

L&D Managers: How well do you manage your learning assets?

Learning programs are valuable assets that require significant effort to design, implement and maintain, but organisations often don't have a consistent or efficient way to strategically manage the entire set of programs they own or use.

Curriculum frameworks are common documents in the P-12 education space, but seem to be not so common in workplace contexts. I'm not entirely sure why this is, but I am very sure that having one will give you the helicopter view you need to help analyse your overall learning needs, reduce design and development time, manage the accuracy and validity of learning content and get improved value from your suite of learning programs. Consider a curriculum framework like an asset register, to help you and your team to manage the entire lifecycle of your learning assets, from cradle to grave.

Why would you bother?

Have you ever:

- Been asked to design a new program that is really not 'new', but just a slight variation on an existing theme?
- Encountered out-of-date or incorrect information in one of your learning programs?
- Had difficulty navigating your way through the current learning content or programs on offer in your organisation?

If you answered yes to any of the above, then maybe you should consider if it would be worth the effort of capturing some basic information about your current learning programs into a framework that can be easily referenced and maintained. In my experience, this project would be in the 'spend a little time now to save a lot of time later' category.

Isn't this just a fancy name for a 'Course Catalogue'? We already have one of those...

Not really. A Course Catalogue is generally more of a marketing and communications document, structured for the consumer, rather than the manager of learning programs and content. And unless you and your L&D team routinely search the entire catalogue before analysing, designing or decommissioning learning programs, you're probably not using it to effectively manage your learning assets. If you do have a catalogue, then this would be a great place to start with your information gathering work.

How to get started.

There's not too much rocket science required to build a framework. A simple spreadsheet will be all you need to start with, and some basic types of information that would be useful to capture about each of your learning programs could include:

- Learning Program Name
- Purpose
- Learning Objectives
- Date of last review
- Date of next review

- Target Audience
- Content Owner
- Subject Matter Experts
- Program Designer
- Duration (HH:MM)
- Delivery Mode
- Provider
- Assessment (Y/N)
- Assessment Method
- Pre-Requisites
- Post-Requisites
- Reaccreditation Required (Y/N)
- Reaccreditation Timeframe
- Legislative/Policy References
- Any other information or tags that will help you manage the lifecycle of the programs you have in your organisation.

Depending on how sophisticated you want to be, you could also include metadata about each of your programs, like assigning topic categories or labels to make searching and sorting easier.

Capturing the full range of information about all active programs could become a bit of a treasure hunt, so it would be worth considering this activity as a project, and assigning someone to do the work. Content owners and SMEs will need to be engaged, so someone with stakeholder management skills will be an asset here. And you'll need to work out how to manage the outputs of the project, which will likely include updating and/or decommissioning of programs.

How to use it once you've built it.

Once you have catalogued all of your programs into your curriculum framework, consider making it a mandatory check-in point for all learning analysis and design requests. After all, no point reinventing the wheel, particularly once you have a good view of all the wheels that you've already got!

If you're able to publish the framework on your company intranet/portal, you could also direct people who are considering requesting a new learning program to do a search before they engage the L&D team.

Perhaps most importantly, keep it up to date! Ensure that all design and development activity is entered into the framework as it happens, so you've always got a current view of the learning programs you have on offer.

Sample curriculum framework template: www.openaccesslearning.com/resources/