



The Power of Progression: Linking Employee Development to Performance Excellence

Creating a virtuous circle between employee Learning, Development, Progression and Performance Improvement.

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About Learn Amp

Learn Amp is the complete People Development Platform; enabling your entire employee learning, development and performance management strategy.

We combined the best elements of Learning Management Systems (LMS), Learning Experience Platforms (LXP), Talent Development and Performance Management tools into one unified People Development Platform. Helping employees and their managers take ownership of learning and development, whilst providing organisations with the necessary visibility and control.

1. Introduction

At Learn Amp, we believe that connecting learning with performance and progression is what generates a virtuous, win-win cycle for all. A truly fulfilling experience for the individual and supercharged performance across the organisation.

But tying these elements together is a challenge not many businesses master.

Set against the context of an ever-evolving workplace – including major trends such as the Great Reshuffle, an age of acceleration, the increasingly short-lived shelf-life of skills¹, and career pathways for younger generations now less linear or predictable – the need to align learning, progression, and performance is a case easily made to business leaders. Yet so many share this as one of the biggest challenges to get right.

When we began our research for this white paper, the question we began with was, why?

We found there were a combination of reasons:

- Learning and talent development are often owned by different departments using separate systems and varying approaches.
- Performance management and appraisal processes often fail to connect to clear learning and development opportunities or interventions.
- L&D and Talent Development teams are too far removed from understanding the unique and changing needs of individuals. Requiring a shift to a bottom-up approach where individuals, managers and coaches can connect the dots between performance results, learning requirements and development offerings.
- There is an over-reliance on incentivising learning through tactics such as gamification that focus on extrinsic or short-lived motivation and reward.

Often failing to meaningfully impact development, performance and progression long-term.

In this white paper, we'll look at how to foster a culture of learning for performance.

We'll explore how to design frameworks that link performance to progression, and that tie progression and performance back to learning needs.

Finally, we'll look at how an integrated technology solution can make all the difference in fusing these key components together.

“Before Learn Amp, training levels were plateauing and in some cases even declining – but now they’re on an upward trajectory. We’ve been able to introduce an incentive system for our in-store employees based on training, which has only been possible since we introduced the Learn Amp platform.”

CHRIS DWYER

Learning Systems Manager, Specsavers



2. The magic link between performance and progression

Defining terms

Uniting performance and progression begins with understanding what these terms mean in theory, in practice and who they matter to.

Merriam-Webster defines these terms in the following ways²:

- **Performance:** the execution of an action; something accomplished; the fulfilment of a claim, promise or request.
- **Progression:** forwards or onwards movement.

In the context of performance and progression in the workplace, our working translation of these definitions is:

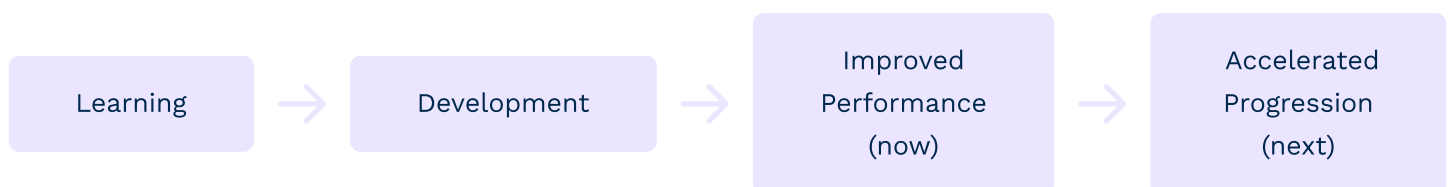
- **Performance:** the measure of an individual's fulfilled impact, now. A team's or the organisation's fulfilled impact, now, is a by-product of multiple individuals' performance.
- **Progression:** the measure of an individual's forwards movement to an improved state (e.g. role, level, experience), next. Note that this is not only measured by 'speed' to progress, but depth and breadth of progression.

And on this basis, learning and development can be seen as vehicles which transport individuals from poorer to improved performance, now, and from stagnated or accelerated progression, next.

We think it's helpful to consider 'progression' as distinct from 'development'

If 'to develop' is 'to evolve or unfold', then 'development', like learning, is a key catalyst for progression. Progression is the end goal, not the method.

We can think about the relationship between learning, development, performance, and progression as a flow-diagram.



If learning and development are the vehicles that drive us in our intended direction, then who or what is the driver?

There have been several recent reports highlighting why progression is the single-most important factor in employee experience.

LinkedIn's 2021³ report found that employees would stay longer if they felt their organisation invested in their careers. This is a perspective that People, HR, and L&D professionals share, with 94% in Oracle's 2021 report⁴ highlighting that internally recruiting helps to retain the most valuable talent.

The ultimate objective of an organisation is increased and sustained performance, now, whereas the ultimate objective of the individual is progression, next.

Through making clearer, direct connections between learning, development, performance, and progression, organisations can reveal the magic ingredient that drives rocket-fuelled growth: **motivation**.

But how can organisations tap into their employees' motivations to turbo-charge organisation-wide performance?

We believe in shifting the focus from 'performance management' which focuses too greatly on the needs of the organisation, towards a people-centric strategy that aligns development goals and maps out success plans where both the individual and the organisation benefit.

This means developing competencies tangibly linked to progression outcomes, so that the individual is motivated to achieve higher performance because it lights a clear path to progression.

A Virtuous Cycle

If employees are motivated by what learning and development can do for them in their performance, and are subsequently rewarded with progression opportunities, a virtuous cycle begins.

The organisation benefits from increased performance, while the individual benefits from a fulfilling development and progression experience.

