



The Background

Centrica has made a dedication to its colleagues that it would focus on increasing access to learning within each of its 9 businesses.

The Challenge

During this expansion of the learning programmes, the L&D team was also expanding (due to a large investment by the business) and resetting the business's expectations of how it would support learning. As part of this, new L&D talent was being onboarded and existing people moving into new, more specialised roles.

As the business was scaling, the external partners had been used to provide some key Programmes rather than the L&D team.

These two factors led to a series of challenges being uncovered that needed to be addressed.

Primarily:

- A need to formalise processes and reduce the number of L&D touch points for the programmes (at one point 3 L&D BPs and a L&D manager were supporting just 7 programmes)
- A need to strategise how Centrica could move the learning from the programmes and into the workplace (helping to embed the learning making it scalable and repeatable)
- A need to understand if the programmes were effective (very little was understood about the learning that happened in the programmes, what people thought of them and how the success of the programmes could be measured)

- A way to engage colleagues in the programmes, as low application and attendance were recurring issues
- A desire to understand if the colleague learning experience could be improved.

Align Learn Do was asked to build and implement a strategy to address these challenges.

The Solution

Align – How we went about qualifying the need

We knew that Centrica had talented and driven people running the programmes. What we couldn't find were analytics behind them. Our first step was to talk to people that had been part of last year's programmes (all of which were being repeated this year).

We talked to a cross-section of people that had been on the programmes and had been involved in supporting them. This included the colleagues that applied for the programmes, the L&D team supporting them and the Executive Sponsor for each of the programmes.

After reviewing the colleague learning experience, we focused on 3 areas that we believed would address the 5 challenges.

These were:

- **Application process** – Where the journey starts and involves communicating the programme, its aims and the benefits to potential applicants. We wanted to understand how we could reduce the number of people involved in the support without impacting the colleague learning experience
- **In Programme Support** – Where we wanted to understand how the partners worked with Centrica to build learning that would meet its specific needs and how Centrica could better support colleagues in the programme. This would also help us understand how we could make the programmes scalable and repeatable (if required to be aligned with an internal programme)

- **Post Programme Support** – Where we wanted to understand what support Centrica was offering once the programmes had been completed. This was to help build the Learning Metrics for the programmes.

The 3 areas fed into the desire to understand and improve the colleague learning experience.

By doing this we helped Centrica understand if the perceived challenges were real and where they could improve their offering.

The Findings

The Application Process

- Different people supporting different programmes, with different processes led to applicants being unsure whom to turn to if they had questions and who was responsible for different elements of support. This in turn led to different messaging going out to different parts of the business
- This created multiple overlaps and duplications of work
- Some of the criteria within the application process were stopping suitable candidates applying
- We found that all this compounded to make the application process for the programmes seem opaque and onerous; reducing the number of people that could potentially apply.

The In-Programme Support

- The chosen partners provide excellent levels of programme support, but some of them were cagey about revealing what learning happens within each workshop or session. This is natural as they need to protect their Intellectual Property but makes it difficult for Centrica to build connections into internal programmes that could support this kind of learning.
- The lack of clear learning objectives within some of the programme offerings was putting people off from applying or attending (if no

application was necessary) as they didn't understand what was in it for them. This meant that people weren't being pulled toward the programmes.

- The L&D team did not have regular check-ins with people on the programmes and were missing out on opportunities to gain insight that could help shape internal offerings (though this was due to the changes in the team and was a reason why we were engaged).

Post Programme Support

- Centrica didn't offer formal support after the programmes. Some support was offered through some of the partners. Some support was offered through the sponsors that successful applicants were asked to approach when they had been notified they would be on the course, but nothing that would help colleagues embed what they had learnt and see if the learning is
- This makes it difficult to measure the effectiveness of the programmes beyond the satisfaction surveys.

This led us to believe that we could address the 5 challenges by making and implementing recommendations to address these 3 Areas to build lasting change.

