

Interactive Workshop Findings:

How Can CL&D Make Better Use of Omnichannel Learning to Boost Engagement and Impact?

Insight, perspective, and advice from Life Sciences Training and Educators Network (LTEN) members on the pros and cons of multichannel versus omnichannel learning approaches, and how to move your organization towards a “learners-first” culture that results in more efficient and effective field reps



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INTRODUCTION

At the LTEN Annual Conference in June 2022, Commercial Learning & Development (CL&D) professionals in the Life Sciences industry came together to learn, share perspective, and gain insights to take back to their organizations to shape their training strategies.

In this session led by ACTO, 30 attendees, including CL&D leaders from Abbott, AbbVie, Janssen and Vertex, participated in a lively group discussion around multichannel versus omnichannel learning, followed by a breakout exercise where four teams explored the following three questions:

- Why is a multichannel approach detrimental to learning?
- How can an omnichannel learning approach shape strategy?
- What is needed to make an omnichannel learning approach a success?

The output of this session was a rich collection of wisdom and advice from a diverse group of CL&D professionals in the Life Sciences industry, who are living it every day.



GROUP DISCUSSION INSIGHTS

To kick-off the discussion, the group considered the definitions of “multichannel” versus “omnichannel” learning.

What is Omnichannel Learning?

From a straight dictionary meaning perspective, omnichannel learning is defined as “all ways of acquiring knowledge or skill,” but what does that mean, in the real world?

One participant said it best when she described omnichannel learning as “providing the right content, at the right time, to the right audience,” while making it “personalized.” Everyone in the room agreed with this working definition.

Building upon this, the group reflected on what is meant by “all” – what are all the ways in which a person can learn?

The short list included:

- Visual (Spatial)
- Aural (Auditory)
- Verbal (Linguistic)
- Physical (Kinesthetic)
- Logical (Mathematical)
- Social (Interpersonal)
- Solitary (Intrapersonal)

While we’ve long understood that there are different learning styles, traditionally, training has been delivered in a “one-size fits-all” format. The results of this approach are not great, and this has led to a shift towards offering multiple ways of learning to a student, based upon the theory that if a person receives instruction in their preferred learning style, they will learn faster and in greater depth.



Workshop participants agreed that you must incorporate different approaches into all your learning programs – a mixture of visual, aural, and verbal in tandem – to ensure information is delivered in a way that supports different learning styles and achieves the best outcome.

The group also felt that learning is rarely delivered in a single learning style. For example, a single home study e-module may include a video, a reading assignment, and a written component. A workshop participant from a medical device company, where physical learning is critical, shared another example of this by describing how their medical device field reps learn through a hands-on experience (physical) with a voiceover (aural).

Another important element of the definition of omnichannel learning is that it is personalized. In order to personalize learning, you need to know what the learner has already done and what their experience, skill, or knowledge level is, so you can be smart in crafting their learning journey.

Finally, in defining omnichannel learning, it was agreed that such an approach helps ensure message consistency across all programs, content, and formats, which also decreases the likelihood of off-label messaging and use of unapproved content out in the field.

What is Multichannel Learning?

The conversation then shifted to understanding what is meant by “multichannel.” By definition, multichannel means “many channels.” Workshop participants agreed that what differentiates a multichannel approach from an omnichannel approach is that multichannel means many things happening in separate swim lanes – multiple efforts taking place, but independent of each other – while omnichannel suggests the efforts are unified and connected.



BREAKOUT TEAM INSIGHTS

Why is a multichannel approach detrimental to learning?

With a clear understanding of the definition of omnichannel learning versus multichannel learning, workshop participants broke up into four teams to independently dig into why a multichannel approach is detrimental to learning. Each team came back to the broader group with what they collectively believed were the top issues with a multichannel approach.

Interestingly, there was a lot of overlap in what each team identified as the critical issues with a multichannel approach. Across the four teams, these were the top issues:

- Content is disorganized, disjointed, and hard to find
- Information is inconsistent
- There is duplicative learning
- There is contradictory messaging
- There is a lack of control over content accuracy
- Updating content in silo'ed channels is labor-intensive
- Learners are confused and burned-out

All the teams referred to the fact that content is owned by multiple departments within their organizations, which contributes to a lot of the issues. Content is developed in isolation, which leads to inconsistency, duplicity, and lack of control. This, in turn, leads to a confusing learning experience for field teams, which can result in frustration and training abandonment.