One way to illustrate that virtuous cycle, is through the **Kirkpatrick Model**⁵. This model has been used since the 1950s to assess the key markers of learning effectiveness:

1. Did the learners find the learning engaging?
(Reaction)
2. Has the learning enhanced their competencies?
(Learning)
3. Can the learning be applied to their roles? How does it inform the organisational culture?
(Behaviour)
4. How can the outcomes and results of the training and its application can be measured in their performance?
(Results)



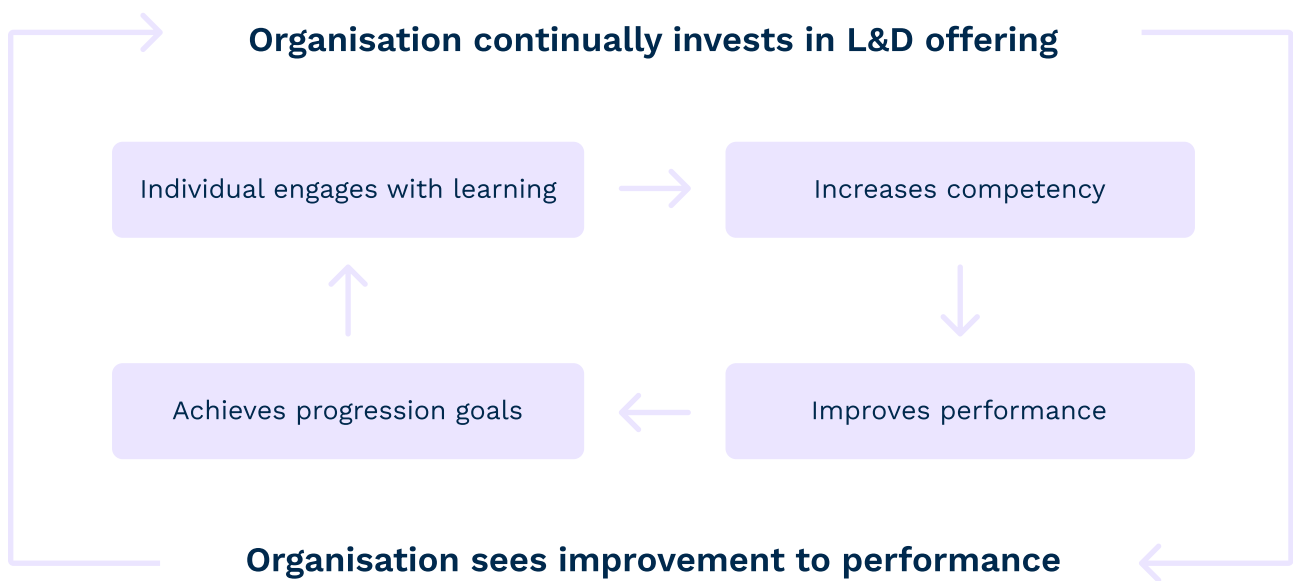
Applying this definition through the lens of building a culture of high-performance, we translate the Kirkpatrick model like this:

1. When employees engage with learning, they develop the competencies needed to perform better in their role.
2. Their improved performance results in improved collective performance.
3. Consistently good performance, plus continued development of competencies, leads to progression for the individual.
4. The more the individual sees that return on investment (ROI) from engaging in learning, the more they are motivated to invest again in the learning and development process.
5. The organisation also recognises the link between learning, development, progression, and performance and is confident in investing further in the need to improve and widen their learning and development offering.

And so, a virtuous cycle is created. Generating enduring value for all, with learning and development as the driver and openly recognised champion of this success story.

In fact, Gallup’s **2022 State of the Global Workplace report**⁶ found that highly-engaged teams are up to 18% more productive than teams with low engagement. And low engagement results in turnover that’s up to 43% higher than high engagement.

Engagement and motivation are the triggers for the virtuous cycle of performance, resulting in higher and more sustainable performance through better productivity and reduced turnover.



3. Designing an L&D strategy that drives performance

To design a learning strategy that drives improved performance and progression, it can help to think of yourself as a product owner.

Shaping an effective L&D ‘product’ that your ‘customers’ (employees) value and engage with, as it addresses their specific problems and provides them with the tools to achieve their progression goals.

There has been a wealth of recent research highlighting why focusing on improved performance and progression routes can reduce costs and increase productivity. Microsoft’s recent report found that replacing exiting workers costs one-half to two times the employee’s annual salary.

Assuming an average salary of \$50,000 that replacement cost translates to between \$25,000 and \$100,000 per employee⁷. Meanwhile, the cost to develop and progress an employee is on average only 10-20% of their salary⁸.

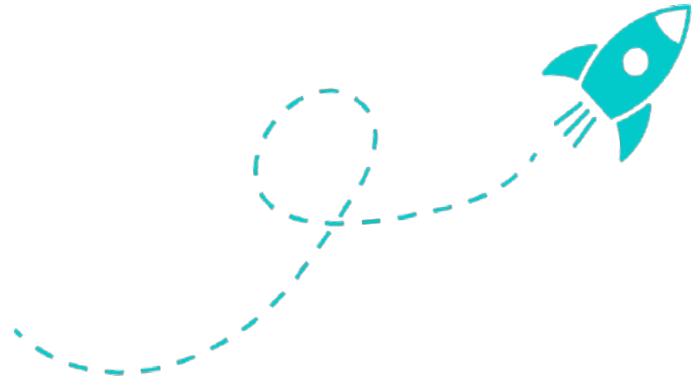
Hiring and promoting internally not only reduces cost but is a powerful retention tool. 2 in 3 employees, 75% managers, and 77% business decision makers say they would stay longer at their company if there easier opportunities to change roles internally⁹.



In this section, we'll explore how to identify the needs of your 'customers' (employees) as well as the needs of your 'product sponsors' (managers and leadership) so you can deliver solutions that align individual progression and move the needle on organisation performance and growth.

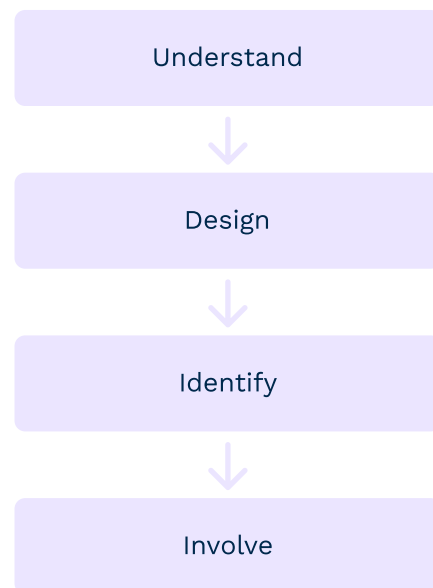
We'll cover how to ensure you know what the business needs to achieve its strategy and the competencies of employees, at all levels, required to fulfil those needs. And look at why focusing on the needs and competencies of leadership (your 'product sponsors') is a good place to start.

