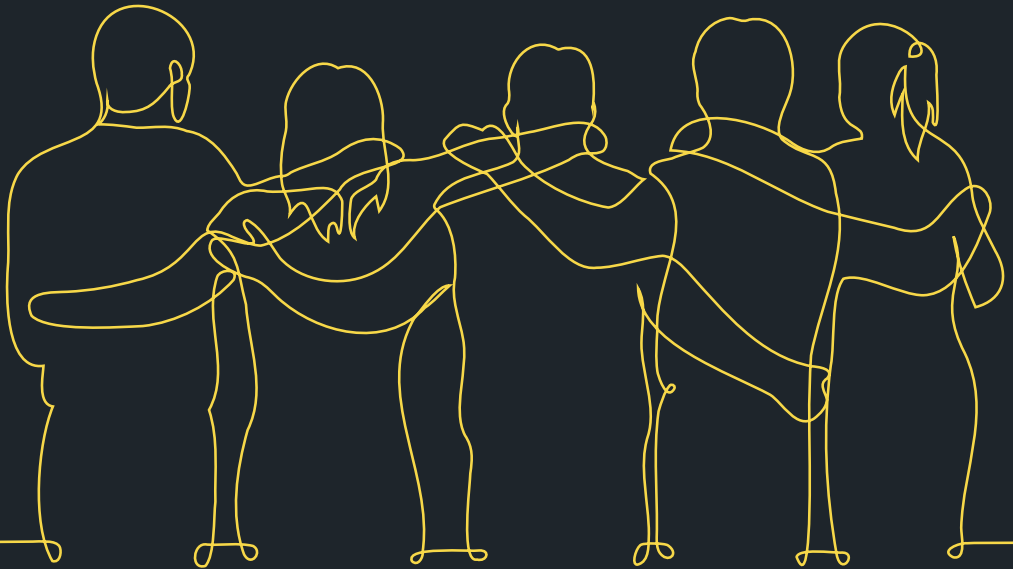


5app.

The practical guide to
**building your
learning
culture**



Where to begin?

In L&D, we talk a lot about 'learning culture'. But what does that really mean? How do you know if you have one? And if you don't, where on earth do you start?

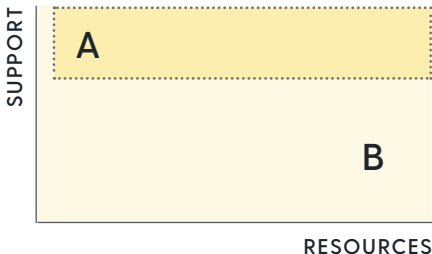
You can have the most dazzling learning strategy in the world, with a giant budget and a learning team of 1,000... but if your learning culture doesn't support your plans, it's never going to take off. Equally, you can do a lot on a tiny budget as long as your employees feel safe to innovate and are actively encouraged to learn by an enthusiastic leadership team.



+ A limitless learning culture

L&D teams often fall into the trap of thinking they can't achieve their learning goals without more money and resources. While those things can make the journey easier, the reality is that without having the right culture in place, it's almost impossible to meet your goals.

Take a look at the chart below. Company A has a two-person L&D team with a small budget. Company B



has a 1,000-person team with a huge budget. But company A has strong leadership buy-in and a motivated, engaged audience. Company B's leaders don't understand the value of learning, and engagement is almost non-existent. Without sitting in this 'high support zone', company B's learning will never be as successful as company A's.

No matter your budget, you can always find ways to do more with less. But without buy-in at every level of your business, you just can't build a successful learning culture.

We work with businesses of all sizes every single day with huge variation in budgets and team sizes. But they all have one thing in common: a commitment to creating and maintaining a flourishing learning culture. And it really, really works. Let's find out why.

So... what is learning culture?



Learning culture refers to an organisational environment that prioritises and values continuous learning and development.

In a business, this means that employees actively seek opportunities to acquire and share knowledge and skills. Positive learning cultures embrace change, innovation and adaptation, keeping the business evolving and well equipped to deal with current and future challenges.

