

2023 Learning Trends

Cutting through the noise

It's time to re-evaluate how affective some of the most common strategies or tools L&D teams deploy are. We need to start asking more questions in order to achieve more consistent outcomes at the end of the day.

But don't worry, we won't leave you in the lurch - **we're here to help.**

We have identified five core areas that we believe will help you to drive faster business impact this year. This is because they're based on real-world problems we're seeing across the industry and not the result of someone coining a buzzword. Think of them like data patterns rather than trends.

-  **Social learning**
-  **Data storytelling**
-  **Inclusivity**
-  **Skills**
-  **Coaching**

For each one we have identified the core questions we would encourage you to seek answers to, so we'd love to see you take these away and start to have the right conversations across your businesses.

Building effective relationships is the foundation to creating results that have a higher impact, and drive you toward your business goals faster.

Social Learning

Social learning is how we learn in every day life. It's the grounding to most of what we do in the industry and it never hurts to return to thinking about how we ensure it's still front of mind in the experiences we are encouraging people to take part in.

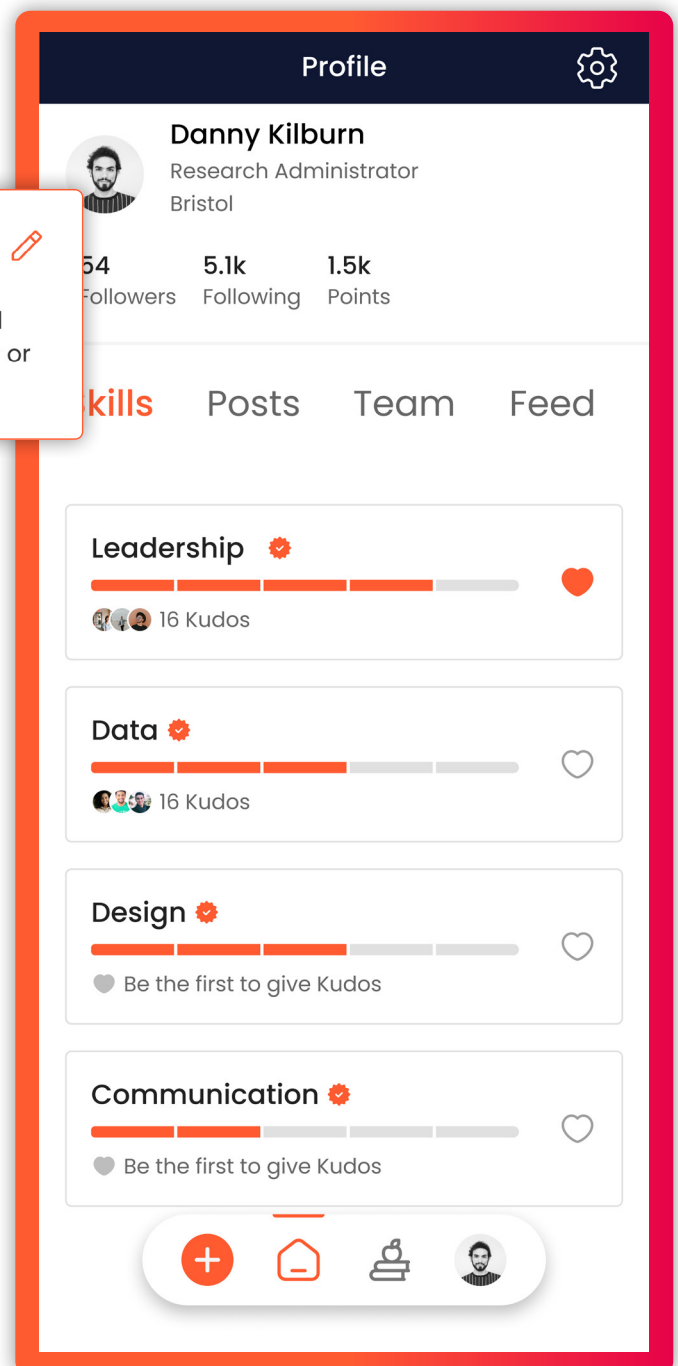
No matter the industry or sector you operate in, your people will not only be responsible for continuing

your information dissemination and utilisation, but they will actively be building on it, to shape the culture at your company.

It's essential to think about how we build connection, communicate and collaborate.

About Danny

I love anything related to hiking, jumping and running. You'll normally find me at a sushi bar or binging a new show on Netflix.



Questions you can ask:

What tools do you have in your tech stack that can be used together?