We'll review the cornerstone tools for this development work; a competency framework, tied to a transparent progression framework, and mapped to your learning offering. Used together, these tools form the core mechanics of the vehicle which will drive your employees from the now into the next.



We'll approach this in the following four steps:

1. **Understand** the strategic direction of the organisation, the short and longer term goals, and how the organisation is currently performing against them.
2. **Design** the frameworks that will enable employees to grow. (1) define the competencies for each role and team needed to deliver on the organisation's goals, and compile this into a competency framework (2) design a progression framework that charts progression routes and competency requirements at each level; use this to assess current distribution of roles, role-levels and competencies across the organisation.
3. **Identify** gaps and opportunities in the existing learning and development offering based on the competency framework, keeping what you can, re-purposing where possible, and designing new learning and development experiences needed to bridge the gaps and meet the collective need.
4. **Involve** managers and get their buy-in to deliver the integrated approach, offering toolkits and practical guidance on how to contextualise the competency and progression frameworks sustainably, into the daily workings of their teams.



Throughout these steps, including your employees in the prototyping, building and testing will ensure you are delivering and refining solutions that are going to be attractive to them.

Step 1: Understand the problems, needs and baselines

Before you can develop a valuable and impactful ‘product’, you must know what reality you’re starting from as this will underpin the direction you take to achieve your goals.

You need to know what you do well, and where the opportunities for improvement and growth exist. So, [ask interrogating questions](#) to understand the real needs and obstacles.

- What challenges is the organisation currently facing?
- What are the organisation’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats? (SWOT analysis)
- Which teams or business units are meeting those challenges, and which ones aren’t?
- What are the positive outcomes that would move the needle in regards to business performance?
- What does excellent performance look like at the individual, team, and organisation level? What are their ‘Jobs To Be Done’?¹⁰

- Where and why are you falling short?
- What will it take to get you to where you need to be?

Only when you have an accurate picture can you know how to design your ideal product.

Ensure to ask people at all levels of your organisation, use data where possible to provide a full picture, and only finish this process when you feel confident you have got to the truth. Otherwise, you will waste time and design for solutions that won’t make the required difference.

There are several approaches you can take when gathering relevant intel about employee roles and the ‘Jobs To Be Done’ that result in improved performance. Here are a few and their advantages and disadvantages¹¹:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth information to better understand the feedback. • One-to-one setting with opportunity to ask probing questions and ‘get to the bottom of it’. • More likely to get detailed responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to conduct at scale: the most time-consuming method of gathering feedback. • Better used in combination with scalable alternatives for breadth and depth of feedback.
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge reactions of a small number of your target audience. • Controlled but free-flowing discussion. • Great for testing the waters and understanding the conversations around the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A less ‘safe space’ if members of the group feel uncomfortable sharing real thoughts and opinions. • Participants may be influenced by the feedback of others.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Observational research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the lived experience of the your audience. • Observe elements of peoples' experience they may forget to mention. • Gather intel and case-study examples of challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be organised carefully in order to facilitate accurate insights. • Difficult in busy teams, especially if remote and/or deskless.
Qualitative questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather a range of feedback across multiple teams and groups, efficiently. • Design questions carefully to target specific areas of the experience and understand challenges. • Generate comparable reporting, using a blend of qualitative and quantitative responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response detail or context may be limited and therefore may skew the results – best in combination with one-to-one or small group research.



“The learning was successfully mapped to business objectives, and this was borne out in business results. The autonomy and ability for someone to curate their own learning, contribute to other’s learning and take a learning pathway whilst working towards performance goals shows a range of functionality being utilised both socially, collaboratively and individually. This initiative helped the organisation become ready for learning during the pandemic”

JUDGES comments

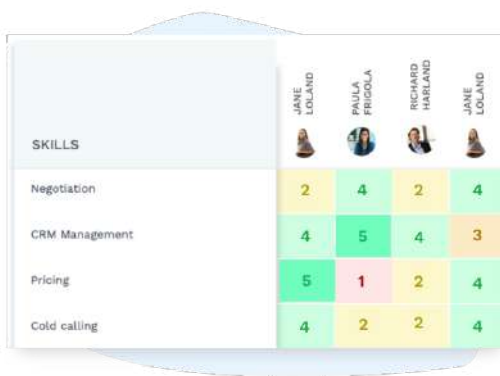
Learning Technology Awards 2020



Step 2: Design frameworks that allow employees to grow around them

At the heart of strong performance, an employee requires the core competencies to deliver in their designated role.

These competencies are formed of the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) needed to demonstrate the competency at varying levels, where performance is the result of how well they master and consistently they apply them in context of their role.



SKILLS	JANE LOLLAND	PAULA FRIGOLA	RICHARD HIRLAND	JANE LOLLAND
Negotiation	2	4	2	4
CRM Management	4	5	4	3
Pricing	5	1	2	4
Cold calling	4	2	2	4

Once you have defined the organisational needs, the first task is to analyse each team and each role in terms of which KSBs (and competencies) are needed purely to deliver adequately in that role.

From there, you can begin to build a picture of the full spectrum of performance per role: from under-performance to exceptional performance and all the levels in between.

This breakdown will enable you to compile a competency framework, which details KSBs required of each role.

By comparing the variations in competencies for different roles, you'll be able to define the scale of levels for competencies, from entry-level to expert. Note that the framework will need to be able to compare 'apples for apples', so the number of levels should be the same across all competencies.

From there, you can embed this new language and understanding of competencies (and levels) into a progression framework, which maps out the routes for progression for each team and role.

