Measuring learning: wake up and smell the metrics

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Helpful insights for learning managers

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Measuring learning impact - it's one of the toughest nuts to crack for L&D teams. With endless training requests and scattered data, it's easy to feel like you're chasing your tail.

👉 So, what really matters when it comes to measuring learning? And **are you sure** business leaders don't have metrics they want you to impact?

I dug into the performance metrics business teams **actually use** - and combined that with insights from a recent L&D roundtable on evaluation. Here's what I found....

Why measuring impact matters more than ever

Proving value is more crucial than ever, especially for in-house L&D teams.

- **Cut backs**. Budgets are under scrutiny and there's been major cut backs. L&D teams need to be able to show their impact and necessity to organizations.
- **AI**. With AI set to revolutionize workplace learning, offering real-time personalization and on-the-job support, L&D professionals must lead experiments. Data is key.
- **Skill training.** As organizations push to upskill their workforce for the future, L&D teams need to prove they're up for the job and that their skills training works.

Yet most L&D teams still rely on completion rates, survey feedback, and assessment scores as their main evaluation methods.

Challenges of measuring learning impact

What is holding learning teams back from more effective measurement and evaluation?

Here are **four key challenges** uncovered in our recent roundtable that learning managers say get in their way:

1. Measurement is inconsistent. When working at scale, there's so many types of learning for so many different teams, it can be hard to find a success measure that works for all.

"One of our biggest challenges is making sure we're consistent with measurements just because of our size. We've got so many people to look at. So we just rely mostly on completions." - Roundtable participant

2. Stakeholders rarely ask for measurement data. For some learning teams, stakeholders rarely ask for data. It can feel like an uphill battle to measure learning, and one that may not feel worthwhile to all in L&D.

"For me, specifically, nobody's really clamouring for the data"

3. Data is often trapped in different systems. Making it hard to get a clear, joined-up picture of learning effectiveness.

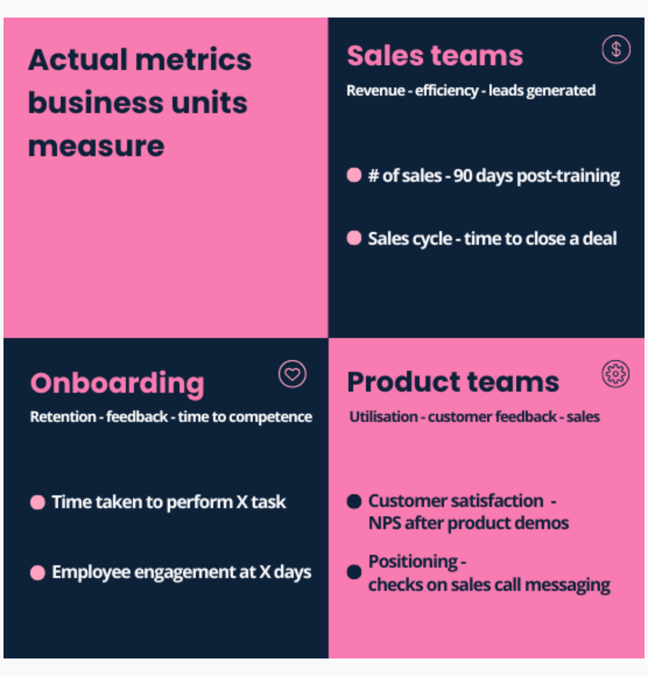
"We have several different offshoots, and they all have their own LMS system. Trying to get reporting from one to another is almost impossible."

4. Evaluation is reactive, not proactive. Measuring the effectiveness of learning can often be driven by when there's a key interest in the business.

"In my environment, there are two drivers of concern or interest in training. One is when something goes wrong, and the other is when it's the flavour of the month for leadership."

What business leaders want you to track

From our research, interest from business leaders is there! But they expect more than what L&D typically track. Here's a flavour of their actual metrics:



When we asked how they measure training impact, **sales, product, and operations leaders** said they focus on:

- **Sales performance and revenue growth.** Did the training help increase sales conversions?
- **Customer satisfaction and product adoption.** Did trained employees improve customer experience or usage of a new tool?
- **Retention and time to productivity.** Did onboarding help reduce new hire churn and get people up to speed faster?

Explore more about the actual metrics business divisions use here.

If learning isn't linked to these kinds of business outcomes, there's a high chance the business leaders aren't interested.

The rub?

Many L&D teams are drowning in requests for training, feel like the rest of the business isn't interested in what they are doing, and are stuck in completion tracking mode.

Yet if L&D professionals **proactively collaborated** with department leads, and used the metrics that already exist to show the impact of learning on those metrics, it would be a very different story.

This is the approach, Elucidat customer, **Pret** took to their employee training, and it won them an award!

In fact, L&D teams may find they get less of those low priority projects that don't tie to a business metric!

Practical steps you can take

Here's how to take a practical approach to measurement and evaluation, without getting lost in data.

1. Be proactive, not reactive

Start embedding performance measurement into the learning design process from the beginning.

Ask **before design work starts**:

- **What business problem are we solving?**
- **How do you know it's a current problem or gap that needs to be addressed?**
- **What existing business data could indicate success?**

When you start with business goals and create a collaborative conversation, measuring impact becomes easier and more meaningful.

💡 Push back on projects that don't relate to a metric or business outcome!

2. Focus on one or two metrics

Measure one or two outcomes, rather than trying to do everything. And try to hone in on a metric that already exists!

For example:

- **What's the goal?** Reduce new hire onboarding from 60 to 30 days.
- **Who is affected?** Customer service reps in Europe.
- **What should change?** Reps should resolve complaints 30% faster.
- **How to measure success?** Resolution drops from 5 to 3 days.

💡 There's no such thing as a magic metric that works across ALL projects!

You can hear more about this from learning measurement expert Dr. Alaina Szlachta in this podcast episode.

3. Use what exists already

Ask your stakeholders to show you the metrics they already track in that area, for example:

- **HR data.** Retention rates, churn, time to productivity - e.g. Workday, SAP
- **Sales data.** Revenue uplift, deal size, conversion rates - e.g. Salesforce, Hubspot
- **Customer metrics.** CSAT, product adoption, call resolution times - e.g. Qualtrics, Jimminy

4. Utilize AI

AI tools like **Tableau, Looker, Power BI, or xAPI-enabled learning platforms** can integrate multiple data sources.

For example: **You can merge LMS data** (course completions, quiz scores) **with HRIS data** (performance ratings, retention rates) to see if training is improving employee performance and retention.

5. Test small, then scale

Instead of tracking **every learner**, **find top-performing teams** & compare them to low performers.

Look for patterns: What did the successful teams **do differently? Did they engage more in learning? Did they have coaching conversations with their managers?**

"We should look at who's succeeding and learn from them, not just track everyone."

6. Tell the story, not just numbers

Leadership doesn't care about **completion rates** - they care about **business results.**

Present data visually and bring it to life with quotes and short case studies.

Keep it short and focus on what business leaders care about.

"Instead of reporting '87% completed,' say: 'Customer complaints dropped 30% after training, saving $250K in refunds.' It's a better story."

Final thought

Measurement doesn't have to be a burden. But the onus is on you to be **proactive** about it.

Start small, track what matters, and share your insights in ways that resonate with business leaders. Because when L&D proves its impact, it can only strengthen your relationships and reputation.

Having data on your side will also help you experiment and move with the times as new tech and AI capabilities grow.

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