We can think of our learning culture as a lens through which we view the world. Understanding where our learning culture stands today, given our knowledge of our organisation's future growth and challenges, is crucial. We must ensure that our learning culture is poised to empower our people to contribute, grow and add value to the company.

In essence, we need to shift our focus back to the basics. Let's look at photography as an example.

Owning the most expensive camera won't make you a better photographer. What truly matters is understanding the fundamentals: aperture, shutter speed, light and a creative eye. It's not about the gear itself - it's about how you use it.

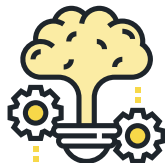
Similarly, in our pursuit of an advanced learning culture, we can't become preoccupied with the latest technology to the detriment of the basics. This approach means we can quickly end up with **all the gear and no idea.**

So... what is learning culture?

If you're wondering if your business has a learning culture right now, some of the characteristics to look out for include:

Continuous learning

Employees are encouraged by managers, the leadership team and their peers to engage in learning activities, whether that's attending training workshops and industry events or participating in online learning.



Safe experimentation



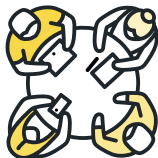
True learning cultures make people feel safe to take risks and experiment. Leadership accepts that not every risk will pay off, but nobody plays the blame game - everyone is free to try new ideas and learn from their mistakes.

Leadership buy-in

A learning culture can't exist without leadership support. If your senior leaders are supportive and genuinely engaged in your learning initiatives, you'll have a much better chance of success.



Organisation-wide collaboration



In businesses with solid learning cultures, teams don't operate in silos. Cross-team collaboration and knowledge sharing is commonplace, whether that's synchronously through multi-team meetings or asynchronously via your learning platform.

Adaptability and resilience

Learning cultures equip their people with resilience and an appreciation, not a fear, of change. Business change is both common and expected, so empowering everyone to tackle whatever comes their way can only ever be a good thing.

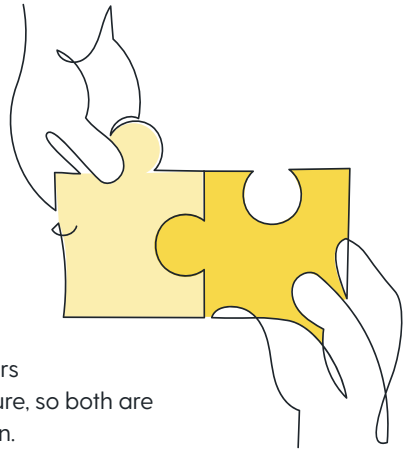


+ How does learning culture tie into company culture?

Company culture may sit outside the remit of L&D, but it's still inextricably tied into the overall HR function.

Company culture has a significant influence on learning culture, so L&D needs to understand the overall company culture inside out to ensure that the learning culture aligns with HR's ongoing culture work.

A strong learning culture both enhances and reinforces the company's broader values, behaviours and beliefs that feed into the overall company culture, so both are crucial for fostering a dynamic, resilient organisation.



+ Tying learning culture to business goals



**...start
with the
business
goals
and work
backwards**

Learning culture also has an impact on business-critical factors such as talent attraction and retention, innovation, employee engagement and morale, so the closer the ties between learning and company culture, the better the chance of success for the entire business.