Traditionally, these routes are split into 'individual contributor' routes and 'line manager' routes, though this is often nuanced and dependent on factors like organisation structure and industry.

For each role, the progression framework should define:

- **The competencies** required across roles with development levels built-in.
- **Output standards** of performance at each level.

Output should be measurable and consider the lagging as well as leading indicators of good performance. For example, number of new leads generated, or customer satisfaction feedback.

By creating a progression framework which is synchronised with the competency framework, the foundations are set for the organisation and individual to be in lockstep on performance expectations, progression opportunities and crucially, the route there through continuous learning and development.



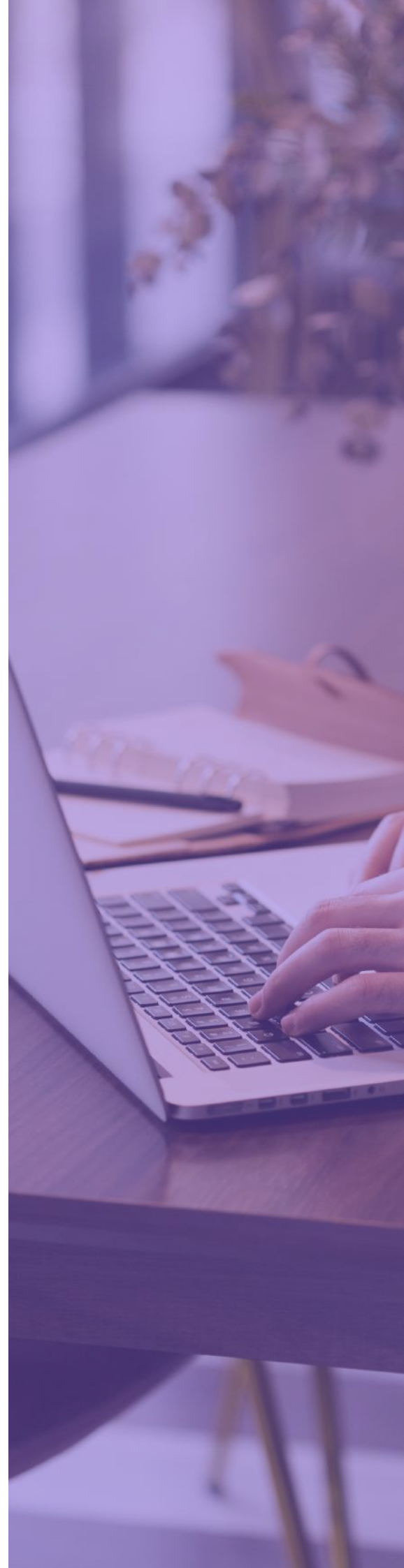
Clearer routes lead to higher levels of motivation, since employees can contextualise how to realise progression goals at the organisation.

Creating two frameworks may sound daunting, especially when beginning from scratch, but there are many tools, models and approaches. Here are a few of our favourites to help get you started:

- **McKinsey & Co:** Using the VECTOR model to create capability frameworks
- **Emily Webber:** Capability Profile Mapping
- **Deloitte, 2022:** The skills-based organization: A new operating model for work and the workforce

Our top tips for ensuring alignment between the two frameworks:

- **Create the competency framework first.** When creating the progression framework you already have the coded language of competencies and levels to weave into expectations for each role.
- **It can be tempting to ‘boil the ocean’ when it comes to competency and progression frameworks.** If you’re operating in an organisation where there are many nuances in role, and many competencies, start with a pared-back, streamlined version to test first, and build out from there.
- **Focus on verbs when describing different levels of the same competency or role.** You may even create a glossary. For example, what does ‘to contribute’ mean, why is it distinct from ‘to collaborate’, and why does one demonstrate a higher level of competency or performance than the other?
- **Keep a bank of worked examples for each role and each competency.** This will help managers and leaders translate and contextualise the framework for their teams. This will take time to build and should never be considered ‘complete’. Resist the temptation to have every worked example in place before you launch, and invite key managers or leaders to record their own examples as they go.



Step 3: Map the frameworks to your learning and development offering

At this point, you know what your organisational needs are and they are mapped against competencies and levelled up into progression opportunities.

Now you need to assess if your learning content, activities, and interventions will effectively address your employees' development needs. Or if you need to design and deploy new ones.

Your L&D team should establish baseline interventions that cover the core KSBs.

Firstly, review the resources or learning experiences you have that met the needs of your competency framework, asking questions like:

- Which competencies are covered by existing resources or learning experiences?
- How comprehensive is the coverage? What is the quality of the content?
- Where are the gaps? What does the 'minimum viable product' (MVP) or best first version of learning content in this area look like?
- What resource is required to build out or redesign existing content?
- Who do we have who can assist in delivering learning activities, or coach and mentor in key competencies?
- Based on current business goals, which areas of competency should be a priority?

In cases where there is a high quantity of learning content to be designed, redesigned, or restructured, create a project plan chunked into phases to deliver the content.

Once you've completed your content and resources audit you'll know what you have and what you need to support development of competencies at each level. But does the development of these competencies provide a helpful pathway in practice for employees to progress?

Here is a useful approach to testing if what you already have, or what you plan to build, will deliver against this macro objective:

1. **Use the employee feedback gathered in Step 1,** together with the frameworks to design personas that represent employees across various departments, their needs and development stage.
2. **For each persona, design a 'development plan'** that charts their journey through the levels in the progression framework. Then start to map this to the learning offering you currently have. Use this as an exercise to identify gaps along the journey and plan to bridge these gaps in the learning offering.
3. **Discuss variations and alternative versions of your personas' journeys** to ensure you have captured the majority of needs and most commonly trodden development paths. You may wish to involve managers and subject matter experts to highlight alternative routes and identify opportunities for variations in the learning offering to better support these less common but equally important routes.

These personas will never capture the nuance of every individual's journey, but their purpose is to represent the typical challenges and motivations of someone progressing through a specific role.

