

# FACTFILE: GCE PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS SERVICES

## UNIT AS 2: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



### Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the importance of effective learning and development for a business;
- analyse learning and development methods including induction training; on-the-job training; off-the-job training and continuing professional development;
- evaluate the possible outcomes of learning and development for employees in client businesses;



### Introduction

What does learning and development mean in the context of PBS? CIPD (2016a) view a learning and development (L&D) strategy as an approach to develop the capabilities, skills and competences of its employees in order to build a sustainable and successful business. The L&D strategy is also viewed as being an important part of the business and human resources strategy. The relationships of L&D to human resource strategy and business strategy will be dependent on the context of the business in terms of size, structure, number of employees, employee expertise, and the external operating environment.

**Figure 1** illustrates the alignment of the business aims and objectives and strategy to the human resource aims and objectives and strategy through to the L&D aims and objectives. The capabilities, skills and competences of the employees are then developed through on-the-job and off-the-job L&D approaches.

The desired result of the aligned (see fig 3 in Human Resources fact file) L&D process is that employees' capabilities are enhanced and this results in improved performance. The assumption is that improved employee performance contributes to improved business performance.

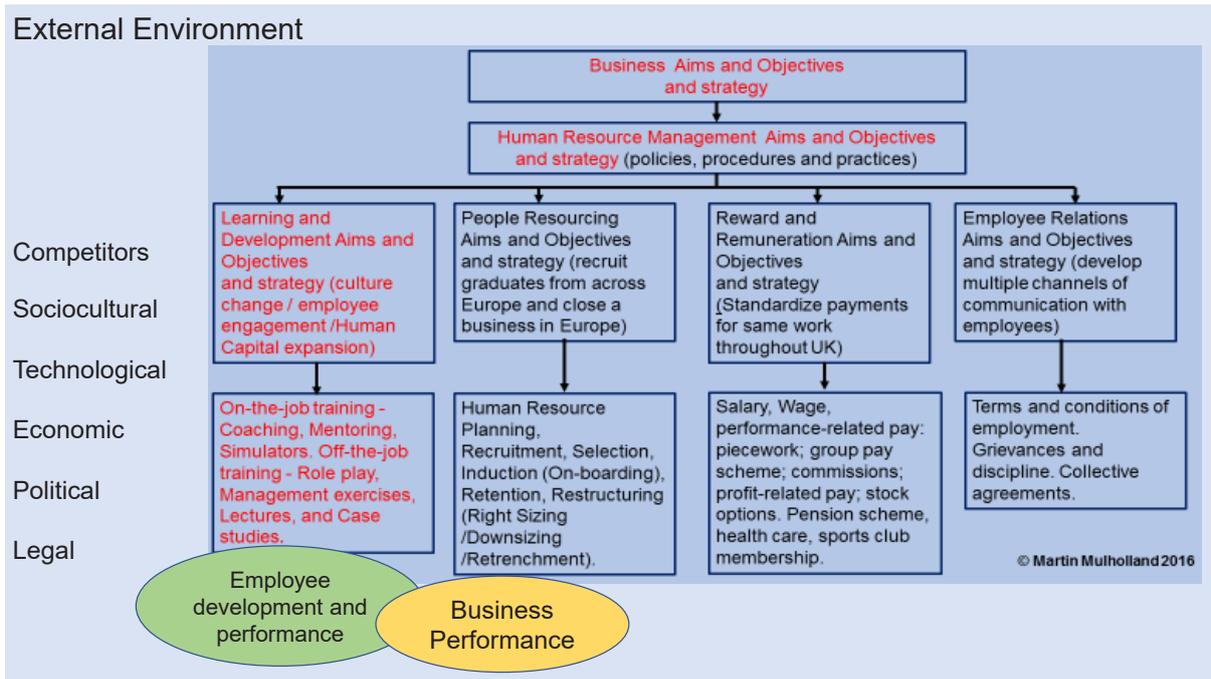


Figure 1. Learning and development relationships to business objectives and employee competences

### Importance of effective learning and development

Effective L&D is important for a client business because:

- the L&D objectives of employees are linked to the business objectives meaning employees are developed to successfully undertake and complete current and future job requirements.
- L&D programmes and methods are cost effective and deliver value for money (return on investment).
- L&D programmes ensure that the business is compliant with external legal requirements.
- L&D mitigates against risk by ensuring that employees are able to do their job properly and safely.
- the L&D of employees is synonymous with the quality of the service provided by the business (meets the expectations and needs of customers).
- L&D maintains / enhances the competences of the employee.
- L&D helps to improve employee performance and subsequently business performance.
- L&D provides employees with the competences and behaviours that meet the expectations and needs of customers regarding service delivery.
- L&D demonstrates that the business values the employee.