Siloed tech is not only a resource drain, it could be damaging your workflows, communication methods or culture. Taking a birds eye view before delving into the detail is so important, and it's very likely that certain areas of your business will be using different tools to you.

How can you create moments to bridge the gap between experience, knowledge and practice?

The space between the viewing and the doing can be a battle ground. By creating moments for people to reflect and share, such as community groups or leveraging social platforms, you will effectively bridge that gap between an individual's lived experience, the knowledge you want to impart and the doing of 'the thing'.

How does your platform of choice encourage connection, communication and social interaction?

We've established that these are fundamental to your learner experience, so how are you going to leverage these via a platform? Put your people in the driving seat, listen to their ideas, and encourage them to share their knowledge and experience.



Data storytelling

Data is a necessity if you want to measure change and demonstrate the impact of learning within your organisation.

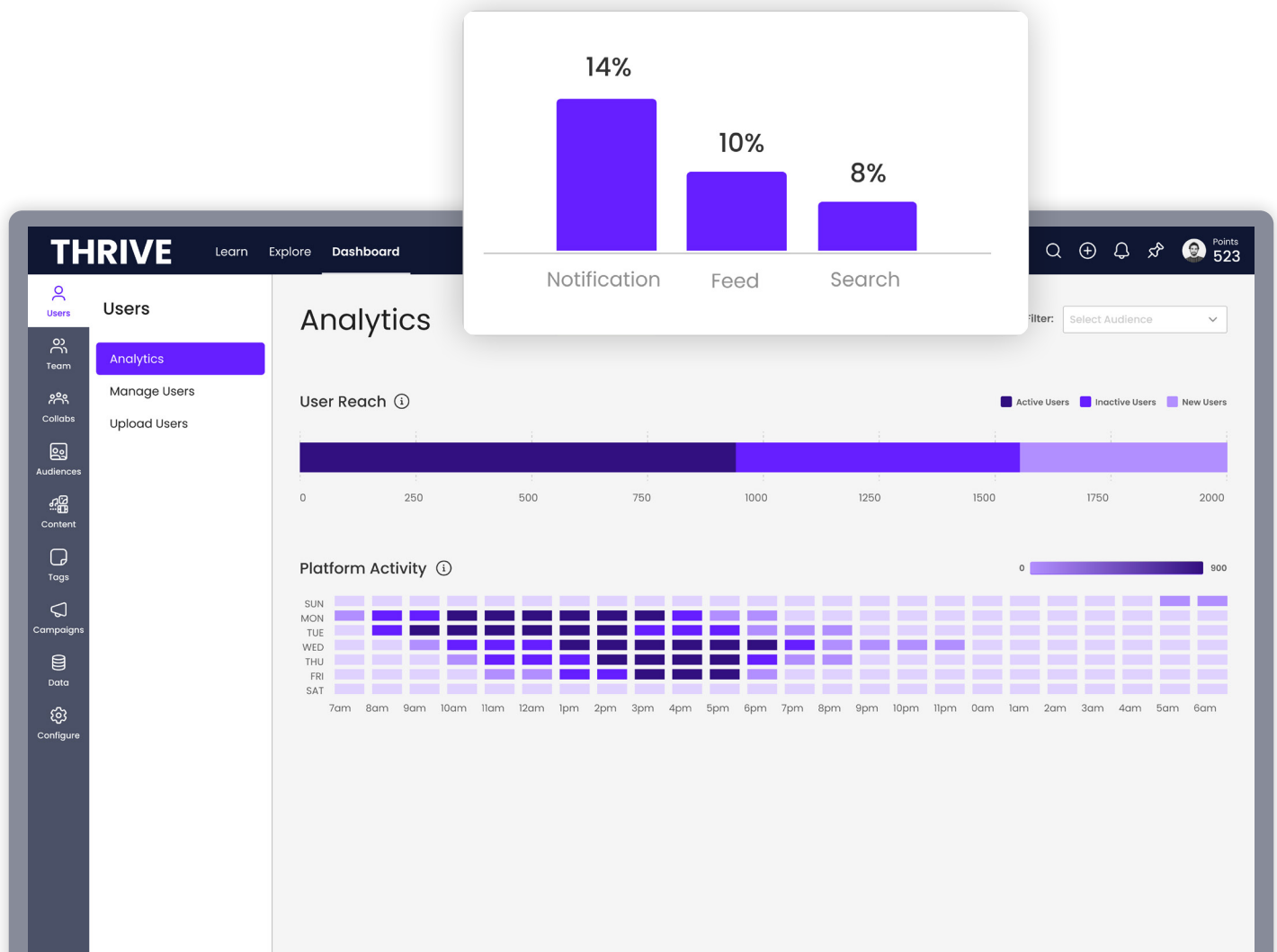
While this statement may seem obvious, it also highlights the importance of focus when working with data. Identifying the best measures to work with and building a strategy to influence them at the best time is the key to success.

