

As we begin to return to work following the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many organisations are reimagining training.

Prompted by lockdown, social distancing, furlough and the potential of a second spike, many companies are seeking ways to rapidly digitise their face-to-face approaches.

By moving online, the ambition is to maintain business continuity by providing equally successful learning experiences across onboarding, talent growth, skills and ethics.

Organisations are turning to technology to provide answers and finding a wealth of innovation to support successful transition.

Here are five challenges faced by L&D now, and how innovative technologies and approaches can help overcome them.

1. Learners are harder to reach

In April 2020, 49.2% of UK adults were working from home as a result of social distancing measures.¹

Most organisations will have to communicate with learners who are not located in the office, whether this is due to the rising trend of remote working, exacerbated by the pandemic, or to support the enormous number of deskless workers.

Deskless workers include shop assistants, construction workers, warehouse staff, postal workers, wait staff, nurses and carers, all of whom need access to the latest information and training. Yet, one of the biggest challenges is that often these people don't have access to desktop computers at work, or even a work email address.

To make this even more challenging, deskless workers often work in shifts, making face to face training difficult to coordinate.

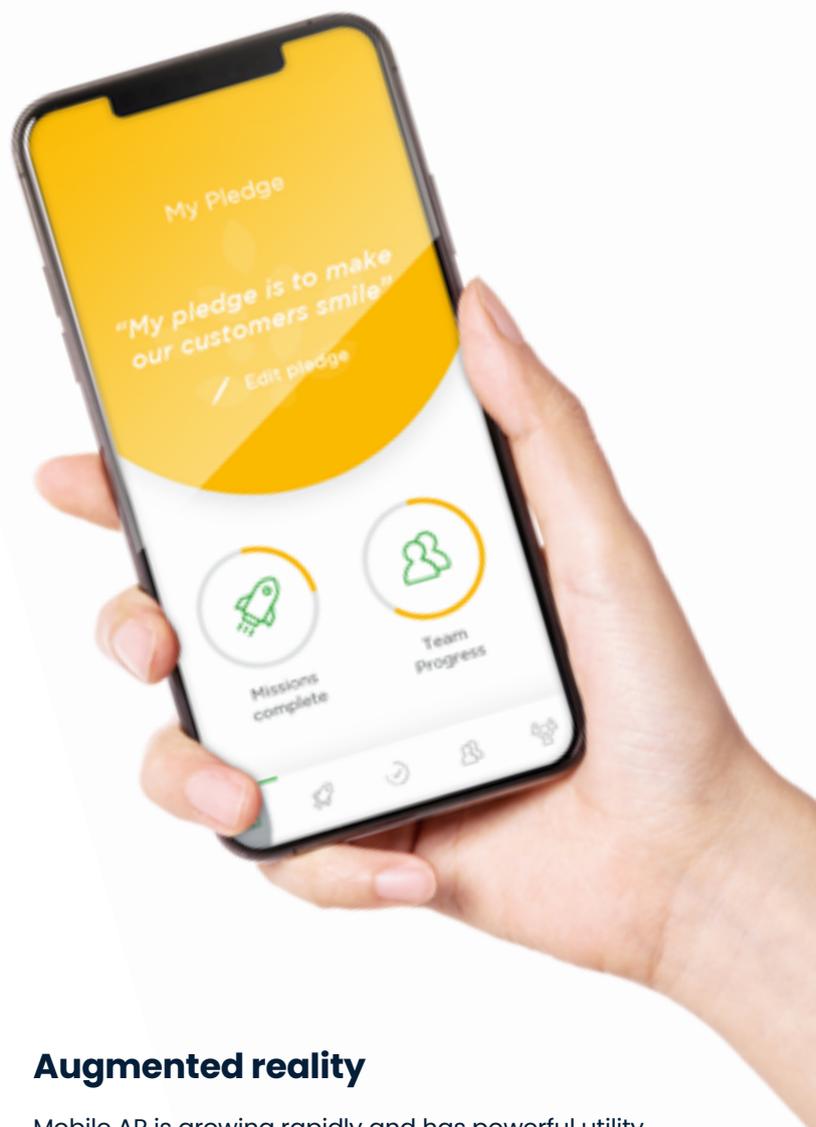
So what strategies do we have to support remote and deskless workers?

