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2020 Learning Business Trends

Leading Learning podcast

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Take-Aways

- Learning experience design is increasingly placing the learner – rather than the learning method – front and center.
- Another emerging trend in the learning business is that conference planners are beginning to prioritize sustainability.
- Learning designers are mapping out pathways for learners to access the career and life they want.
- Quantum computing and 5G cellular are opening up new possibilities for how and what learners learn.
- Learning businesses are approaching maturity in their marketing efforts.
- Artificial intelligence is continuing to transform learning.

Recommendation

Professional development, continuing education and lifelong learning are seeing rapid change in 2020 – the result of digitalization, technological developments and cultural forces. While trends such as microlearning, personalization and digital badges have already received significant attention, others are only beginning to appear as factors that will shape the learning business in coming years. In a forward-looking episode of the *Leading Learning* podcast, hosts and learning business consultants Jeff Cobb and Celisa Steele look beyond familiar topics to focus on emerging opportunities and approaches.

Summary

Learning experience design is increasingly placing the learner – rather than the learning method – front and center.

Several trends are shaping the learning business in 2020. Learning experience design (LXD) is breaking with traditional instructional design – and its emphasis on methodology – to focus on the learner.

“Learning is definitely an ongoing process. It’s not a single event, and we need to stop treating it like that.”

LXD recognizes that the learner is involved in a larger process rather than a discrete, disconnected learning experience. Instead of imposing formal structures and artificial objectives on the learner, LXD honors the way people really learn.

Another emerging trend in the learning business is that conference planners are beginning to prioritize sustainability.

Due to increasing environmental awareness among participants, conference organizers are giving more attention to environmental impact. They’re reducing plastic waste – such as water bottles – and looking at venues’ environmental certifications. Many large conferences depend on participants’ flying in, but virtual events will become more common, as they offer benefits beyond reduced carbon footprints. Virtual conferences can also enhance accessibility, allowing attendance of people whose budget or family responsibilities would prevent them from participation in a place-based event.

Learning designers are mapping out pathways for learners to access the career and life they want.

For years, learning designers have offered learning paths to create coherence for learners. Pathways go farther – they provide a road map that will take a learner through the necessary learning experiences to reach a career or life goal.

“Often, it’s not helpful to access a big catalog of courses. You need to know what you need to do.”

The Institute for Governmental Purchasing Public Procurement's pathways program offers an example: Based on competencies and credentialing, it offers personalization to accommodate public procurement professionals' needs as they move through the stages of their career. Pathways help learners navigate the plethora of constantly changing learning options to help them reach their objectives.

Quantum computing and 5G cellular are opening up new possibilities for how and what learners learn.

Quantum computing is enabling lightning-speed processing, while 5G cellular is accelerating wireless access and boosting capacity in homes, workplaces and public spaces. These technologies will broadly affect daily life and work. They'll expand the potential for using big data and real-time sensor data, such as for the Internet of Things. They'll also enable the use of virtual reality. Quantum computing and 5G will affect both what learners will learn and how they'll learn.

Learning businesses are approaching maturity in their marketing efforts.

Learning professionals appear to be developing expertise in marketing – thanks to intensifying competition and the growing complexity of channels for reaching learners. Professionals are maturing in five areas of marketing: use of data, both to inform learning design and to enhance marketing activities; branding, to build name awareness; omnichannel marketing, including email, SEO, social media and other approaches; content marketing, to attract new learners; and copywriting, a skill that many learning professionals have proven slow to develop.

Artificial intelligence is continuing to transform learning.

Artificial intelligence (AI), in concert with quantum computing, promises to enable truly personalized learning. AI will improve the ability to select learning offerings based on individual needs and to assess changes in the job market so that learning professionals can predict the corresponding shifts in learning needs. AI will also increasingly offer new features for enriching learning experiences and for improving assessment.

About the Podcast

The **Leading Learning** podcast informs leaders and aspiring leaders in the business of lifelong learning, continuing education and professional development. Hosts **Jeff Cobb** and **Celisa Steele** are also the cofounders of Tagoras, a consultancy for learning business organizations.



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