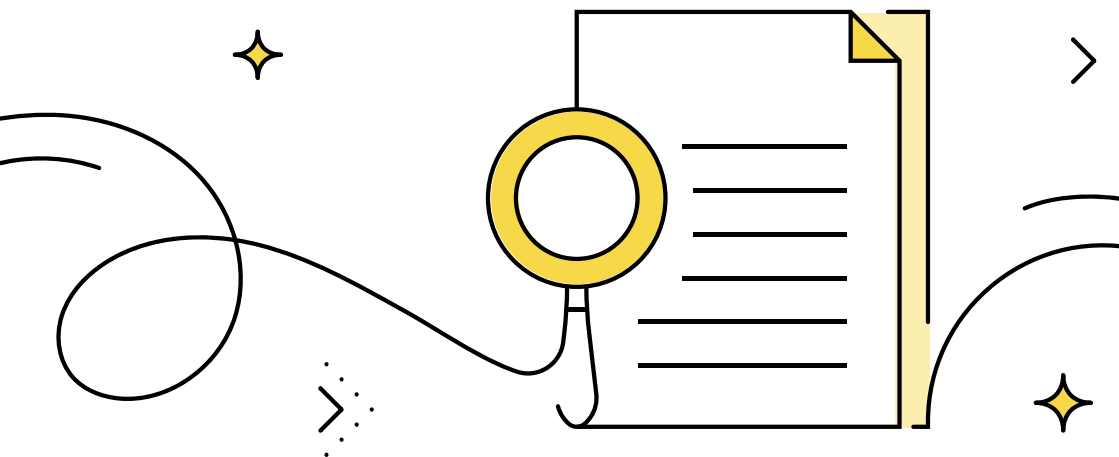
If L&D's ultimate goal is business transformation, it's crucial that your learning culture is laser-focused on supporting your business goals. The trick here is to start with the business goals and work backwards to ensure that they are always at the heart of the learning culture you build. If everyone knows what they're working towards, you'll stand a much better chance of success than building the learning culture first, then retrofitting the business goals.

Start with a learning culture audit

Naturally, the first place to start when it comes to creating a learning culture is to take stock of where you are now with an audit.

You may be thinking 'But we don't have a learning culture - there's nothing to audit!'... but that's not strictly true.

Whether you know about it or not, learning happens every minute of every day at your organisation, and now is the time to find out more about it.



+ 5 steps to auditing your learning culture

1. Develop assessment criteria

While it may be tricky to fully formalise your audit, it's still important to **develop a set of criteria** against which your existing (and future) culture can be measured. That could include leadership commitment, opportunities for skill development, employee engagement in learning and ease of accessing learning content.

2. Review existing policies and protocols

What are the current procedures and practices in place? Are there lots of hoops employees need to jump through to engage in learning? Who has access to which content? What do managers do to encourage learning? What self-directed learning exists outside formal training workshops? **Understanding the current state of play** will help you identify gaps, challenges and unnecessary barriers to learning.

3. Survey employees

Of course, it's vital that you **hear directly from your employees** about their experience of learning at your company. In your survey, you could ask if employees know what content is available, their thoughts on the quality, what's missing, what they like and what they don't like. Crucially, don't miss out on the

opportunity to ask whether or not people understand how the available learning ties into the overall business goals - if they even know what those goals are!

4. Conduct one-on-one interviews

Take the time to **hold conversations about your learning with key stakeholders**, including the leadership team, managers and employees. This will help you dig deeper into the way people learn and share knowledge. You could even ask people to show you how they would find job-critical information to give you an insight into how people really navigate your learning platform and access your resources.

5. Analyse data and report on trends

Finally, the fun part! **Take a look at how your data relates to your original criteria**. Is your leadership team on board with your learning? Do managers understand their role in driving employee development? Are employees engaging, and if not, why not? Do people know what content exists, and if so, do they know the fastest way to find it? This will then enable you to understand your current learning culture and report back to the business on what's working, what isn't and what's going to change.

+ How to analyse the findings of your audit

When faced with a spreadsheet (or several) full of data, it can be difficult to know where to start - especially with something as nebulous as learning culture. But the good news is that by now, you've already identified the business goals you're working towards, so you can use them as a starting point for analysing your findings.

In particular, take a look at:

Trends

- First, take a critical look at the numbers themselves, both from your survey and from your wider business metrics. That means things like completion rates, engagement rates and learner satisfaction ratings, alongside things like sales figures, employee turnover and your Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Themes

- From these trends, you can start spotting patterns emerging. Are specific teams more engaged than others? Do managers view learning more favourably than senior leadership? Are course completion rates low across the board? Are people completing learning, but your sales or NPS still lag behind business targets?