Mobile and microlearning

Multi-device, responsive learning, offline Apps and adaptive learning platforms are making mobile learning accessible to anyone with a smartphone. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategies are already established in many workplaces.

Enhanced performance in the flow of work

Learning in the flow of work is a big ambition for many companies. Consider leveraging tools and systems people use in their daily work to deliver reminders, resources and job aids.



Augmented reality

Mobile AR is growing rapidly and has powerful utility in augmenting useful information into the work environment. It can also be used to support team collaboration through meaningful play.

¹. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirustheukereconomyandsocietyfasterindicators/23april2020>

2. Difficult to practise in a REDI environment

For learning to stick, people need to practise, but in risky, expensive, dangerous or inaccessible (REDI) environments, simulating experience is the only way.

Many companies want their employees to experience 'learning by doing', and we know from Kolb² and Beard and Wilson³ that experience is the best way to learn a new skill.

It can be challenging to transport learners to various locations or high-risk environments such as warehouses, factories, or building sites. Not to mention travel time means lost productivity.

Here are two digital methods for training workers in REDI environments.

Virtual reality

VR allows users to eliminate the outside world and immerse themselves in a simulated scenario. Appropriate use cases include health and safety, procedures, systems and processes, and increasingly, skills training for customer service or HR.

Exploratory 3D

3D representations of plants, equipment and objects are becoming increasingly easy to produce. There is exciting potential for learners to experience a factory, explore a product or interact with a world from desktop, laptop or mobile.



Dog safety at Royal Mail

Sponge's VR project for Royal Mail is helping to keep postmen and women safe from dog attacks.

2. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>

3. <https://www.koganpage.com/product/experiential-learning-9780749483036>

3. Imperative to upskill rapidly

Job uncertainty caused by the pandemic is contributing to people feeling their job is at risk, but hungry to reskill or upskill.

Automation has been another contributing factor to emerging job instability. 44% of workers with low education are at risk of automation by the mid-2030s and women are more likely to be affected than men.⁴

People are beginning to understand that online learning is a consumable service and there's been a boom in online learning throughout lockdown.⁵

It is important for businesses to respond by providing a portfolio of self-directed learning options for users to discover.

Career planning portals

Organisations keen to retain talent are providing transparent web-portals to show staff what jobs are available and what skills are required.

Games

Games build skills quickly and increase mastery, giving people the chance to practise and engage in a fun experience.



"GDPR off-the-shelf Sorted game ticked every box for me and Krispy Kreme. It took a boring topic and made it more engaging so that employees are quite happy to complete the training."

Nicky Prangley
HR Services Manager,
Krispy Kreme

GDPR – Sorted!
Our suite of GDPR, Cyber Security and Anti-bribery mobile games are helping learners globally mitigate human error.

4. <https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/economics/insights/the-impact-of-automation-on-jobs.html>

5. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-lockdowns-spark-boom-in-home-schooling-for-grown-ups-11590053401>

4. Keeping up with increasing expectations



Responsive elearning with a web-like feel.



Elearning and microsite created for London Makes It Possible, enables members to learn about the London Market.

Lockdown has driven internet use up by 70% and streaming by 12%.⁶ Online experiences shape people's expectations and in learning, we need to keep up.

Video streaming accounts for over 60% of all internet traffic, followed by web (13%), gaming (8%) and social (6%).⁷

Content is very much alive. The MOOC market is set to grow from \$4bn in 2018 to over \$20bn by 2023⁸ and employers are increasingly curating content, (think LinkedIn Learning), to help employees stay relevant.⁹

This is giving rise to an emerging kind of 'foraging' learner; one who is self-motivated, hunts out knowledge and is familiar with on-demand learning

and streaming services.

Upgrade your content

Learning needs to be modern, web-like and feature content in a modality people prefer – videos, games and immersive media. All companies need a strategy for User Generated Content (UGC).

