mile and invest more energy in his/her own learning or developmental process.

Getting the chance to express your expectations and to make your own interests or dreams concrete, and having the possibilities to try to fulfil your interests or to pursue your dreams within a learning programme gives you the ultimate drive to go all the way.

I remember meeting by accident a group of my own students in a café in Leuven late at night, all of them highly involved in a hot discussion. When I enquired what they were discussing about, they frankly replied “the company’s problem that we ran into in our project”, referring to the learning project that we discussed that day. It seemed their enthusiasm and involvement had become so that they even discussed the issues in their free time. What more could I wish. In the next meeting, they came up with several alternative problem solutions to study further.

In short problems, challenges or gaps are the trigger for an employee to participate in an L&D programme. Urgency is the motivational lever for the learner to fully take advantage of the other building blocks creating a powerful learning environment. Therefore, problems, challenges and gaps the employee experiences should be the basis of each training activity.

How to create urgency?

Working with problems, cases, or projects are well-known methods to increase the authenticity and attractiveness of a learning situation, which often results in a higher sense of learning that can in turn lead to experiencing learning as pleasant.

Stimulating or creating a sense of urgency at all levels of training is highly complicated. Earlier, we argued that a clear experience, strong argumentation, or the power of persuasion from the problem owner can contribute to this sense of urgency, but a strong interest in a phenomenon can already suffice. Sometimes, working in teams and formulating shared goals can clarify the urgency to the learner(s). Also making sure that the problem owner is close, increases urgency (either the learner himself is the problem owner – he wants to solve a specific problem, or a client’s problem; or he can choose his own interest as a starting base

for tackling a problem; or otherwise the problem owner is cooperating in the learning project).

Tips for creating urgency

We have organised the tips to create urgency in seven groups: fuelling curiosity and energy, an authentic problem as a trigger, closing the gap, setting goals, facilitate, make relevance of investing in learning explicit, experience and feedback

Fuelling curiosity and energy

- Curiosity is empowering a person to learn, it is the basis of learning: fuel the learner's curiosity by triggering why-questions, by being curious yourself as a coach. If you are not a curious person, you are not a learner (David Fox)
- Answer question with questions; do not play immediately the expert that knows all answers, it might kill curiosity
- Start of yourself as trainer with energy and transferring energy to the learners
- Make learning an energising activity, energy helps to create flow
- Start from personal interests of learners or at least connect to it
-

An authentic problem as a trigger

- Start from a problem, as authentic as possible: Take time to brainstorm on and discuss the problem with the learner in order to trigger curiosity to understand and solve the problem, to create ownership

- Make the authenticity of the problem explicit from the start of the learning journey for example by inviting a third party (client, organisation, stakeholder, club,...) to formulate and describe the project assignment.
- Use highly actual problems or challenges they will face in the future and that have been on the agenda in team meetings
- Embed the problem in a real-life case.
- Organise an immersion day: immerse learners into real cases
- Take time to brainstorm, to create mindmaps, to unravel a problem or a clients initial question
- Work with authentic material, real information from the professional field instead of for training purposes adapted or designed information.
- Go outside: look around and visit reality.
- Involve the problem owner, (s)he's the one that gets confronted with the problem daily.
- Invited speakers /experts that have tackled comparable problems
- Let the learner/employee figure out how the problem could be solved, and facilitate the search process (without giving away the solution).

Closing the gap

- Let employees themselves reflect on a competences or knowledge and skills needed, for example by involving employees in strategic discussions on future of the organisation or unit. This helps the employee to foresee the new roles and tasks to be fulfilled in the future and opens the discussion about what is needed in terms of competences. This analysis of competences needed is the stepping stone towards collaboratively defining the gaps in competences and the support needed to close the gap
Invest time in letting the employee explain how (s)he perceives the gap.