Step 4: Engage and enable managers

Your frameworks have been built according to organisation and individual goals.

You've mapped these frameworks to your learning offering, gathering initial input from your product sponsors (managers, leaders, subject matter experts).

You've brought the learning offering to a position where you're ready to roll out the frameworks.

...What now?

Gallup research suggests that in at least 70% of cases, how employees engage with learning and development depends on how they view the quality of their management, with half leaving companies because of their manager¹².

But this idea is far from new.

Noe indicated in 1996¹³ that support from supervisors affects employee's willingness to engage in development activities. While Gibb in 2002¹⁴ highlighted that increase line manager involvement in learning and development improves the quality of learning.

Managers can guide their team's learning and development focus from the vantage point of understanding the individuals' needs at a more personal level, and in the context of their team's goals and performance.

As a stakeholder group, managers are critical to ensuring any competency and progression framework results in improved performance.

They are the enablers of these frameworks, as they have the insight of the everyday challenges of the individual, their development needs, and how to steer development goals that feeds into the bigger picture of how their team performs against the business needs and strategy.

Managers of the highest performing teams are often invested in the progression of the individual, as they know this correlates to better team and business performance.

Managers are your biggest asset when it comes to unlocking an integrated performance, progression and learning strategy.

However, they're often lacking the confidence, knowledge and tools to meaningfully link their team's performance and development needs to learning, development and progression opportunities.



If the importance of the manager's role in their team's performance is nothing new, what are the challenges managers are facing, that are posing barriers to their impact in 2023?

With the advent of remote and hybrid working structures and more dispersed workforces, it's increasingly difficult for managers to observe performance, identify development needs, and match learning interventions to support.

Microsoft's research found¹⁵, after analysing feedback and activity of over 20,000 employees across 11 countries, that there is a growing sense of mistrust among managers as they have less direct visibility of their teams' work. With more than 50% sharing that they struggle to trust that remote workers are doing their best work.

This breaks down the trust needed to have open performance and progression conversations, so it's crucial we offer managers better ways to track performance and identify how they can support their teams.

Whilst also equipping managers with the competency to have open and honest conversations with their team members to establish a shared, aligned vision for development and progression.



In particular, studies suggest there is a direct correlation between managers' communication competency and the performance of their teams.

Dr. Michael Leimbach conducted one such study which looked at the correlation between the competency of coaching-style communication and employee performance. In his study, the employees whose managers had received coaching training improved their own performance by 18%, but it was those employees whose managers had received the targeted coaching improved the most, with a 42% increase in performance¹⁶.

So, in order to make the tying of organisational and individual development goals through competency frameworks a reality, it is critical to first elevate and equip managers with (1) the right competencies and (2) the right tools to build this into the everyday fabric of their teams.

Supported by technology that will do the work of matching learning experiences and resources to competencies for them, managers are freed to focus on establishing a shared long and short-term progression and development plan for individuals in their teams, aligned to team goals.

By starting with manager competency and tools, organisations can unlock the crucial ingredient needed to activate an integrated competency, progression and learning offering: manager buy-in.

With managers bought in on the 'what's in it for me' behind tying progression to the learning offering, and equipped to deliver this with their teams, they'll more readily contextualise this for the individuals they manage. Fixing that often that missing link which drives an increase of motivation in learning and therefore performance and progression.

But what support and approaches do managers need to deliver this well?

Here's how we recommend approaching your manager engagement and enablement:

1. **Gather focus groups of managers** to run a short series of alignment and development sessions.
2. Use these sessions to **gather intel about their current challenges and successes** when it comes to performance evaluation and implementing effective development and progression plans. At this stage, they'll likely have already seen the progression and competency frameworks, so these discussions are more about gathering feedback directly from managers on the benefits and challenges they foresee in implementing the frameworks. In the same way a Product Owner would conduct refinement research to ensure the proposed solution will work in practice.
3. Based on the feedback, needs and ideas from the managers, **create a toolkit and support plan for managers to use**. Whether to support 1-to-1 conversations, guidance on recommending learning and development content, or worked examples and 'explainer' videos on use of the frameworks. Where possible, include as many of the ideas from the managers themselves into the toolkit, which will build additional buy-in and keep the designed solution as close to the experienced challenges as possible.
4. **Present the toolkit and support plan to your focus-group managers**. The follow-up sessions should focus on getting the manager population aligned and energised, while objection-handling and highlighting where the toolkit shares practical advice for implementation.
5. **Invite your focus-group managers to be the 'early adopters' of this toolkit**. So you've opportunity to test this out in practice before rolling out more widely. Agree to test for a fixed period before regrouping. For example, a quarter.
6. **Finish the series with a 'regroup' and retro session**. Find out how the managers found applying the frameworks together with the toolkit and support plan. What changes do they recommend?
7. **Iterate and roll out more widely** for all managers, leaders and teams.
8. **Treat this as an ongoing iterative exercise**. Revisit to ensure ongoing alignment and value is provided. Once this initial series of sessions has been delivered ensure to set up processes so the toolkit can be updated and adapted, it should be a living and evolving resource.
9. **Ensure you've created ongoing structures for your managers to keep on aligning, sharing and collaborating**. Manager communities, ongoing training and coaching sessions and workshops revisiting your approaches will all help with this.



Top Tip: Engage managers with a tool like Learn Amp

With Learn Amp' you could:

- Host a manager community with discussion feeds, file sharing and FAQs.
- Share a dashboard featuring the latest success stories, toolkit and promote upcoming events,
- Provide an employee directory so that managers can learn and connect with each other directly.