“ We spoke a lot about learners being overwhelmed and confused, and just giving up and abandoning training. This just negatively impacts the whole learning experience in general. ”

- Workshop Participant



Additionally, because content is created by multiple teams and is difficult to find, sales reps struggle to find the right information when they need it, which leads to rogue, non-compliant behavior like creating their own material or pulling information from the internet. Ultimately, this reflects poorly on the CL&D teams, who are trying to prove their connection to improved field performance.

How can an omnichannel learning approach shape strategy?

Given the challenges with a multichannel approach to learning, the breakout teams then explored how an omnichannel learning approach could positively shape overall strategy, and steps CL&D teams can take to move their organizations in this direction.

Create a Learning Governance Council

Bring together stakeholders from all the different departments (Training, Marketing, Operations, Medical, Regulatory, etc.) who touch learning to ensure everyone is aligned on strategy, approach, and deliverables.

Create a Global Calendar

Detail the timing of everything so there is transparency and information sharing between different departments about when training materials and sales enablement content will be delivered.

Establish a Feedback Loop with Learners

Provide a way for learners to share how they want to learn, new topics that they want to learn about, or areas where they need more training.

Define What Success in Learning Looks Like

Define the outcomes you expect, the impact to performance, and how you will measure it.



Implement Adaptive Learning

Ensure your platform supports adaptive learning, so you can create personalized experiences based on learners' preferences and adapt to that insight in real-time.

Connect the Content

Make sure you understand all the content that will be given to a learner to ensure consistency, while also taking the opportunity to reinforce previous learning – from awareness all the way up to experiential learning.

“Our team felt it was really important to be able to connect the content across all channels, which we can't really do today.”

- Workshop Participant

The broader group all agreed that you can significantly reduce, or even eliminate, the issues that learners are experiencing today by implementing these approaches. An omnichannel approach ensures learning is organized, consistent, clear, and approved.

What is needed to make an omnichannel learning approach a success?

The closing question for the breakout teams was to consider what is needed to make an omnichannel approach to learning a success. The team conclusions were consistent and complimentary.

Think Big, Act Small

The suggestion here was to formulate a long-term strategy, but rather than try to do everything at once, be agile and “take little bites” to achieve short-term wins that, over time, get you to the bigger picture end goal.



Get Executive Buy-in

Build a solid strategy, backed by metrics, that you can use to secure executive buy-in, support, and ultimately, budget.

Secure Departmental Sponsors

To be successful, you need cooperation across multiple departments, so having an executive sponsor from each of the areas involved to champion and prioritize the strategy and goals is critical to success.

Ensure Cross-Functional Collaboration

All teams agreed that the most important ingredient for success is having open collaboration, communication, and transparency across all parties involved, to promote proactivity instead of reactivity.

Invest in a Comprehensive Learning Platform

The best laid plans will fail if you are unable to execute due to lack of infrastructure, so invest in learning technology that will enable you to put your strategy into action and monitor progress through data and metrics for continuous improvement.

Ultimately, all these efforts are tied to the goal of establishing and maintaining a learner-first culture across the organization, which leads to more efficient, effective and compliant field reps. By focusing on what's best for the learners as we think about content, messaging, training, and the platforms they must use, we strengthen the link between learning and performance.

“ You need to have collaboration and ‘student positive intent’ if you’re going to really make this work. ”

– Workshop Participant



CONCLUSION

The 2022 LTEN Annual Conference delivered a valuable arsenal of best practices and take-aways for attendees, equipping them to return to their organizations with practical strategies to elevate their training programs.

Among the tools provided were the insights gathered from this workshop focused on how CL&D teams at pharma, biotech, and medical device companies can make better use of omnichannel learning to boost engagement and impact.

The group agreed that many learning channels (multichannel) operating in silos leads to inconsistency, duplicity, and lack of control of learning content and training, while omnichannel learning – a unified, connected, and personalized approach – helps ensure message consistency across all programs, content, and formats; supports different learning styles; and reduces compliance risk, all of which leads to better outcomes.

Many excellent ideas were shared around how to set up a framework for omnichannel learning success at an organization, which included establishing a Learning Governance Council, establishing a feedback loop with learners, and ensuring “content connection,” to name a few.

Other keys to success identified by the group were to get executive buy-in, establish open cross-functional communication and collaboration, and invest in the right technology to support your strategy.

With the right strategy, infrastructure, and support, the shift to a “learners-first” company culture can become a reality.



ABOUT ACTO

ACTO, the #1 learning platform for Life Sciences, helps educate and engage learners through unified touch points and journeys, which reduces risk, improves efficiency, and boosts effectiveness. With ACTO, commercial and clinical leaders can draw deep, powerful insights to improve performance by consolidating learning into an omnichannel experience.

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