



Spotlight on Peter Meredith

Interim Head of L&D, Morrisons

How long have you worked in Learning & Development?

I've worked in Learning & Development for 22 years across a variety of different sectors including telecommunications, finance, automotive and retail. Some of the worldwide recognised brands I've worked for include Virgin Media, Lloyds Banking Group, M&S, Coca-Cola and most recently Morrisons as a Senior Retail L&D Manager.

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

Tough question to pick just one. Would probably have to be winning a National Sales Trainer of the year award in 2002 as I was relatively new to the world of training and this gave me the confidence and self-belief that I was making a real difference to the people I was training.

What was your most challenging training situation and why?

Whilst working for M&S I took on a new challenge as I wanted to do something different and agreed to lead the L&D workstream for delivering an IT project to upgrade the PeopleSoft platform and to roll out a new People System (employees could access their salaries online, complete training online etc). This project was a challenge from start to finish as the timescales kept changing, the budget kept changing, there was no recognised project lead and the politics and getting a decision made were a nightmare. Lots of reflection and lessons learnt from being involved in this project!

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

I've worked in loads of different training environments in the UK and across Europe. The best and most unusual environments that spring to mind are delivering a sales induction on an actual pirate ship moored at Hartlepool whilst working for Virgin Media, using a haunted dungeon in a castle in Edinburgh for a team build and using the rooftop garden of Coca-Cola offices in central London to do a resilience session. Great memories.

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

Most likely I think it will be the same as most other people that work in L&D i.e. LinkedIn, IGD website, training zone, CIPD, local networks, webinars, peers etc. I'm always on the lookout for any new channels so if anyone knows of any then please let me know.



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

Be 100% sure it's something that you enjoy doing! I've seen a lot of really good talent move into L&D thinking it's the right career move, only to find that being stood at the front of the classroom facilitating training is a lot tougher than it looks. Having the right skills and energy to engage and motivate an audience can be a challenge. Add to this being able to design materials often within a short time frame as well as the long hours, travel and flexibility required, you need to make sure when thinking about getting into training that it's right for you.

On the flip side of this, no two days are the same, you'll get exposure to all levels and all departments within an organisation, you'll tangibly see the difference you can make and you'll have the opportunity to really make a difference through the L&D service and support you'll provide. The final piece of advice I'd give to any new trainer is to be curious and invest time in getting to know the business you are working for. Spend time with different departments and actually do the role if you can. This will give you the confidence to know what you are talking about when designing and delivering training.

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

The direction of L&D continues to move us more towards a digital, mobile offering whilst at the same time the debate still rages on as to whether behavioural training can be effective online.

I personally think there will always be a need for both but I do think L&D will become even more bitesize and 'needs based' in the future. Millennials will want to learn by watching a YouTube video on their mobiles instead of attending a classroom based course.

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

I think we need to gate crash the party at an earlier stage! Often we are brought in as L&D professionals to land what's already been decided at senior level. If we can get a seat at the table to put a learning perspective on what's being discussed and be party to these conversations at the start, it will really help us to be more strategically aligned.

I also think we need to challenge more as often in L&D we get involved in areas not aligned to the business priorities. We need to get better at saying 'no' and offering an alternative.

I've often said to teams that I've lead that 'if it doesn't make the business profit, or save the business money, don't do it'.

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

It would have to be setting up my own L&D business if I knew I couldn't fail.

Based on my L&D experience and the brands I've worked for, I think there is loads I could do for other organisations and I'm sure I could do a better job than some of the external providers I've had experience of working with.

Unfortunately, I've never had the financial security to do this but if I knew I couldn't fail, then count me in!



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