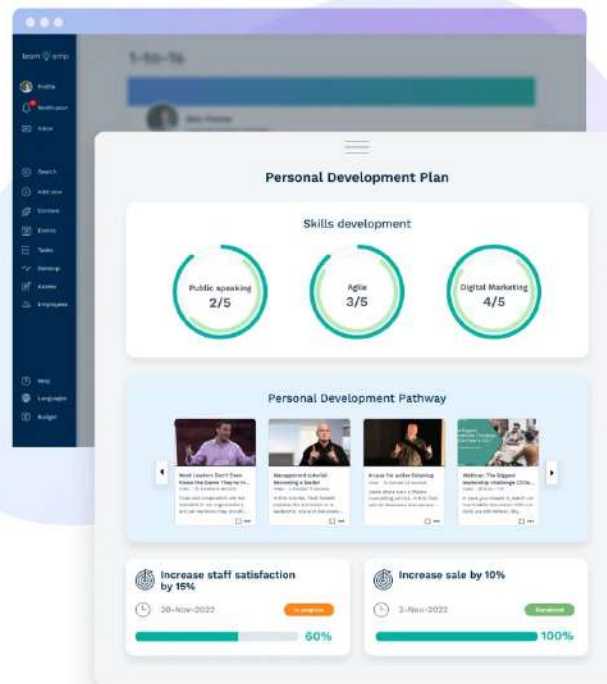
4. Drive performance through learning and development with technology

It is our belief that realising an integrated learning and performance strategy can be best achieved with a technology solution that facilitates that integration.

The right learning and talent development platform can act as the glue that fuses the frameworks, the learning offering, and the everyday execution of your strategy.

Without a technology solution that guides all relevant stakeholders and automates large parts of the process, L&D and managers are left with issues around alignment of company and employee need, increased workload and continual re-education on the frameworks and learning offering.

Let's look at the functionality sets that amplify the whole process, release the administrative burden across the organisation, and bring your learning, development and progression product to life.



1. Taxonomy mapping

The strength of the link between the competency framework and the learning offering, and how visible that link is not only to Learning & Development, but all managers and their teams, will define how successfully a culture of learning for performance will thrive.

Establishing that link manually or via multiple tools or spreadsheets risks:

1. Not being visible and equitably accessible to all, day-to-day.
2. Unwieldy to update and therefore not sustainable as a drain on L&D and managers.
3. Becoming easily disjointed if existing on different systems – for example, a Skill updated in a separate Skills tool causes the learning content mapped to it on a learning system to become out-of-sync.
4. Becoming out of date quickly, not keeping up to date with the current needs of the business which will affect confidence and engagement.

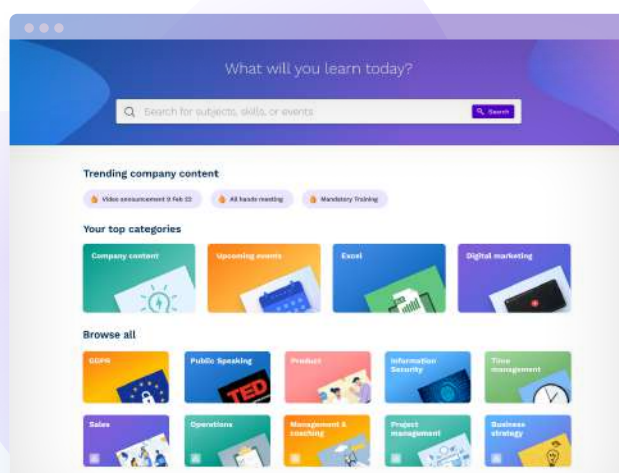
A system that can make the direct link between all learning resources and your competency framework will mean that you can keep the two in lockstep.

Whilst also making it possible for others to see and contribute to the learning offering available for each competency.

Note: 'learning resources' is used in the broadest sense to include content, subject matter experts, events, documents, pathways, programmes, etc.

Key features to look for in a platform:

- Ability to define your own competency both at granular competency level, and attach those competencies to roles.
- Link competencies to a learning taxonomy and collate into broader categories.
- Associate or tag all types of learning resources with competencies and/or categories.
- Surface categories for users when searching for content, to make it easy to search by competency and category.



2. Skill ratings

To complete the virtuous circle between learning resources and competencies, a platform needs to be able to assess the level of people's competencies and recommend learning opportunities. Providing highly personalised and automated recommendations which historically would've come from L&D and managers.

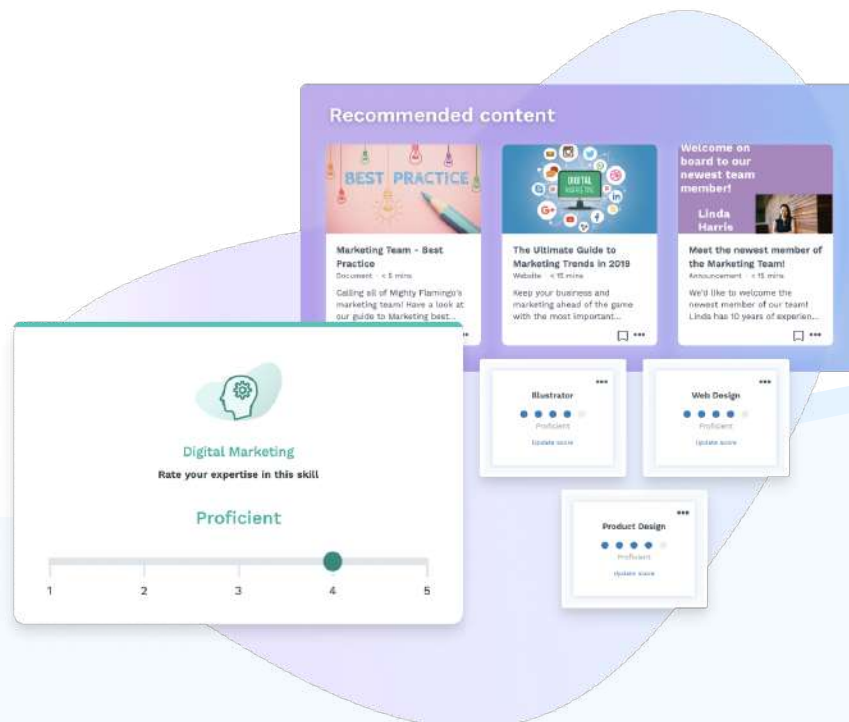
The advantages of having competency assessment functionality in the same platform as your learning and development offering means you can not only provide a more integrated and accessible product for the individual, but also save significant amounts of time for L&D administrators.