Setting goals

- Ask learners to think about “where am I now” and “where do I have to go to”. Coach the learner towards formulating his own learning question(s); this is intensive, but it pays back
- Let learners describe themselves what is challenging to them.
- Ask the learning to make his burning ambition explicit
- Formulate goals both on the individual and team level: what are we aiming at, what is at the horizon we want to reach? Ask learners to describe their ambitions, what their interest is, what their future plans are, let them describe their own goals, discuss and state their individual and team goals
- When you set goals, take into account that learners are not blank sheets. They have a lot of very relevant experiences and in many cases a rich knowledge and skills base. Let learners bring up this richness of experiences, and prior knowledge, leave space and time for doing that and use it as a lever for formulating goals in terms of the next steps in their learning and development process
- Expectation management: Check and discuss the expectations of the learners at the start and during a learning trajectory
-

Facilitate

- Negotiate on more time and space for the learner’s own development; make it part of the organisation’s brand box
- Avoid an assessment-systems or set of tests that kill ‘personal urgency’

- Make sure the learner has a complete picture of the whole process, if bits and pieces for this have to be learned; seeing and knowing the end-product is crucial.

Make the relevance of investing in learning explicit

- Discuss why an organisation invests so much in this learning trajectory
- Demonstrate a raise in efficiency that learners will be able to reach when they master the content/method/application
- Provide arguments that show that learners can speed up their career
- Provide evidence that what will be learned is key to what will be needed or done
- Let learners ask themselves: What's in it for me? And use this as a starting point
- Perform a needs assessment with the learners
- Use a 360° feedback report as a starting point

Experience and feedback

- Give learners when needed eventually a “practice shock” - let them perform in practice even if you know they will fail in order to learn from failures (if accountable)
- Use feedback of supervisors, managers, or clients
- Fuel the feeling of urgency through a regular feedback dialogue with the learners
- Discuss mistakes, incorrect solutions; analyse the process and discuss the approach

Learner agency

This second building block, learner agency, focuses on ownership of the learner over his/her own learning.

Every professional or individual is a manager: a manager of his/her own thinking, acting and functioning. Learner agency originates when a learner takes learning into his/her own hands. As such, learner agency is a *mindset or attitude* to adopt and to develop: day after day, the learner chooses to take up responsibility and ownership for his/her own learning and professional conduct. From this view, learning should not be regarded as something that is 'achieved' after following an L&D program or educational program. Instead, learning is something you need to keep thinking of and working on every day of your professional and personal life.

Learner agency enables a learner to (keep on) grow(ing). Not only within his/her organisation, job or function, but also in general functioning. It's those people who take their lives into their own hands that achieve what no-one thought possible. Steve Jobs, for example, wanted in his companies Apple or NeXT only creative employees that were willing to take on challenges, with a learner mindset.

A strong reflective attitude is an inseparable part of a self-managing learner that takes up agency. Reflection is the ability to explicitly look back on and think about your own actions (Schön, 1983). One can reflect on two general moments: after action, or in action. Reflection-on-action takes place after the actual action: after completion, you look back on how you did, how it went etc. Reflection-in-action occurs when you actively reflect while acting, which makes it possible to make adjustments on the way. Both reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action are important, but the latter is harder to accomplish. It requires a higher level of self-awareness and ownership. Professional activities contain dynamic, complex and

diverse social interactions that have a significant impact on our functioning. It is important to keep an eye on these components, so that you can adjust where things go wrong. This holds for a trainer, but also for the structural engineer who has to take into account the client's wishes and expectations, the possibilities of his team and the building site, and the town planning determined by the city. The consequence of this multiplicity of factors to take into account is that hardly anything ever goes as you planned it. Being flexible, and being able to reflect will enable you to make adjustments: as a professional or a learner, you can adjust your own actions (or vision, attitude), you can stimulate your environment to start acting differently, and you see (other) opportunities to reach your goals.

The flexibility to deal with unexpected problems, the guts to try a different approach, and the openness for alternatives make that learner agency is a strong pillar for High Impact Learning.

How to create learner agency?

A High Impact Learning environment allows for a high amount of 'learner agency': it is not a trainer, a LMS or a teacher that determines and structures everything on beforehand; instead it is the learner him- or herself that has an increasing influence on what he/she does and learns, and how. The learner crafts his own learning and development trajectory. Agency emerges when the learner takes the next move: he or she takes initiative, acts on and decides about his/her learning process. Agency implies that learners are able to estimate the consequences of their choices, and accept these consequences.