Learn – How we went about designing the change

To re-design the application process we recommended:

- Moving forward, one Centrica colleague should manage the relationship with and the end-to-end process to reduce the communications, work overlaps and increase transparency in the process.
- Removing contradictory language with different application packs for different programmes, making the whole offering easier to understand
- Introducing marking guides that allowed people applying to understand how their applications would be judged. This made the process more equitable across the different Centrica Businesses

- Recommended allowing people to submit answers via voice not on video, to reduce nervousness in people applying who felt that the written word didn't do them justice.

To re-design In Programme Support we recommended:

- Centrica works with partners to agree on the Learning outcomes. A good mix of what they both usually measure and what Centrica would like to see as success measures/learning This would help the colleague to understand the benefits of the programmes and help pull them toward applying.
- Centrica works with partners that will share the content they provide so they can map to internal capabilities while promising not to infringe on their IP. This helps with making the programmes scalable and repeatable.
- Centrica works with partners that where possible would offer some face-to-face sessions, as well as be willing to have the programmes hosted within the L&D technology stack. This helps with colleague engagement.
- That L&D offers colleagues attending a programme the chance to speak to them about it to address any issues.

To create the Post Programme Support we recommended:

- That check-in points with participants are created. Initially One check-in 4, and 8 months after the As a first step in post Programme Support
- The content of check-ins created by L&Dare designed to look at behavioural change for the individual and the effect on the business that the programme is having (or not and to understand why)
- That Centrica starts to look at the ROI for the programmes. Initially looking at metrics between people who hadn't been on the programmes and those that had to understand if there is a discernable measurable difference between the two.
- Programme review takes place. Decision on moving the programmes to an internal intervention, using a different external partner or keeping the current partner is made.

Do – How we went about implementing the recommendations

All of the recommendations were accepted, and we set about working with the Centrica teams to implement them.

We worked with teams closely to deploy changes through all external group-wide learning programmes. He was able to understand the formal and informal communications channels that needed to be used to explain and gain buy-in for the changes.

This led to the creation of 2 Playbooks that the L&D team can use to support their programmes.

They offer a plug-and-play solution with flexible options to reduce the cost of deploying the programmes and increasing L&Ds bandwidth.

This lowers the cost of the deployment of the programmes by standardising collateral design, reducing the headcount needed to support the programmes, and removing duplication of work and increasing L&D bandwidth, by allowing colleagues to get back to uncovering and addressing needs.

Outcomes

Applications

Centrica has seen the time to create/curate application materials and manage the process reduced from circa 2 weeks per programme to 2 days. This is a saving of around 14 weeks per year. Also, Programme-specific needs can be communicated through 1 person; reducing workload duplication.

Centrica has received between and 2x and 5x increase in applications to the programmes. With one programme being so popular they are running a second cohort of it.

In Programme Support

External Partners are now primed to be able to articulate the learning objectives so Centrica can build engaging comms and pull colleagues towards applying.

Centrica can build those objectives into internal programmes, creating clear throughlines when people are moving between internal and external learning programmes.

Centrica's partners understand what support is required and can resource this ahead of time. They have a process for colleagues to feedback during the programme, helping L&D better understand the colleague learning experience and where it can be improved.

Post Programme Support

This is already taking shape with the first post-programme support coming online as a mix of 3rd party support and Internal L&D support. The learning metrics have been agreed upon and will be deployed during the programmes, helping improve them for future cohorts.

Conclusion

Centrica now has an effective, embedded way of working, it can deploy that to address the 5 challenges.

It is set up to take these ways of working and apply them across all group-wide programmes of learning that helps:

- Reduce the number of L&D people involved in each programme
- Reduce the cost of development
- Increase colleague engagement
- Improve the colleague experience
- Measure the impact that the programmes are having.

These savings will increase the bandwidth of the L&D teams allowing them to focus more on business needs. The improvements will help the business see the positive impact this passionate and dedicated group are having.