Critically, it also allows you to track the direct impact of the learning and development offering on competency levels, in a unified solution.

This is vital for building a sustainable and organically-growing culture of learning for performance that stands the test of time, while also allowing L&D and subject matter experts to adapt the learning offering in real-time, based on the correlation they're seeing between learning and upskilling or re-skilling.

Key features to look for in a platform:

- Ability to link the skill directly to the learning offering.
- A recommendations engine based on an individual's selected skills and competency levels.
- Option to define template/ preset skills based on role, but with flexibility for individuals and managers to build in other skills, too.
- Flexibility to have self-rating and/or manager-rating on skills to aid alignment and reflection.
- Skills analytics – visualised in reporting widgets that can be added to admin and manager dashboards as well as in-depth, exportable reporting to track trends, provide comparison and drill down into areas of interest.



3. Performance conversations aligned to learning and development opportunities

You may now have a platform that can tie your competency framework (and with it your progression framework, which maps those competencies to levels) with your learning and development offering and even start to provide personalised recommendations for individuals based on their roles.

But what integrated tools are on offer that enable managers to have holistic conversations with their team about performance, development and progression?

Investing in a platform that enables managers and leaders to set goals at company, team and individual level. Whether that's using a cascading Objectives and Key Results (OKR) framework, or focusing on per-individual SMART objectives linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is the key piece of the puzzle that will:

- Set transparent targets and expectations for performance for all employees – and in doing so, how they can progress.
- Provide timeframes for the individual and momentum, tapping into their motivation to achieve the targets and expectations.

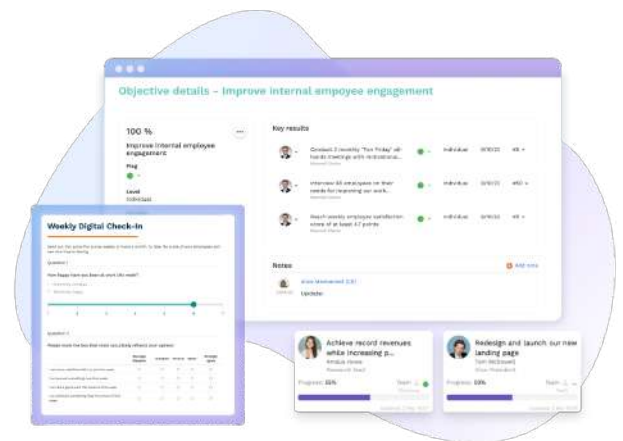
Setting objectives on a separate system, unsupported by the learning and development offering, is often what creates the symptom of siloed teams with varying approaches to employee development.

Bring objectives, competency management and the learning and development offering into a unified solution to ensure these key dependencies are interwoven, and continually trigger the virtuous cycle.

Move beyond siloed thinking and practices by synchronising these elements to drive higher performance.

Key features to look for in a platform:

- Flexible objective-setting options, from cascading OKR frameworks to individual goals.
- Creation of objective templates which managers can adapt for their teams.
- Performance conversation check-in forms, which bring together the individual's objectives, tasks, learning activity, competencies and feedback in one place.
- Automation to assign to manager and their line report on a regular cadence (weekly, monthly, quarterly) of your choice.
- Collect observations and evidence of performance, e.g. application of competency.



4. Decentralised learning assignment and reporting

Hand-in-hand with engaging and enabling managers is decentralised learning assignment and reporting.

Further enabling managers and leaders to have the autonomy and flexibility to tailor learning and development opportunities to their teams' needs, and to track impact.

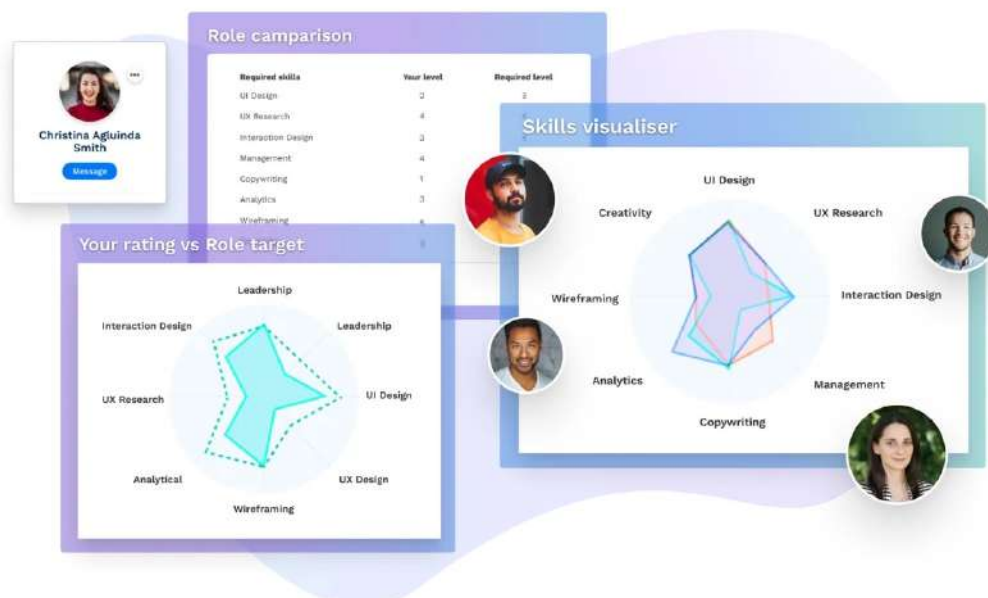
Key features to look for in a platform:

- Decentralised, flexible permissions – reporting visibility limited to team for managers, and a range of permissions beyond 'learner' and 'admin'.
- Ability for managers to assign learning and tasks for their teams, both one-by-one or to the whole team, easily.
- Saved reports which managers can access regularly, and export as needed.
- Ability for managers to build their own dashboards, with analytics widgets visualising performance and learning for their teams only, all in real time at the point of need.