Perceptions

- Compare your data and findings with the qualitative perceptions of your learning offering gathered from your survey and interviews. Does your learning have a bad reputation, and is there a good reason for that? Do people generally appreciate your learning, but it's not having the desired impact? How do perceptions align with the actual performance of your learning?

Context

- Finally, consider any contextual factors that might be affecting your learning. Has your business undergone a lot of change recently? Has there been a hiring freeze? Is your industry facing particular challenges that are putting additional pressure on your employees?

Once you've performed your analysis, be sure to present your findings to your key stakeholders. While it's important to show the weaknesses you've identified, it's just as crucial to show the strengths of your existing learning culture. Then, you can reveal how you plan to address any gaps or overcome challenges as you start making improvements.

With your audit complete, it's time to start rebuilding the all-important foundations of your learning culture.

Getting it right from the ground up

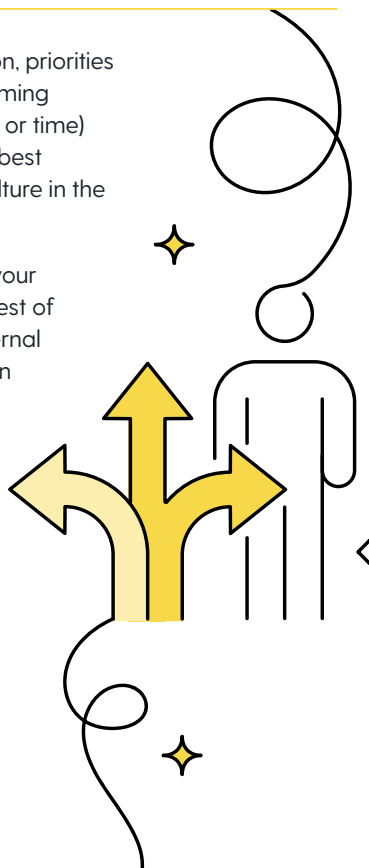
We never said that building (or rebuilding) your learning culture was easy, but it's absolutely vital if you're looking to make a genuine business impact. But it's not all down to L&D. In fact, much of the change starts with leadership...

+ Leadership's role in cultivating a learning culture

Like with almost everything else in an organisation, priorities are set and reinforced from the very top. Overcoming resistance (usually surrounding budget, resources or time) and earning leadership buy-in will put you in the best position to iterate on and evolve your learning culture in the short- and long-term.

Once you have buy-in, make the most of it! Ask your business leaders to share their support with the rest of the business, which could be via your regular internal comms (such as an employee newsletter) or, even better, as a personalised video message.

5app's content partner Hemsley Fraser makes use of this approach. Hemsley Fraser's CEO Lynsey Whitmarsh regularly posts video clips to employees via their 5app learning and comms platform, ensuring everyone hears directly from Lynsey in her own words about important topics. Imagine the impact it would have on your learning culture if you could get a video endorsement from your C-suite!

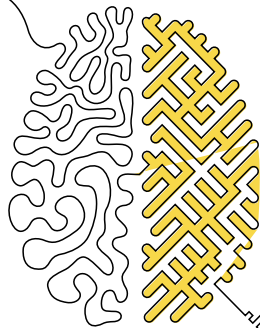


+ Fostering a growth mindset

Of course, the success of your learning culture doesn't solely hinge on your leadership team.

A lot of it also depends on the mindset of your employees. Are they stuck in the status quo, or do they have growth mindsets, meaning they actively seek out opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge?

Below, we've put together some of the common objections we hear from learners, and how you can overcome them to foster a growth mindset across your company.



If they say...	Focus on...
"I don't have time for learning!"	Carving out dedicated learning time in everyone's calendars, as well as creating short microlearning resources
"I don't know where to find what I need!"	Streamlining your learning platform for more intuitive, user-friendly navigation and content organisation
"I don't know what skills I need to develop!"	Equipping managers with the leadership skills needed to develop their employees
"I don't see the point!"	Clarifying how your learning programme feeds into achieving overall business goals
"I don't feel like my efforts are recognised!"	Awarding points, badges or certifications for engaging with learning, and celebrating learning achievements via internal comms

+ Creating a supportive environment

A healthy learning culture relies heavily on having a supportive environment where everyone feels safe to take risks, experiment and innovate.