- L&D can help with employee retention and engagement by preparing them for promotion.
- L&D facilitates change programmes (organization development) that enable the business to be competitive in the future.
- L&D adds to the human capital stock of the business.

### The learning and development process

The employees' L&D objectives should be aligned with the business objectives and then delivered through the L&D cycle (Torrington et al., 2014), as shown in Figure 2. This consists of:

- identifying the L&D needs of the employee;
- designing the L&D activity (on / - the - job);
- implementing the L&D activity;
- reviewing the L&D activity.

The desired outcome of this process is a more competent employee who is able to achieve and sustain a higher level of performance. This employee performance adds to overall business performance.

**Stage 1** in Figure 2 involves an analysis of the employees L&D needs and these can be identified through processes such as appraisal and job analysis.

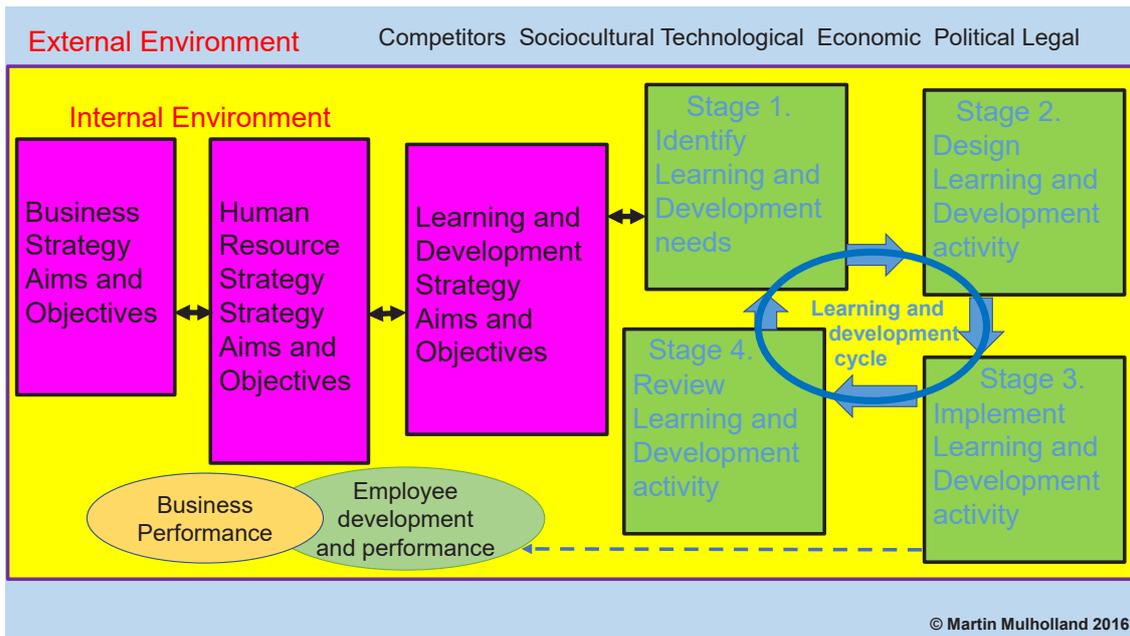


Figure 2 Learning and development process

**Stage 2** consists of the design of the L&D event which takes into consideration factors such as the learning needs and objectives of the employee, the budget available for training, and the strengths and weaknesses of each L&D method.

**Stage 3** deals with implementing (delivering) the L&D activity within a business. The L&D event(s) can occur on-the-job and/or off-the-job. The particular learning method(s) employed could include: coaching, mentoring, simulators, role play, management exercises, lectures, workshops, case studies, podcasts, videos, discussion fora, and conferences.

**Stage 4** entails a review (evaluation) of the L&D event(s) which may be undertaken using methods (CIPD, 2014; CIPD, 2015) such as learner reflection and feedback, business metrics (income, market growth), and external benchmarks (productivity and absence rates).

**Analysis of learning and development methods**

**Induction training (onboarding)**

Induction training is the process used within businesses to welcome new employees to the business and help to prepare them for their new role through the provision of learning events (CIPD, 2016b).

The advantages of induction training are:

1. Employees can be grouped together which better utilizes the time of the person delivering the induction.
2. Guarantees that all new employees receive consistent information and clarity on the business' brand, values and culture.
3. A range of communication techniques can be used including: group discussion; presentation; and management overviews.
4. Provides an opportunity for new employees to socialise with each other and develop inter and intra departmental relationships.