In other words, agency is taking up responsibility for your own choices, the actions you perform, and the consequences for yourself and your environment.

Tips to create learner agency.

We have organised the tips to create learner agency in four groups: goal setting, openness for alternatives, support and room for own choices.

Goal setting

- Let learners formulate individual and/or team goals
- Make learners rethink halfway their own learning goals and adapt these

Openness for alternatives

- Allow flexibility in (pathways to) solutions
- Stimulate finding original paths to solutions
-
-

Support

- Make use of a PDP (personal development plan) or LDP (Leadership Development Plan)
- Providing an oversupply of trainings in a catalogue does not enhance learner agency
- Use mid-period reviews as a coaching moment
- Allow room for and stimulate reflection (How did we do? Was it efficient? Can we do this better/differently? Why? How will we do this next time?)
- Give adequate feedback, both on a task-level and on a process-level
- Next to critical feedback, also provide constructive feedback
- Provide always an overbalance of constructive feedback compared to critics
- Trust the learner
- Make sure you know the learner: remember his/her name to start with

- Build a culture where failing and making mistakes is allowed. Start with yourself: show that you see your mistakes, and demonstrate how you learn from them
- Lead by example - share 'failure stories' - manage reactions on others' mistakes
- Use a portfolio as a tool for guidance
- Make sure you build a Learning Culture: It's okay to make mistakes and learn from them
- Provide learners ways to excel in electives (e.g. different levels)
- Organise opportunities for learners to present their achievements to peers
- Provide variation to choose from in online learning paths (video, instruction, text, assignment; or any other path)
- Provide more open course programmes
- Integrate virtual action learning (VAL)
- Think how you can make learners owner of what they will do/learn; discuss this with them.
- Let learner produce their own product
- Open schooling: let learners choose and prove their competence through argumentation and documentation instead of organising Pass/fail tests. This provides space to take ownership, while traditional testing usually hinders ownership
- Give employees 'training & development' opportunities instead of a financial end of year bonus
- Use flipped classrooms that learners can plan as they want and FtF meetings at prescheduled times

Room for own choices

- Give learners opportunities to choose to develop their own talents, interests, ...
- Give learners the responsibility to manage their own project
- Let learners select their own peer-learners that join their project team
- Let learners choose goals
- Give voice and choice!!
- Gradually allow for more choices, and ask learners to respect the consequences of their choice(s)
- Learner agency is about choices one has within a learning programme: give learners room for determining which learning activities and approaches to undertake, multiple pathways to follow.

Collaboration and coaching

There is substantial scientific evidence that collaborative learning is effective and therefore should be central in learning programmes. There are surely many different forms in which collaborative learning is taking place in a variety of ways such as cooperative learning, case based learning, project based learning, problem based learning, buddy systems, etc. Variation is crucial in learning, so we believe that diverse collaborative forms of working and learning should hold at least 1/3 of programme and not exceed 2/3.

Tips to create collaboration

We organise the tips to create collaboration in two groups: implement collaborative learning, support learning through collaboration.

Implement collaborative learning

- Implement teamwork as an opportunity for employees to learn from each other
- When the work is not organised in teams, facilitate and stimulate small group work to deal with certain questions or tasks. It creates an opportunity to learn from colleagues. Implement different types of working in small groups, from dyads, triads to teams up to 7 team members
- Organise a worldcafe
- Use a speeddating session to introduce learners to each other
- Organise the work in projects

- Projects for external clients increase the stake of the outcome to be delivered and therefore stimulate to make optimal use of the expertise of all team members
- Use (interprofessional) communities of practice
- Organise workplace learning in interprofessional teams
- Let learners choose buddies
- Integrate facebook groups and discussion fora in the process
- Implement workplace learning and internships in dyads
- Create enough variation in collaborative methods used.

Support learning through collaboration

- Use coaching at the right time to turn the collaboration into a learning opportunity
- Try to create open, clear and honest communication
- Try to create dialogues
- 'Just-in-time' reflection and intervision about the creating professional products
- Give constructive feedback
- Listen and do not judge. Again: when asked give constructive feedback
- Increase motivation by handing out increasing responsibilities.

