



Top Ten Ways to Turn Learning into Improved Performance

The Learning Activation Checklist

L&D professionals excel at designing and delivering learning initiatives. They also know how to curate and offer learning libraries to support these programs. They've had decades of practice.

But too often the **Learning Activation and Completion** steps that turn great learning into improved performance on the job are missed. These steps begin before the formal delivery phase and continue far beyond. They include creating practice opportunities on the job, accessing and using performance support tools, and collaborating and coaching to boost performance.

So, what are the Top Ten Ways to Activate and Complete Learning for performance to improve on the job? Below is our **Learning Activation Checklist**:

1) Begin with Performance Outcomes: If you're delivering a program that has been offered in your curriculum for over a year, check in with your business sponsors to ensure the program's design and objectives are still aligned with current performance and business priorities. If not, make the appropriate revisions to ensure the formal learning - as well as the performance support tools and social learning elements - address these new goals.

If the program is new, your sponsor's business and performance objectives should be the basis of the entire learning intervention. Learning activation and completion are predicated on having a clear line of sight to the end goal. What is the skill gap that needs to be closed? Participants and their managers need to know what exemplary performance looks like.

2) Set Expectations for Application: Once the intervention is ready for delivery, set expectations with all stakeholders that the learning experience includes application on the job which is designed to improve performance. Articulate the performance gaps the learning initiative addresses and how these will align with business priorities. The earlier this positive expectation setting can be done with participants and their managers, the better. This enables:

- participants to begin thinking about and planning how they will use what they learn in their work, before they start the process.
- managers to value their role in supporting employee development that will enhance the individual's and team's results.

Research shows that a planning conversation between a manager and direct report held **before** a program begins is the single biggest positive influence on a participant's motivation to apply learning after the program. Setting the stage for this conversation with guidelines and coaching tips for managers will have a strong pay-off after the program.

3) Use Challenges to Focus Practice: Provide the learning cohort with a series of challenges, each defining a clear set of actions or tasks with outcomes that align with the desired performance outcomes. If set correctly with some stretch, the challenges will give participants both a roadmap to follow and learning experiences that will be motivating. Working on shared challenges introduces opportunities for social learning and peer coaching that energize the experiential learning. In terms of the 70:20:10 framework, the “20” provides the spark for the “70.”

4) Remind People to Keep Actions Top of Mind: In our busy work lives, it’s easy to have development priorities fall to the bottom of the To Do list. The trick is to have a process that makes it easy and engaging to remember to take action – sending a periodic “nudge.” One example is to prompt people via email or text about specific actions they can take to progress on each challenge. You can set timeframes for completion, and set expectations that people will report progress to their manager.

Another approach is to send participants periodic examples of what successful action looks like and ask them to report their progress via email. Virtual meetings can be scheduled between sessions in multi-modal programs to keep the group connected and focused on their challenges.

5) Capture and Share Evidence of Progress: Give participants a way to capture and share the actions they are taking. Encourage them to be creative and document their progress on each challenge. You can use an in-house collaboration platform, or an external platform, to encourage the group to continue learning from each other. Your facilitators can monitor the social learning activities and add virtual comments or questions. Documenting progress brings an element of visible accountability to the process that can be motivating to people.

6) Embed Performance Support in Work: Since the majority of learning occurs experientially on the job, it is critical to make performance support tools available 24/7 for easy access. Application-rich resources including job aids, checklists, scripts, and wizards can jumpstart action. When learning is embedded directly in work, the impact on performance is far more significant than learning delivered *apart from* work.

Ideally you can curate the content assets for the initiative in the same virtual space where progress posts and social learning occur. If the organization has a shared drive for performance tools, we recommend you make use of this digital location as well.

7) Activate Social Learning: Development is a team sport involving feedback and coaching. We’re all familiar with the benefits of coaching, but it remains an experience that too few people receive on a regular basis. You can influence and encourage social learning in many ways including:

- Upfront contracting with your business sponsors to identify exemplary performers and subject matter experts who may serve in mentoring roles.
- Opportunities for spaced learning, team projects and peer coaching among participants working on shared challenges.
- Clear expectations on the manager’s role in supporting practice on challenges during the application phase of the program.
- Involvement of program alumni to tap into the mentoring and peer coaching aspirations of those who are motivated to build their own coaching skills.

8) Track Real-time Metrics: With a focus on learning activation and completion, we recommend you monitor participant engagement and collaboration as they work on challenges. The sooner people get started with application, the more likely they are to complete the challenges. Engagement (defined by posting examples of progress on challenges) becomes a leading indicator that predicts the percent of people likely to improve their performance.

If you have access to a collaboration platform to gather data and track progress in real time, this task will be much easier and scalable for multiple programs.

9) Verify Improved Performance: When challenge outcomes meet the performance requirements needed to drive results, the participant's manager, coach, or mentor should provide a confirmation of success. This can be done via email or text, or comments on a shared document.

This is different from self-reported responses on a survey sent 3-6 months after a course. Verified performance results are linked to the specific skills or outcomes demonstrated on the job. You may not have the bandwidth to get verification on all challenges, but select the most important ones that align with direct business impact. You will have data to share with your sponsors that illustrates the learning intervention delivered the targeted performance improvement.

10) Scale with Technology: You can implement most of these suggestions with your own creativity and the technology you already have in place – using email, texts, and a collaboration platform or shared drive on your internal HRIS or LMS. Many collaboration platforms can address the social learning and sharing elements we have described, but they don't support the entire process.

If you want to scale the way your organization turns learning into improved performance, supporting large groups in dispersed geographic locations, specialized platforms that activate, document and measure informal and social learning can deliver significant value. We invite you to take a look at www.70-20.com to see our proven approach.

Katherine L. Granger - President

Fort Hill Company – Copyright 2017



The Learning Activation Checklist

Top Ten Ways to Turn Learning into Improved Performance

Actions	Completed
1. Begin with Performance Outcomes	☐
2. Set Expectations for Application	☐
3. Use Challenges to Focus Practice	☐
4. Remind People to Keep Actions Top of Mind	☐
5. Capture and Share Evidence of Progress	☐
6. Embed Performance Support in Work	☐
7. Activate Social Learning	☐
8. Track Real-time Metrics	☐
9. Verify Improved Performance	☐
10. Scale with Technology	☐