

COMPARE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT METHODS

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL WHEN IT COMES TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AS IMPORTANT AS KNOWING WHAT SKILLS YOU NEED TO DEVELOP
IS KNOWING THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP THOSE SKILLS

USE THE TABLE BELOW TO GET AN OVERVIEW OF COMMON METHODS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

METHOD	WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?	LIMITATIONS	INVESTMENT AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
Apprenticeships	Combining a standardised industry training programme, with on the job training that allows you to develop your employee to meet the specific needs of your business.	Apprentices must be aligned to an apprenticeship standard, which may limit the areas of the business in which you could employ an apprentice. You will need to use an approved training provider to deliver the off the job element of the apprenticeship.	Apprenticeships are a significant commitment for the employer who will take responsibility for developing that apprentice on the job. You will need to consider what support will be given to the apprentice, including mentoring, and you will need to allow the apprentice to use 20% of their contracted working hours in off the job training. Apprenticeships are also a significant commitment for the apprentice, taking at least a year to complete. If your organisation has a payroll of over £3m then it will be paying an apprenticeship levy which can be used to fund apprenticeships. Organisations that do not pay the levy are only required to fund 5% of the training cost for an apprenticeship (the other 95% will be government funded.)
Accredited training courses and professional qualifications	Where accreditation is needed to meet required industry or professional standards, or where it is expected that an individual will have a specific qualification in a certain job role.	Accredited training courses and professional qualifications deliver a standardised framework of skills and knowledge, and therefore may not directly meet the needs of your business.	Professional qualifications will normally take 9 months or more to complete (depending on the qualification level) and so will require significant employee commitment. The majority of courses can be delivered in the evening or online, but some may take place during working hours. Depending on the duration and level of the qualification, courses can cost anywhere from £500 to £15000. If it is in the employee's own interest to complete a professional qualification, you may think about part funding the qualification and should consider putting a repayment contract in place with the employee in case they decide to leave the organisation.
Secondment	Expanding specific skills and knowledge through deeper, experiential learning, which the individual cannot get from their current job position. Secondments outside of the organisation are also used to strengthen relationships between the organisation and its suppliers or customers.	Secondments require an available position for the employee to move into, and the ability to back fill the position that that employee is leaving, for the duration of the secondment.	A secondment must provide clear value to the organisation and to the employee. Organisational culture also plays a part in ensuring that secondments are a positive experience for all involved. There are a number of legal implications with seconding an employee. You will need to make sure that you are fully aware of their employee rights as a secondee, and ensure that these are not breached. There will also be financial implications related to the employee's terms of employment (including salary and pension contributions, for example) and these will be different depending on whether the employee is seconded within the business, or to an external organisation.
Formal talent programmes	Completely customised programmes that develop specific skills in those employees that have been identified as high performing or high potential, for the purposes of career progression and talent retention. Programmes are often used for management training, for example, and will include a variety of activities such as training days and 360 degree reviews.	Formal talent programmes are normally only made available to a small number of employees. You should therefore ensure that you have more inclusive learning and development activities planned for the wider workforce.	Formal training programmes should be linked to business need and role availability, so that employees are able to apply their learning. Financial investment in these programmes will vary depending on the activities that are included. Costs can be minimal if all training and development activities are delivered in house, but will increase if external trainers are used, or if the programme includes away days or trips.
Project based	Experiential learning that is used for developing new skills outside of the scope of the current job role, often with a focus on career progression. Projects encourage the sharing of skills and knowledge between individuals that are unlikely to work together on a daily basis. They support a knowledge sharing culture and help to develop a multiskilled workforce.	Employees must be suitably motivated to participate in projects, and may require a base level of skills and knowledge to be able to participate. Projects should support the achievement of business objectives but not be business critical.	Standard project management considerations will apply, such as resource availability, project objectives, budget and timescales. You will need to carefully consider the suitability of individuals for project roles, and ensure that there is a positive team working culture and appropriate processes in place for the project to be successful. Investment in this type of development activity will vary depending on the requirements of the project.
Online Learning	Online learning is a flexible learning option that allows employees to complete standardised training in any location and at any time. Online learning is often more useful when delivered in bite sized chunks, with learning activities between 2 minutes and 30 minutes in length.	Online learning is less effective at supporting deeper or complex learning. In order to establish behaviours or embedded skills, online learning would need to be followed up with post course activities or assessments.	Online learning needs to be engaging and specifically relevant to your employees, for it to have a positive impact. It is worth considering a blended approach to learning, which includes both online and offline learning methods, to ensure that learning takes place and is utilised. Off the shelf learning is often sold on a per user licence fee. Bespoke online learning, which is created to specifically meet your needs, is a much more significant upfront investment (commonly costing between £1000 & £10000 per module) However economies of scale can be achieved where you have a high number of users.
Coaching	One-to-one support from a suitably experienced coach which is designed to help an individual to meet a specific goal, usually around improved performance in the workplace. Coaching is useful where short term support is required. It can be used to specifically develop employees in senior/strategic level positions, or by managers to develop all staff.	Your coaches will need to possess a specific set of skills to be effective.	You will need to consider whether it is more appropriate to hire an external coach (often used for senior management coaching), who will charge a substantial daily rate, or whether to give coaching responsibilities to people within your own organisation (Managers, for example.) If you are assigning internal coaches then you will need to ensure that those individuals have received appropriate training and that they receive compensation for the additional role that they will be undertaking. If coaching will form a significant part of your overall development plan, then building a coaching culture will help to ensure that coaching is effective.
Mentoring	Longer term support for junior practitioners, provided by senior practitioners. Mentoring can be a formal or informal arrangement which allows your senior practitioners to share their knowledge and experience, for the purposes of developing junior employees, and retaining knowledge and experience within your business. The addition of reverse mentoring allows the sharing of skills, knowledge and ideas to go both ways.	For mentoring to work, you need buy in from the employees involved.	Mentoring can be one of the best ways of developing your staff to meet the specific needs of your business, but only if you can ensure that your mentors are sharing best practice and not bad habits or incorrect working methods. When selecting mentors you need to carefully consider the candidates' suitability to the role, and their willingness to take the role on. You will need to invest in training for mentors and provide them with compensation for taking on this extra responsibility. You will also need to account for the time that mentoring takes the individual away from their core responsibilities.
Short courses	Useful for filling specific short term skills or knowledge gaps, and where being in a face to face environment provides added value (for example, sales training or specific equipment training.)	Short courses are less effective at supporting deeper or complex learning. In order to establish behaviours or embedded skills, courses would need to be followed up with post course activities or assessments.	A key consideration for short courses is whether they will be delivered on site or off site. Where the need is for a specific course limited to a few employees, or to a set period of time, then it is likely to be more cost effective for employees to travel to an external training facility. Where the need for a specific course is ongoing or specific to your organisation then it may be worth investing in an in house training provision for that course. Participation in offsite short courses can cost up to a few hundred pounds per employee. Development of an internal training provision, or hiring a training consultant is likely to be a bigger up front investment, but economies of scale can be achieved.
Shadowing	A short term activity that allows an employee to understand how a specific job is carried out in the workplace. Usually used for one of two reasons: Either to develop an employee's understanding of the context of their role, by shadowing another department for example, or shadowing a more experienced practitioner to support an employee to develop within their role.	Shadowing only allows the employee to observe skills. It does not allow them to practice skills themselves.	As with mentoring, it is important that the employee is able to observe best practice. There is no cost to this activity. However you must consider the impact on productivity for both the person that is being shadowed, and the person that is shadowing. You should also be aware that there may be some situations in which shadowing will not be appropriate (For example, in some client activities.)

INVESTMENT