Disadvantages

1. A number of induction sessions may cover subjects that are not relevant to all of the new employees.
2. Induction may occur weeks, or even months, after the new employee has joined the business. This can interfere with their work.
3. The induction training can be impersonal and include managers as opposed to direct line managers.
4. Too much information is provided in a very short time.
5. New employees may not be able to attend all induction sessions resulting in incomplete induction.

## On-the-job Training

On the job training allows the employee to learn within their own working environment. The employee can use the tools and equipment which will be employed in their specific job role. The training is tailored to the job. The employee may be shown how to do a job activity by a supervisor or a more experienced member of staff and they will then be observed carrying out the activity. The employee will then receive feedback on their ability to perform the activity.

The advantages of this approach are:

1. The training provided is specific to the job.
2. The employee is observed performing the task after being trained.
3. Errors in performing the task can be addressed immediately
4. Positive aspects of the employees' performance can be acknowledged through feedback.
5. It is a cost effective method of delivery as the employee remains on-site.
6. The employee receiving the training feels at ease in their familiar work environment.

The disadvantages of on the job training are:

1. The person providing the training may not be competent / trained to deliver training.
2. The trainee may be given insufficient time to become competent in completing the activity to the required standard.
3. An external trainer providing the training may not be totally familiar with how the activity is to be completed and could pass on incorrect working practices or miss out on parts of the job to be completed.

## Off-the-job Training

Off-the-job training happens when employees are away from their place of work in order to receive training.

The advantages of off-the-job training are:

1. The trainers are normally experienced and qualified to deliver the training event.
2. Externally training is designed to meet the learning needs and add value to the business.
3. Cost effective to deliver due to economies of scale (number of participants).
4. Opportunity for the employee to network.
5. Potential to acquire a wider range of skills.

Disadvantages:

1. The training might not relate directly to the job.
2. Can be more expensive due to travel, subsistence and accommodation costs.
3. Down time as employee is not working.
4. Employees may need more time to practice what they have learned.

## Continuing professional development (CPD)

The benefits of CPD can viewed from the perspective of the employee and the employer. From an employees' viewpoint, CPD enables them to ensure their knowledge and skills are up-to-date. It also safeguards the maintenance of the professional standard of their qualifications and registrations. CPD provides credibility and enables the employee to highlight their achievements. It provides employees with knowledge and technical capabilities to deal with change and can help with an employees' career progression.

The main benefits of CPD to employers are that it ensures employee's standards within the business are externally verified and that best practice may be shared.

## Advantages of continuing professional development

1. Highlights the commitment of the employee to self-development.
2. Helps the employee assess their learning and appreciate its value.
3. Enables the employee to recognise their knowledge gaps and address their knowledge deficit.
4. Assists the employee in planning and achieving career goals.
5. CPD is a sign of the employees' professionalism.
6. CPD provides a pathway for the employee to up-skill and engage in new practices.
7. CPD helps the employee improve their employability.

Disadvantages:

1. The employee or employer may incur a cost to maintain their CPD membership and registration of the professional body.
2. The CPD route and learning events attended by the employee may not relate to their work within the business.

3. The employee may be more orientated towards developing their career externally (more opportunities) rather than with the business. Consequently the employee may leave and the business incurs recruitment and selection costs.

The effectiveness of a L&D event can be assessed via a number of models (Tamkin et al., 2002) e.g. The Kirkpatrick four-level model. Many of the training evaluation models are variations and developments based on Kirkpatrick's model. The four-levels in the Kirkpatrick model are: Reaction; Learning; Behaviour; and Results.

**Level 1, Reaction** – relates to how participants responded to the learning event. This is usually measured by participants completing a participation questionnaire.

**Level 2: Learning** – the degree of change that

occurs with the participant in relation to knowledge, skills, or attitude with regards the learning and development objectives. This is typically assessed by performance tests.

**Level 3: Behaviour** – the scale of the change(s) in job behaviour as a consequence of the learning and development event, that is, the application of the learning. The assessment methods employed to measure this are observation(s) and productivity data.

**Level 4: Results** – The return on investment from the employee having attended the learning and development event. Measurement methods include sales, new business generated, cost reductions, and improved quality. All of the previous measures can be linked back to the return on investment of the learning and development event.