Modern platforms

Platforms are a key aspect of the user experience. Ease of navigation, social features and mobile access are essential. Address the experience of your external population too, such as members, customers and channel partners.

6. <https://bit.ly/3gMioZ8>

7. <https://www.sandvine.com/global-internet-phenomena-report-2019>

8. <https://www.marketsandmarkets.com/Market-Reports/massive-open-online-course-market-237288995.html>

9. <https://bit.ly/2WchblO>

5. L&D data is insufficient

'Completions' is simply not an effective measure for determining whether learning has been effective, yet our polls show more than 95% of organisations are collecting it as the dominant metric.

L&D want data to help track business impact, improve the user experience and make evidence-based recommendations to stakeholders.¹⁰

There are now platforms and technologies that capture more granular data and provide an evidence base from which to make decisions.

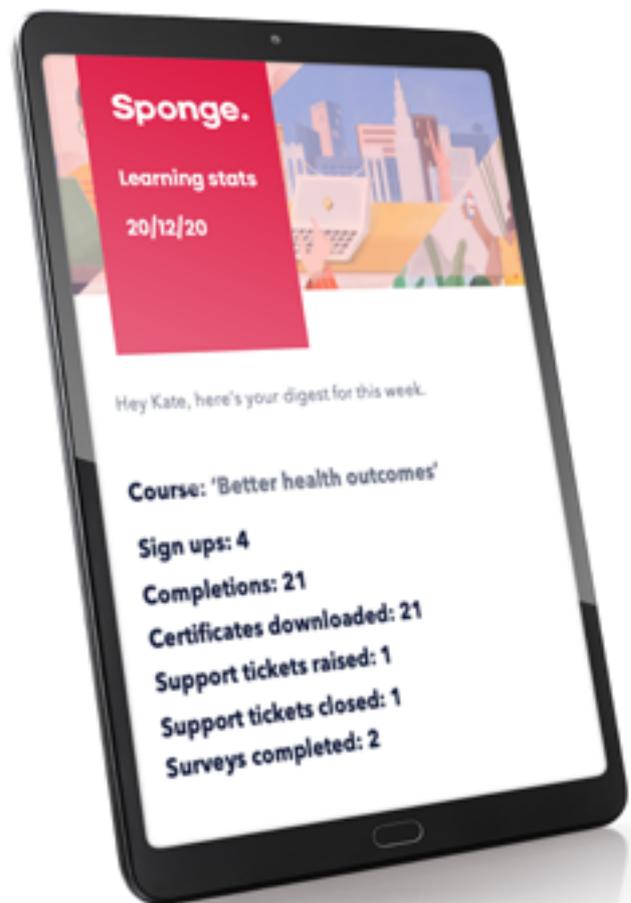
Data is also being used in creative ways to enhance the learning experience using real-time leaderboards, social benchmarking and diagnostics.

Insights driven dashboards

Learning Management Platforms featuring xAPI and Learning Record Stores (including our own Spark platform), display individual learner data and use algorithms to determine trends. Managers can see which concepts people are struggling with and modify content accordingly.

Email digests

Digests are weekly 'snapshot' emails that present relevant quantitative data from a learning campaign, such as log-ins, sign-ups, completions, diagnostics and feedback via Survey Monkey, all in one place.



¹⁰. <https://wearesponge.com/sixways>

About Sponge

Sponge creates pioneering learning that empowers employees to perform better at work so organisations stay ahead of the game.

We apply human-centered design approaches to solve the thorniest performance challenges faced by a global workforce.

By combining the science of learning, powerful creativity and deep technical expertise, we build solutions for better retention, better recall and better transfer. Our approach drives real business outcomes improving growth, efficiency and risk mitigation.



External Learning Solution of the Year - 2020



Best Advance in Compliance - 2019



Company of the Year - 2018



Learning Provider of the Year - 2019



Best Commercial Programme - 2019



Learning Developer of the Year - 2019



Learning Designer of the Year - 2019

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