This is where learning culture most closely aligns with your overall company culture, which is where L&D needs to work alongside the wider HR team. Outside pure learning impact, a supportive culture will boost talent retention, morale and happiness, which can only be positive for the overall business impact of your efforts.

Now is the time to start asking questions about the way learning happens right now. Is it safe for people to learn the way they want to? Are employees too time-pressured to dedicate time to learning? Are there any red flags in your culture that make people unable or unwilling to learn?

If you determine that your culture isn't supportive enough (and if it's not, don't panic - you're far from alone here), L&D and HR should work closely together to fix that. It usually means driving wider cultural change to create an environment that supports self-directed learning, alongside signposting to relevant, useful resources to support everyone in their roles and longer-term career development.



If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.



- Henry Ford

Values to cultivate to support your learning culture include:



Collaboration



Creativity



Openness



Transparency



Resilience



Flexibility

What role does employee engagement play?

It should come as no surprise that employee engagement has a significant role to play in your learning culture.

You can lay all the groundwork to create a thriving culture, but if your people aren't engaged, it's never going to take off.

But as we all know, there's no magic bullet to transform a disengaged workforce overnight. It takes a multifaceted approach with a deep understanding of what motivates your people, what makes them feel valued and what truly inspires them.

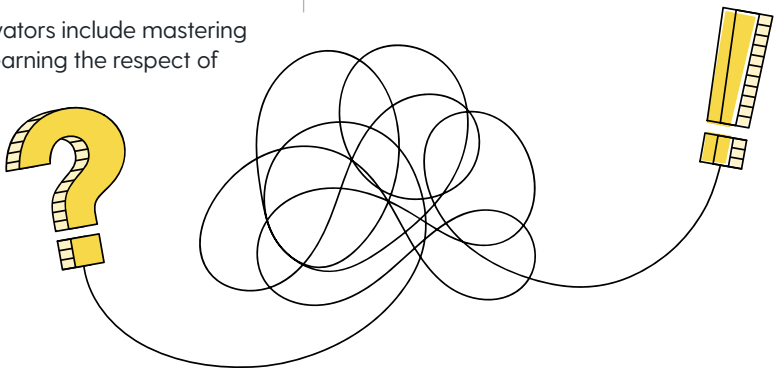
...there's no magic bullet to transform a disengaged workforce overnight.

+ Understanding employee motivators

Let's be realistic here: plenty of employees are motivated by money. That may come in the form of earning pay rises or bonuses or chasing promotions - but whatever it looks like, this is one of the top motivators for many of your employees.

(both within the business and from the wider industry) and participating in meaningful work. Understanding what gets your employees up in the morning can give you invaluable intel when it comes to getting them engaged and - dare we say it - excited about learning.

Other motivators include mastering new skills, earning the respect of colleagues



+ Making motivators work to your advantage

This is all about clarifying the ‘What’s in it for me?’ for your employees. Why should they engage with your learning? Why will it benefit them to upskill and reskill? Why will your learning help them achieve their personal and professional goals?

Again, this is where joining the dots between your learning and your organisational goals comes in. If your business achieves its targets, it benefits everyone - the company thrives, people get their bonuses, new roles open up, promotions are offered, there’s more budget and desire to offer professional development.

Recognition and rewards go a long way to maintaining employee engagement. While dangling the carrot that motivates them will give them a focus and a reason to learn and share knowledge in the long term, it also pays to drip-feed mini motivators to reinforce learning behaviours. This could mean collecting points, awarding prizes (such as ‘Learner of the Month’) or simply recognising improved performance in your internal comms.



How Greystar created a self-directed learning culture

GREYSTAR™

International real estate company Greystar had a challenge many businesses will recognise. They had a lot of great content and resources, but the learning culture was lacking.