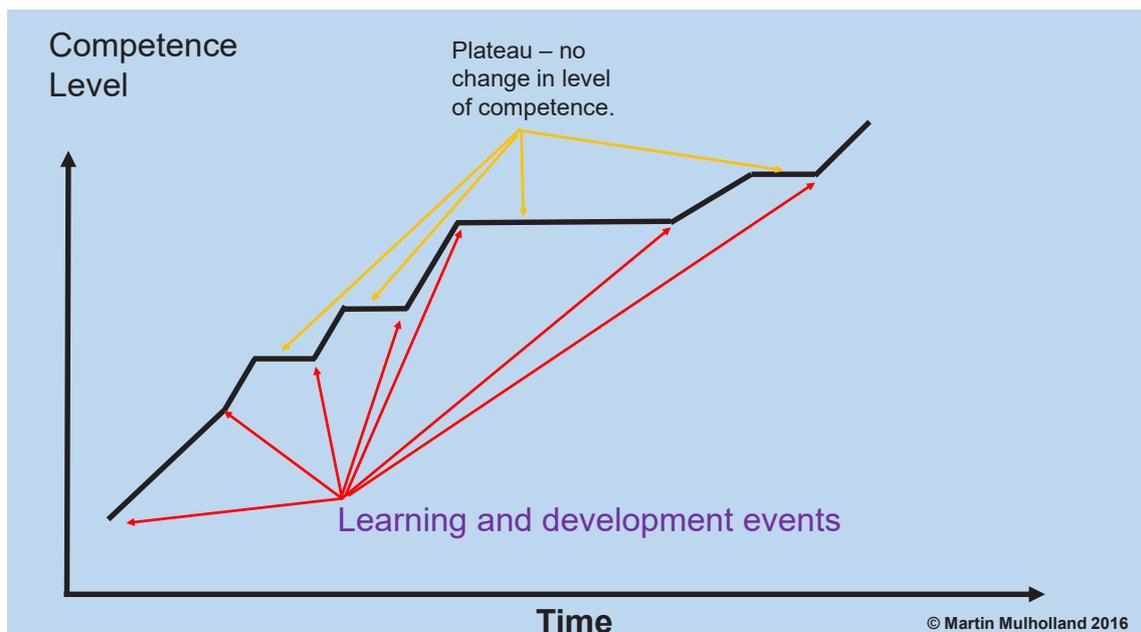


Figure 3 Learning and development impact on the employee

### Evaluation of the possible outcomes of learning and development (L&D) for employees

There are a number of possible outcomes for employees after they engage in L&D event(s). These outcomes include:

- raised competence level; higher level of performance;
- contribution to cost reduction; increase in employee retention;
- better employee engagement; higher level of motivation;
- enhanced career development opportunity; promotion;

- reward and remuneration;
- more capable of coping with business change;
- greater understanding of the business;
- being able to make informed decisions;
- enhanced working relationships;
- increased networking;
- clearer understanding of the business;
- enhanced professional credibility;
- being able to meet regulatory requirements (minimize risk).

Fig. 3 provides a range of information relating to learning and development e.g:

1. As a result of L&D event(s) the competence levels of employees will be raised as illustrated

- in Figure 3 (the steepness of the line after the start of the L&D event(s) indicates how quickly the competence level rises).
2. The L&D event(s) result in the employee having a higher level of performance in their job.
  3. After the L&D event(s) the employee may engage in new working practices that contribute to cost reduction;
  4. L&D event(s) can increase in employee retention as the employee feels that the business values them and is prepared to invest time and resource in their development.
  5. L&D event(s) can foster better employee engagement through the two-way process of communication and participation.
  6. L&D event(s) instils a higher level of motivation as the employee appreciates the support and investment the business is prepared to invest in them.
  7. L&D event(s) enhances the career development opportunities for the employee by broadening / deepening their competence level.
  8. The promotion; reward and remuneration system within the business may be tied to a competency framework. The higher the competence level the greater the level of reward.
  9. L&D event(s) may make the employee more capable of coping with business change as they have acquired the knowledge and skills needed for different types of jobs in the future.
  10. L&D event(s) provide the employee with a greater understanding of how the business works and how they can help the business achieve its objectives.
  11. L&D event(s) help the employee to make better decisions as they have acquired a better insight into the problem solving.
  12. The employee is able to enhance working relationships through the acquisition of soft skills (communication, empathy, and patience).
  13. Through attendance at the L&D event(s) the employee has forged relationships with other participants and increased their network.
  14. L&D event(s) has given the employee a clearer understanding of the business' learning culture and how it impacts upon employees and the business (Rogovsky and Tolentino, 2010).
  15. The employee can enhance their professional credibility by upgrading to a higher level after completing a L&D event(s).
  16. L&D event(s) enable can enable employees to meet regulatory requirements (minimize risk).



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