



Spotlight on Melanie

Head of L&D at Dixons Carphone

How long have you worked in Learning & Development?

More than 15 years.

In your career in L&D, what has been your best or most memorable experience and why?

Completing my CIPD Advanced Level 7 in HRD... and upgrading to Fellow. It felt like a real recognition of the work and skills I have built up over the years.

What was your most challenging training situation and why?

Delivering a training session for 100 people, which was supposed to have physical handouts that people could use alongside the workshop and nothing arriving – or those that were delivered were incorrect/partially complete – it was a case of thinking on our feet, piecing together some of the incomplete documents to help build one or two using photos to help people visualise the content... using creativity to think through how we could apply the learning without the tools for the job, building teamwork and having people collaborate to use the limited resources together... it actually worked out quite well in the end and also encouraged us to shift towards digital content and a different way of working!

Best (or most unusual) training environment you've ever trained in and why?

When delivering some Customer Experience training for our leadership teams, we were lucky enough to deliver the sessions in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in London – it was such a great opportunity to see Customer Service at its best and truly reflect on how Service Excellence makes a significant difference to the end user – phenomenal service throughout the day and topped off by an experience at the Goring Hotel where they provided us with personalised treats based on what our leaders knew about us.

How do you stay up to date with what's going on in L&D?

I use Twitter and LinkedIn as really quick and easy ways to keep in touch with trends and discussion topics on a daily basis and then use benchmarking/networking groups to help maintain my network, sense check my thinking, learn from others and evolve my plans.



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What's the best advice or recommendation you could give to a new trainer?

- Take time to keep yourself connected to the outside world, it's so very easy to get caught up in the immediate activity that's happening in your organisation and not use best practice from outside.
- Be yourself – whilst it's great to look at others and learn from what they do (what you like that they do and what they do that you don't like) always remember that authenticity is key.
- Do your prep and then make it your own! (Prepare, prepare, prepare...)
- Step out of your comfort zone... if you want to progress in your career think about a growth mindset, how you can challenge yourself to try new things etc.

What do you think the future of L&D looks like?

Ever evolving, I think there are new skills that we need within the L&D organisation (project management, stakeholder management/influencing, collaboration, data analysis etc), but ultimately the way we learn doesn't change... one 'shot in the arm' won't create learning, so we need to focus on performance support and ensuring that all those skills that we provide learners are embedded through 'on the job' support and coaching and contextualising the content.

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In your opinion, how can L&D teams be more strategically aligned to business priorities?

It is essential that we spend time with the business – getting to know the Exec/SLT and their motivations and plans, spend time on the floor with the colleagues to understand their challenges and day to day activities, connect with front line managers and establish routes into their 'business as usual' so that learning can really connect to their existing processes and plans. Ensure that all learning plans have clear scope with objectives and outputs/results expected – this will not only ensure that we are aligned but will ensure the business continues to ask us to support them with their objectives and goals moving forwards.

...And lastly, what would you attempt to do, if you knew you could not fail?

I'm not often afraid of failure, I believe even when you fail you learn and grow and therefore I usually take a chance on things... but I'd probably push myself harder on my favourite pastimes... maybe try a marathon instead of sticking to 5k or 10k or perhaps try a downhill slalom instead of skiing carefully and sensibly!



Trainer
Secrets