Despite having access to a wealth of useful content, employees were struggling to find the information they needed, when they needed it, which prevented them from delivering top-quality service to landlords and tenants around the world.

That's why they decided to rethink their approach to learning - and that meant starting with the learning culture. Greystar's employees wanted to be empowered to find relevant content independently, without requiring lengthy, formal training, which meant creating an efficient, self-directed learning culture.

For Greystar, learning academies were the answer. This solution, using 5app academies, puts information right at each employee's fingertips, simply by restructuring the content they already have. The L&D team worked closely with each department to create separate academies around specific roles, functional areas and locations to meet the unique needs of each audience.

A solution as simple as getting the right content to the right people at the right time was enough to completely transform Greystar's learning culture, equipping everyone with exactly what they needed at the point of need.

This resulted in a staggering 328% increase in learner engagement as it became easier for everyone to find content that would support genuine performance improvement.

This was the ultimate 'do-more-with-less' solution for Greystar, as not only did it streamline operational efficiency and knowledge sharing processes, but a 15% improvement in Greystar's Net Promoter Score (NPS) made the benefits of learning crystal clear for everyone.

Now what?

Of course, there's no one-size-fits-all solution to reignite a company's learning culture.

But one thing is clear: getting the right content to the right people at the right time really does work to drive engagement and performance, which makes it easier for the L&D team to prove why learning matters.

L&D teams don't have limitless budgets, and there is constant pressure to do more with less. That means empowering employees to find what they need themselves - and that's where academies come in.



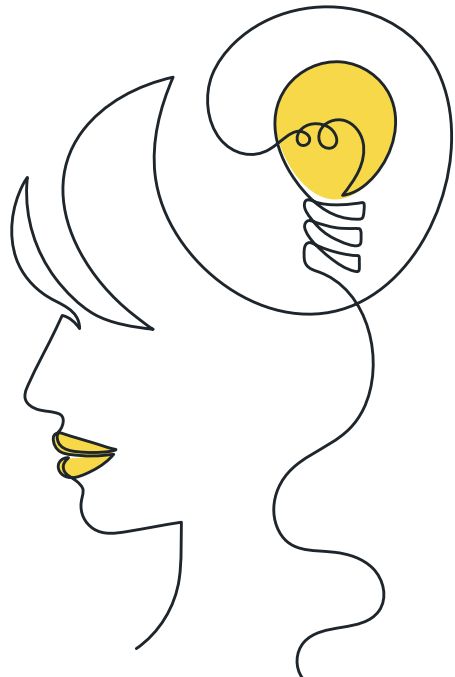
...getting the right content to the right people at the right time really does work



+ Self-service, self-directed learning

In our pursuit of a self-directed learning culture, we first need the content people can self-serve from.

Many companies already have this, but maybe it's spread among multiple platforms, or it doesn't look great, or it's just plain hard to find. No matter how good the content is, it's not going to have the desired impact if we're standing in the way of our own learning culture.



Shameless plug time...

That's where academies come in.

5app academies take the great content you already have and organise it into highly relevant, personalised collections to streamline the learning and knowledge sharing process. Sounds simple, and it is... if you have the right tech in place. 5app's learning and comms platform champions elegantly simple learning, so combining this user-friendly tech with the accessibility of academies is exactly what you need to lay the foundations for your self-directed learning culture.

+ Let's get started

Curious about how academies can help you create a learning culture that truly supports your organisation's goals? We hear you.

That's why we're offering you a **free 30-minute consultation** with 5app's Chief Learning Officer Steve Thompson. Steve was the brains behind academies during his time at Greystar, so he knows better than most why getting the foundations right is key to transforming a learning culture.



...this is exactly what you need to lay the foundations for your self-directed learning culture.

A stylized line-art illustration of a rocket ship, angled upwards and to the right, with a trail of motion lines behind it. The rocket has a circular window and a pointed nose.

Ready to find out more?

Book your session with Steve, or see 5app academies for yourself with Try 5app.