

# Lead with need

A quick guide for learning managers

We know we want to deliver effective training, but what does “effective” actually mean? We can only measure effectiveness if we’ve determined what we want the effect to be.

In other words, we can’t even begin to design a learning solution until we’ve understood the problem we’re trying to solve – until we’ve properly uncovered the business need. And this can mean challenging what project sponsors say. So, how can we do this?

## Talk to learners, early and often

“ ***It’s not just about the solution. It’s about the context in which that training is likely to be experienced.*** ”

- Jason Baker, Founder and Director of Snowfish Learning

A training need will often be communicated from the top, so it’s easy to steam ahead creating your materials without checking in with learners at all. But taking the time to work with those who’ll be completing the learning can offer invaluable insights.

- Get their thoughts on the training need – where has it come from?
- Walk through what the required performance looks like now - what are the challenges?
- What is the reality of when and how they will be able to complete training?

## Do your research

“ ***Keep on top of data because that’s how you become a strategic adviser rather than the order-taker.*** ”

- Lori Niles-Hofmann, Co-founder of NilesNolen

To be able to get involved with strategic discussions around training, you need a good understanding of the information they’re based on. This means taking the time to find out what’s really going on in an organization so you can advise on the best learning solution.

- Talk to people. Informal and formal interviews will give you valuable qualitative data on what is really happening.
- Set up data feeds to keep your finger on the pulse of the digital information on the organization that’s changing daily - intranets can be a good lead.
- Ask for access to audits and reports if these exist for the area of the business you’re working with
- Get familiar with customer feedback. This will give you a clear insight into areas of strength and weakness.

## Connect the solution and the needs

**“ How did the solution actually deliver against this needs analysis? Why did you choose that particular type of experience in order to achieve the measurable goals that you set out? ”**

- Jason Baker, Founder and Director of Snowfish Learning

Your understanding of the training needs should stay with you throughout the lifecycle of a project as something you can continually refer back to. This way, you can be clear about how the solution meets the need.

- Make sure everyone involved in a project understands the training need that's driving it - document it centrally and link to it in design docs, etc.
- Document evidence to back up the needs you are trying to meet, so it's clear how the need has been identified - include quotes, process analysis, and/or data.

## Question everything

**“ It's the job of L&D to look a little further. ”**

- Lori Niles-Hofmann, Co-founder of NilesNolen

Some organizations consider their L&D teams as transactional producers, whereby the business determines exactly what kind of learning they want to develop and simply tasks L&D with its creation. To move away from this model, it's important that L&D professionals feel confident in questioning the training needs they've been presented with, to dig deeper into what is really happening.

- If a learning solution is requested, ask which need it aims to meet.
- If a training need is presented, ask how it has been identified.
- Encourage the business to interrogate the need further – why has that need come about? What is the behavior that needs to change? What else could be at play?