The starting point on any data journey is therefore understanding the change stakeholders across the business are trying to achieve.

External data points are crucial to relating your efforts to those changes or outcomes and we're seeing more time being spent with stakeholders really understanding what measures they use to quantify the area in question.

These outcomes give a useful way of framing metrics. Where we might want to measure the productivity or success of a team over months, we can gain more impact by measuring this around a particular focal event like a campaign or the launch of new resources.

Ultimately: think big, start small.



Questions you can ask:

Have you identified the two or three business areas where change is most needed to meet business objectives?

You can't do everything at once. If you prioritise the business areas where change is most needed you'll be able to drive change effectively. That doesn't mean ignoring other areas, and it might mean making some tough decisions, but overall you'll be able to work more efficiently.

Are you coaching for change?

The relationships you build in those business areas will help you determine how much coaching for change you need to carry out, but it's likely that you'll be able to see a different way of approaching a problem that your team can support. You'll have to bring a diverse range of people and opinions along on a journey, so utilising (or even developing) your own coaching skills is key.

What measures are currently being used by those areas and how can you aggregate the data to make use of it?

As with the stakeholders, the measures currently being used in each business area will likely be vastly different. Collating this in a way that is meaningful to you and tells a story can help you to provide impact.

Are you planning for maximum impact?

Think carefully about the times you're planning to review or track data. Avoid holiday periods, or busy times that would skew data. Work with your stakeholders to plan for maximum impact.

Inclusivity



DE&I is a clear focus for many organisations, and we're starting to see a new mindset emerging within the learning space, with a deeper understanding of how the decisions we take affect the prospects and opportunities of learners across our organisations.

As learning teams strive to improve their resources and the overall employee experience to cater for these diverse needs, we are beginning to see skills emerge which would not be out of place in a traditional product team. Research, surveying and usability testing are all becoming more common and offer a way of understanding how useful our resources are.

Being willing to accept that our resources are not as perfect to others as they may seem to us is a real challenge, but being able to test out new ideas and concepts quickly (and being willing to change them just as quickly when necessary) is the key to opening up learning to all.



Questions you can ask:

What variety of needs do your people have?

A wide variety of factors can have an impact on how well colleagues may be able to access information, put new skills into practice, or share their knowledge with each other. It's obviously important to consider each "team" or group before planning a strategy for them, but where do you start to unpick things?

A good tip is to look at the preferred means of communication in that area; how do people communicate directly, and how do people receive important updates? It's entirely possible that there are existing difficulties in these areas, but understanding what works, what doesn't and why can give you great insights into the needs and culture of a team.

Are your sample groups representative of the full spectrum?

Within the team it's also important to consider individual needs, and the types of challenges managers might be aware of. This might seem like a huge task but you can build a representative picture of the needs across larger teams quite quickly by doing this.

Be sure to document what you learn about your teams, and use this knowledge to ensure that your strategy and research takes account of individual requirements appropriately.

What user testing are you conducting, and is it effective?

User testing is useful wherever you have something that needs to be accessed or consumed by people, especially when the resource being accessed needs to work "intuitively".

Simply put, conducting a test involves asking a representative group of users to attempt specific tasks with the resource. Questions should be as unbiased as possible and focus on the interactions that may be needed to achieve a task, for example "Where would you start if you wanted to share a resource with a colleague" or "How would you go about revisiting a particular piece of information in this resource".

Genuine user testing will identify surprising shortcomings in your resources and tools, and help you pinpoint the best way to format and structure your learning for individuals to use in the best way possible.

How are you encouraging people to identify problems faster?

One of the biggest challenges when analysing your strategy and resources in this way is staying positive about receiving negative feedback. We all have a desire for what we produce to be perfect and well received, and it's natural to feel a little defensive when something doesn't work as well as you hoped for your colleagues.

Being positive about finding problems is essential to honing your tools and resources though, and every bit of feedback is a step forward, particularly when you can conceive a clear action off the back of it!

Skills ⚡

They've been a hot topic for a number of years now, but we genuinely think we're pushing for the right things here. At a fundamental level the skills of your people are what drive your business forward. Skills not only feed into talent mobility and your attrition rates, but are fundamental to the culture of your business.

For us, the North star rests in bridging the gap between organisational goals and identifying emerging individual skills. This is because you'll be able to focus on what's fundamental to business success, but identify what is motivating your people to continually improve, too.