Coaching

There are many types of coaching. Here, we focus at individual coaching for a safe climate, and team coaching. According to Barendsen and Dochy (2017), team coaching contributes to team effectiveness and team innovativeness. It also can overcome well-known pitfalls and it increases the perceived efficiency and team

climate. Team coaching can have an increased impact on the level of change and development within organisations due to its systemic approach, but certainly the group dynamics, the developmental level of the team and the team's commitment during the coaching process do play also an important role. A crucial aspect of coaching is the feedback dialogue between the learner and the coach. Therefore, in addition to tips to coach for a safe climate and tips to coach a team, we formulate some tips for the feedback dialogue.

Tips to coach

Tips to coach for a safe climate

- Coaches know all learners by name
- Coaches speak aloud about the talents of learners and their trust in high quality
- Coaches speak out about individual qualities and rewards
- Do model that you are a curious, excited person about learning; that you are curious to learn new things (David Fox)
- Set up learning environments where people see how much reward there is in being a curious person (Dave Fox)
- Set high expectations

Tips to coach a team

- Stimulate team communication
- Provide feedback on occurring team interaction processes
- support the team to enhance the quality of their interactions

- Create an open and trusting atmosphere and safety to share ideas and learn from each other
- Focus at building shared commitment
- Set clear expectations concerning team outputs
- Encourage collaborative efforts
- Stimulate team consensus on procedures and team goals
- Provide encouragement and feedback
- Provide insight into the team's way of working and identify areas of improvement
- Encourage desirable performance behaviours
- Give recognition and celebrate small successes
- Intensify interpersonal relationships
- Address conflicts openly and equip team members with conflict management skills for the future
- Empower members by delegating tasks
- Steer towards dividing responsibilities among team members
- Encourage team members to give others the opportunity to experiment and work out problems on their own, instead of immediately providing solutions
- Stimulate and encourage teams to coach themselves
- Preferably, your coaching should be voluntary where both coach and coachee perceive mutual benefits of engaging in the coaching process
- Stop, look back, think and plan forward
- Help thinking about a coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources
- Monitor and scaffold not only the cognitive process of dealing with the task, but also the process of dealing with group processes

- Stimulate and challenge learners to critically question their thinking in order to further extent, modify or deepen their understanding
- Stimulate team members to act as a team
- Stimulate a shared commitment to the team and its task
- Stimulate the team to critically reflect on the alignment of strategies and procedures used
- Monitor and stimulate the contribution of each team member in order to make optimally use of the different expertise available
- Stimulate that team members critically question and argue on each other's contributions
- Make sure team members feel is safe to speak up, to not agree, and to discuss divergent ideas. Take actions to increase safe feelings such as e.g. Spending some time for informal activities so members learn to know each other from another perspective.
- Ask your team members after some weeks to reflect individually on the golden principles for successful team collaboration (that they come up with themselves): To what extent is the team working according to these 'principles'? Are all principles relevant? What critical events happened that might have caused negative tension in the team? How did you deal with it as a team? What positive flow did you experience as a team? What evoked this? To what extent do you feel your team reflects on the team cooperation during the project work? Discuss this in the team. And decide eventually to reformulate the golden principles.
- Focus on the strengths of peers
- Dialogue on outcomes
- Support reflection and self-evaluation
- Dialogue for inquiry and feedback
- Give the feedback a developmental and not an evaluative purpose.

- Remember 'situated coaching': coaching behaviours can be more or less suitable depending on the team context and progression of the team.

"But where do we get the time for a feedback dialogue?"

- Implement a system of peer-feedback
- Organise the feedback dialogue on the group level; focussing on patterns observed in the work done and stimulating peers to learn from each other
- Individual feedback dialogue is just walking and talking - during meetings, learners should work constantly, coaches should walk and talk (= constantly questioning, engaging, motivating, challenging = providing feedback)
- Ask for self-study on beforehand, so that your hours of contact time can focus on 'digging deeper', on action.
- Plan your feedback dialogue
- View feedback dialogue as a part of the learning process
- Put the responsibility with the learners
- Make a more strict selection of relevant goals to go for; go for quality in learning instead of quantity. Less content is more time for feedback

Hybrid learning

All learning is a mix of different methods and formats nowadays, so all learning is blended. With this building block, we stress the importance of hybrid learning to create impact, **a well-thought mix between online and offline**. In short, a sequence of activities that follow an “online/FtF/ online/FtF/ online/FtF/ online/FtF/...” sequence with well thought frequency and duration adapted to the context, domain, level of learners, etc.