"Great to be able to see people's progress for training. It allows me to be more in touch with how people are progressing. I love that it is personalised to allow the individual to set their own goals by setting their own tasks. Much better clarity of what content is available in the system. So much easier to find things and access them."

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5. Spaces for peer learning and mentorship

Providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning is a key pillar of creating a thriving learning for performance culture.

Models like Morgan McCall's 70/20/10 model suggest competencies are developed primarily through on-the-job experiences and social interaction, and that formal learning isn't where the majority of our learning and development 'happens'.

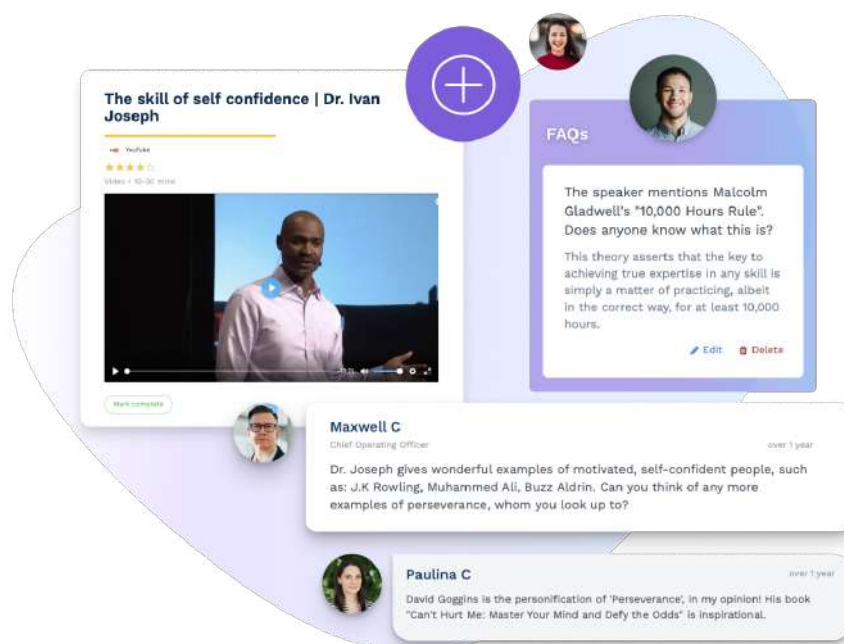
But with teams becoming more dispersed, hybrid, and digitised, opportunities for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and apprenticeship-style mentoring have less space to develop.

A platform that enables these opportunities, particularly those based on competencies or areas of expertise, re-opens the channel for peer-to-peer sharing, learning and guidance.

While the ability to assign a Coach to assess application of competencies based on assignments with scoring criteria, and offer personalised feedback, accelerates the on-the-job development process by rooting it in feedback and reflective practice.

Key features to look for in a platform:

- *Adaptable assignments – from self-recorded video upload, to document upload, to written submissions, and scored manually, or by a set criteria, or without scoring*
- *A 'Coach' role to provide additional support to the individual.*
- *Community space creation, with discussion feed, community dashboard and community library.*
- *Ability to build Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) log on learning content, and designate experts to answers questions.*
- *Peer-to-peer content sharing to enable capture, distribution and recognition of individuals' expertise.*



5. Conclusion

We hope this white paper has provided some food for thought about how you can link learning to development and progression, with an intended goal to improve individual and in turn organisational performance.

If, like us, you also find it helpful to see L&D and your employee offering like a product you offer to customers, here is a recap of the key building blocks we believe you need to design and build an effective learning and development strategy that will supercharge organisational growth.

1. Your progression framework
2. Your competency framework
3. Linking learning and development opportunities
4. Clear target and objective setting
5. Feedback and peer-guidance opportunities – through mentorship, communities and assessment of competency application
6. Decentralised learning delivery – through reporting and assignment for managers

The outcome should be a well-oiled vehicle for driving real change across your organisation.

So employees across the organisation can consistently perform better having engaged more deeply with their own learning and development.



Vision statements for your project could be:

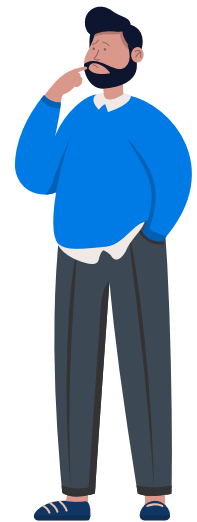
Employees have clarity on what progression looks like, and the performance expected of them in order to achieve this progression.

Employees know which competencies they need to develop in order to perform well and ready themselves for progression.

Employees have access to curated resources and digital communities to tap into the expertise of others and develop autonomously.

Employees are regularly coached and scored on application of competencies and given feedback and recommendations on how to improve.

Managers review the learning and development activity of their direct reports against performance targets, regularly, and discusses in performance conversations – recognising achievements, highlighting gaps and recommending learning.



Supported by the right technology

It is our deep belief, through years of experience and having seen this play out with our customers, that segregated systems and processes are nowhere near as effective as unified ones.

The building blocks we have discussed often fail to connect in meaningful ways, with purpose and direction lost in translation...

But carefully-orchestrated and integrated together, as well as supported by the right technology, they create a sustainable and scalable model for high-growth and high-performance organisations.

If you would like to find out more about how Learn Amp can provide the technology solutions to support a strategy like this, and tap into the collective wisdom of our team, then we would love to hear from you.

About the Authors



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With more than eight years experience in education and L&D, starting with five years as a teacher in higher education, Alice has a practitioner's understanding of learning and progress design, as well as procuring and implementing systems for engagement and assessment.

Drawing on her background in education and learning theory, Alice works with customers to apply L&D best practices to real-world organisational challenges, speaking regularly at industry events on employee experience and development themes.



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With over fifteen years of experience in L&D and OD roles before joining Learn Amp as part of the founding team, Joe is experienced in building a learning and development culture from the ground up.

With a deep interest in how culture, ways of working and technology drive performance, Joe has been a judge for the UK Customer Experience Awards and regularly writes and speaks about the link between customer experience and employee experience.

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