Skills are here to stay, and you should take a holistic view of them

+ Add skill

Data Analysis 



Leadership 



Operational Outcomes 



GDPR 



Questions you can ask:

How are you identifying operational, values-based and individual skills?

How you identify each of these areas will be different, and the information that comes out of these investigations will likely differ

across the business, but drawing this out will help you to create a bigger picture that can act as a jumping off point.

How are you gathering data from your people (or are you even doing this)?

Your people are at the heart of everything you do, so how do you know what's important to them when it comes to their own personal development? If you're not already having these conversations or gathering data from your people managers, think about beginning this journey. This data will inform your programmes, and help you stay relevant across the business.

How do you plan on connecting your skills strategy with talent mobility and hiring processes?

Talent mobility is the primary goal of a skills-based organisation. Yes, identifying skills gaps can help you inform your hiring process, but recognising emerging skill areas can also help you to understand what is motivating your people. Leveraging this information will make buy-in a whole lot easier.

The screenshot displays the THRIVE learning platform interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes the THRIVE logo, tabs for 'Learn', 'Explore', and 'Dashboard', and a user profile section showing 'Points 523'. The 'Learn' section is active, showing a sidebar with 'Overview', 'Goals 1', and 'Skills 2'. The 'Skills 2' section highlights 'Leadership' and 'Communication' with progress bars. The main content area features a 'Leadership' skill card with a 'Current Level: Advanced' and a 'Set target level?' button. Below this, a 'You've got skill goals' message states: 'Completing all the tasks in your goals will help you advance your skills.' A progress bar shows '66%' completion for 'Improve your leadership skills'. The card also displays 'Skill: Leadership', 'Due date: 11 September 2022', 'People: 16 people', and a 'Badge' icon. The description reads: 'Improve sales your leadership skills. Make better decisions & drive your team.' A 'View 3 tasks' button is at the bottom. Below the skill card, the 'In progress 3' section shows three task cards: 'Time management' (2 months ago, 547 views), 'Finding meaning at work' (3 weeks ago, 2,654 views), and 'A strong leadership vision' (4 days ago, 938 views).

Coaching



Coaching – by which we mean identifying an individual to work either one-on-one, or in group situations, to help individuals identify the quickest ways toward self-improvement – leads to business impact.

Coaching empowers you to uncover your strengths, identify your blindspots and create a plan

of action for development to which you are held accountable. It all sounds great, right?

But it comes at a financial cost. The question then becomes, how do you begin to justify this expense, or build on what you already have with an aim of implementing a coaching programme at some point in the future?

Questions you can ask:

Who are your current coaches and how can you leverage those skills?

It's easy to identify these people because you'll be hearing good stories from those they manage or coach. These are the people you want to approach to talk to; to dig into what they do and how they do it, to work out how you can bottle up some of this magic.

What business impacts would introducing coaching bring?

Coaching can lead to faster self-development by shifting someone's mindset to where it

needs to be faster than traditional manager-led conversations. It can also provide headspace for innovation as it unlocks people's hidden potential and removes blockers.

What type of coaching will have the most impact in your organisation?

Your answer to this question will tell you a lot about your (or your team's) mindset, as much as about your business priorities at the moment. There are smaller scale ways to introduce coaching into your business, such as peer coaching, but these take longer to embed and drive results.

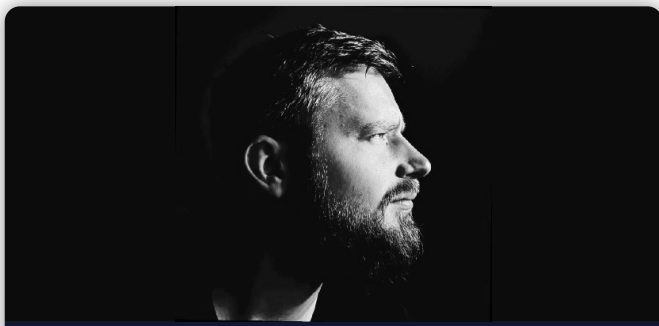
That's a wrap


These questions of course are the tip of the iceberg, but we'd love to hear how you're approaching these topics and challenges in your own organisations.


Feel free to connect with Mark or Helen on LinkedIn to continue the conversation.


Or reach out to have a chat with THRIVE:

hello@thrivelearning.com
thrivelearning.com



Mark Ward
Co-Founder of THRIVE 



Helen Marshall
CLO of THRIVE 

Additional resources

[L&D trends map](#)

[Peer-coaching workbook](#)

[Agile skills](#)

[THRIVE Learning & Skills Platform](#)

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