‘Online’ means:

- video or web conferencing and chats
- searching information on the web
- using youtube

‘Offline’ means:

- face to face work meetings
- studying materials on your own

Tips to enhance hybrid learning

We have organised the tips to enhance hybridity in two categories: tips to design hybridity and tips to support hybrid learning.

- **Design**
- - Create hybridity in learning modules, a sequence of activities that follow a “online/FtF/ online/FtF/ online/FtF/ online/FtF/...” sequence with well thought frequency and duration

- Think about alternative ways of hybrid learning such as the use of discussion for a, the use of social media etc. in addition to the traditional way of making learning objects online available
 - Start hybrid learning trajectories always with a FtF meeting
 - Invest in time for someone to keep the discussion board going
 - -'Variation is the key of learning'
 - Vary in FtF activities: discussion, interaction, collab work, presenting, inspiration sessions, storytelling sessions, ...
 - Keep on alternating online learning (chatrooms; video's; shared work on assignments; e-content; webinars, games, ...) , and offline learning (FtF sharing, discussion, just-in-time lectures, mini-panels, etc.)
-

Support

- Stimulate learners to create and post their own youtube video based on your assignments
- Stimulate interaction and collaboration among learners, online as well as offline
- Stimulate reflection as a useful step in defining the next steps in the learning trajectory
- Support learners in making argued choices on how to go through the online learning offers, to craft their own learning trajectory
- Make explicit to the learner the purpose of the offline and online activities and why the hybridity is designed as it is.
- Ask feedback to the learners about the hybridity
- Check the learners' computer self-efficacy. If it is low, support the learner in getting to know how to use the online learning

opportunities and to develop confidence in his or her online learning abilities.

Action and knowledge sharing

In training, workplace learning and classes, learners cannot be active enough.

Learners should be most of the time busy exploring, experimenting, testing, (re-)formulating hypotheses, evaluating hypotheses, making errors and learn from it, planning, reflecting and monitoring. (Michael, 2006). Active learning and

knowledge sharing should go hand in hand: learning should become a process of linking practice to concepts through different iterations that is created and further deepened through discussions and/or collaboration.

Organisations could use their L&D programme to translate their strategic policy towards their employees. Sharing is a key in a good, acceptable and powerful translation.

Tips for enhancing action and knowledge sharing

We have formulated tips on how to realise an infrastructure for action and knowledge sharing and how to support and facilitate

Infrastructure for action and knowledge sharing

- Practice 'Learning by doing' by implementing debriefing sessions, time-out sessions during work, to shortly reflect on the work done and check if improvements are needed.
- Implement a variety of active learning methods: problem-based learning, case-based learning, cooperative/collaborative learning/team work; think-pair-share or peer instruction; inquiry-based learning; discovery learning and technology-enhanced learning, etc.
- -Increase diversity (in age and expertise, background) in teams according to the differences in expertise needed to get the work done.

- Coach diversity in order to make it an asset: start with individual reflections, follow up with 'small group discussions' and end with 'whole group agreement' (P. Rosseel)
- -In a face-to-face setting use round tables, don't work as a teacher in front of a class
- If your training or programme runs with multiple teams of learners, try to align your working rooms and facilities with HILL: permanent working rooms for teams and communities
- Create a workbox series (share and document best evidence)
- -Ask learners to share best evidence or cases on the learning platform
- Encourage snack learning by sharing: share daily your event
- Connect communities to practice
- Do people talk to each other?
- Use smaller working rooms for teams that can be reserved for teamwork only
- Implement intervision meetings
- Provide a platform to exchange experiences and information

Facilitate and support

- Stimulate peer-discussion, interaction in teams
- Stimulate sharing information in all possible ways (FtF, platforms, apps, etc.) by showing the example (walk the talk)
- When using an LMS, it should strongly support sharing of know how, of work in progress and of products between learners and learner and coaches. (Blackboard and clones of blackboard are usually weak in this)
- Encourage a climate of respect for each others' findings/input

Flexibility - formal and informal learning

As learners, we can learn in classrooms, but many things we learn outside of formally structured and planned situations. We learn at work from problems, from errors, from questions, through changes, critical incidents, challenges, etc. in the authentic situation itself and this sometimes adds to future performance improvement. Using more informal learning can only be enhanced through installing as much and as well as possible the optimal conditions for informal learning to appear. If learners never meet each other, chances for informal learning will decrease. If learners work together in the same room for a considerable amount of time during a week, informal learning is highly likely to appear. Although the 70/20/10 model has not any scientific grounding, the application of it in many organisations has already stimulated the use of workplace learning and sometimes of informal learning as well.

Tips for enhancing flexibility:

Facilitate-

- Dare to deviate from the training manual to open the room for the learner to craft his own learning path
- -Leave room in the training program for casual learning moments
- -Discuss mistakes as powerful opportunities to learn
- -Use discussion moments and the network in the organisation
- -Stimulate learners to formulate their own goals
- -Brainstorm
- -Be an example of a flexible learner who sees learning opportunities everywhere

- Avoid traditional lecture rooms with fixed seats as ' the place where learning happens'
- Let learners influence the content to be learned, the relevance of it and how they will go about it
- Provide multiple opportunities to learn. Are there ways to access and share information? Do learners have time and space to connect to others and collaborate?
- Recognise, reward and approve learning behaviour explicitly (by supervisors as well as colleagues)
- Do promote team work
- Let your learners build networks and support and encourage that
- Involve learners in task forces to experience critical incidents, challenges, etc.
- Let learners encounter challenging tasks
- Remember that experiencing a high workload enhances informal learning
- Remember also that a high workload combined with a feeling of not being under control with respect to tasks and timing, will result in less investment in learning
- Create structural opportunities for communication, interaction, and cooperation
- Organise regular meeting where units can meet and consult each other;
- Use trade union meetings as learning opportunities for the participants,
- Share internal job openings
- Stimulate job rotation
- Organise common breaks
- Plan how to onboard new employees;

- Think about the architecture of the workplace in terms of proximity and therefore easy accessibility of colleagues
- Enhance participation in internal and external networks.
- Plan meetings with external colleagues and visits to other organisations
- Invite guest speakers
- Organise communities of practice with external partners
- Create opportunities for feedback and reflection
- Use pdp's (personal development plans);
- Implement a buddy system or godfather/godmother system
- Introduce internships so new ideas flow into the organisation which trigger employees to reflect
- Increase the access to information and databases or systems
- Promote having an idea box

Build a learning climate

- Install a climate of trust and warmth among colleagues and supervisors
- Strive for psychological safety when talking about learning
- Make sure people trust their coworkers/managers enough to firmly state their opinions without repercussion
- Install room for making mistakes, sharing them as a first step to reflect on them and learn from them
- Stimulate critical questioning
- Give your people time to learn and reward the use of it
- Do allow and trust people to take responsibility in decision making processes
- Install learning leadership
- Let leaders facilitating learning behaviour

- Let learning leaders promoting innovation and risk taking
- Share and discuss the results of innovation and risk taking
- -Ask leaders to be an example of learning while working
- Ask leaders to share critical learning experiences
- Do create time for analysis and reflection?
- Do provide constructive feedback on a regular basis
- Do appreciate and support of efforts to learn
- Do provide feedback and rewards for proficiency
- Do stimulate and reward learner agency

Assessment-as-Learning

Some programmes do not need any assessment, since no certificates are given. These can surely use assessment as an instrument for learning (assessment for learning). Other programmes do assess for a certain qualification. In such programmes, there is a risk that assessment does become the sole focus of the learner and then turns all motivation into pure extrinsic motivation. When we were inquiring professional training programmes in schools, we hear too many students saying "I only learn when the exam is tomorrow" - a terrifying example of clear extrinsic motivation and no flow in learning. No wonder that impact is limited. That is not what we want, nor is it an ideal situation.

Many researchers have warned for the devastating effect of assessment on learning processes, but turning around such a culture can only be done in a process of a drastic turnaround.

Assessment as Learning means that

- assessment is as much situated as the learning
- assessment can be done by the community / peers / trainers
- assessment of group learning is as important as the learning of the individual.
- 'In vivo' studies / 'live' projects of complex problem solving offer a richness on information on how a learner is progressing and what his current level of proficiency is.

There are also ways to combine 2G and 3G assessments such as for example 2-stage assessments: learners perform the assessment individually first, turn their answers in, and then repeat the assessment in teams. Learners get timely feedback

from each other and learn from the assessment via discussion and argumentation with peers. Team results are usually better.

When learners create their own portfolio in order to prove mastery over several competences, it is usually this portfolio evidence that is the starting point for a portfolio assessment dialogue. Of course it is helpful or indispensable for assessors that the learner does add a reflection paper to the portfolio, providing arguments that underpin the selection of certain evidence for the different specific competences. Our experiences have learned that portfolio's or Personal Development Plan can work excellent, but a minimum of structuring and guidelines should be given to the learner (and also certainly not too many structure and detailed guidelines or even prescriptions).

Also assignments worked on during the learning trajectory are relevant sources of information track progress in learning. In all of these, exercising 'agency' in the use of your resources or tools that offer valid information on your progress as a learner, is a key issue in the assessment.

Tips for increasing 'Assessment as Learning':

How to make assessment a learning experience?

- Enhance a strong integration of learning and assessment: learning is a process of continuously updating your competence (knowledge and skills) base with the assessment of where you are and how you proceed as important levers for the next step to take.
- Pay attention to the process of learning and not only to the outcomes; the input for improvement lies in both.
- A focus for learning is described by the destination for the learners' journey and precise learning objectives are not tightly pre-specified.

- Aim for an appropriate combination and planning of assessment methods and -moments

How to collect information that fuels the learning process?

- Given learning is an individual as well as collaborative experience, use group assessments as well as individual assessments
- Use self-, peer-, or co-assessment
- Use entry-assessment as a starting point to match expectations: dialogue is an important tool to make clear what the starting point is for learning, on which fundament of competences (knowledge and skills) the learner can build
- Stress inhibits learning: introducing high stake tests have been proven to induce stress which hinders the learner to perform optimally
- Reduce testing drastically
- Use the data available of what learners do during the learning process as an input for the feedback dialogue with the learner (portfolio's; PDP's)
 - Stimulate learners to pro-actively seek for the feedback they need; support the learners in developing an attitude of feedback seeking
 - Make asking and giving feedback an attitude: feedup ((where are you going to?), feedback (how does it go?), feedforward (how will you proceed?))
 - Increase peer-assessments, in order to attain a natural habit to learn from each other and to show interest for others' work
 - Let learners discuss about how to operationalise the evaluation criteria for peer assessment
 - Avoid formative or diagnostic ' tests' ; they are usually summative; instead, provide constructive feedback constantly during meetings

- Use Portfolio assessments
- Introduce competence logs
- If you have good arguments for administering a summative test, introduce a two-stage assessments (first an individual assignment; to hand in; then resolve that same assignment in team; and hand in)
- Use products as input for assessment
- Determine criteria in interaction with learners
- Use self-assessment
- Use 180° feedback as a tool
- Use 360° feedback as a tool for learning and assessment
- Implement 3G assessment: how well exercise people 'agency' in their use of the resources or tools available to them to formulate problems, work productively and evaluate their efforts
- Ask learners to document their feedback they received (to monitor progress)
- 'In vivo' studies / 'live' projects of complex problem solving offer ample information on how the learner is doing
- Audio and video recordings are useful tools to provide information on the progress of the learner

Other issues to think about:

Evaluation needs to be more holistic

- AAL based on ongoing performances or 'exit' exhibitions;
- Learners work across disciplines
- Learners or instructors both can devise a task,
- Learners practise using accumulated knowledge and apply it to new situations;
- Learners engage in effective communication in oral, written and graphic forms;

- Reflections of learners are taking into account;