How learning can compete in the attention economy - HR Magazine

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the challenge of low employee engagement with corporate learning and development programmes in an era dominated by highly optimised consumer digital content. The author, Charney Magri, co-founder and CEO of Do Epic Good, argues that workplace learning fails primarily because of poor design — specifically, content that is generic, lengthy, and disconnected from employees' immediate realities — rather than solely because of time constraints. The article presents five practitioner principles for improving L&D engagement: anchoring training in real employee pain points rather than platform capabilities; shortening modules to reduce commitment barriers; using storytelling to aid retention of complex topics; demonstrating immediate practical value upfront; and shifting measurement from completion rates to behavioural and performance outcomes. The author draws an implicit comparison between consumer content ecosystems and corporate learning environments to explain the engagement gap. No empirical studies, datasets, or external citations are referenced. The piece concludes that organisations are increasingly expected to treat learning as a chosen experience rather than a compliance obligation.

Key Insights

1. Low L&D engagement is attributed primarily to poor content design and lack of relevance rather than employee busyness alone.
2. Consumer digital platforms have raised employee expectations for content quality, creating a competitive attention landscape that corporate learning must now contend with.
3. Completion rates are identified as an insufficient proxy for learning effectiveness; behavioural change, confidence, and application in daily work are framed as more meaningful indicators.

Practical Takeaways

- L&D design may benefit from beginning with the specific pressures employees face — such as ethical dilemmas, leadership challenges, or KPI attainment — rather than with platform or content format decisions.
- Measurement frameworks for learning programmes could be expanded beyond completion rates to include observable behavioural change and self-reported confidence levels.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The article is clearly written and raises a legitimate and widely observed tension between consumer content expectations and corporate learning quality. The five principles are coherent and internally consistent. The framing of learning as competing in an 'attention economy' is conceptually useful for L&D practitioners. Limitations: The article contains no empirical evidence, cited research, or data to support its claims. Assertions such as 'businesses invest billions in corporate training every year' and references to low completion and retention rates are made without citation. The five principles are presented as self-evident rather than tested or validated. The author's affiliation with Do Epic Good — a company that presumably offers learning content services — introduces a potential commercial bias, as the recommendations align closely with what a content-focused L&D vendor would offer. The article does not engage with counterarguments, structural constraints, or the possibility that some compliance-oriented training has legitimate regulatory requirements that limit design flexibility.

Organizational Practice

The article describes corporate organisations investing in self-paced digital learning programmes, often built around compliance requirements, with low completion and retention rates. Some organisations are described as beginning to reframe learning as an experiential offering rather than a procedural obligation, with emerging interest in measuring behavioural change rather than module completion.

Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broader shift in L&D discourse away from volume-based metrics toward experience quality and measurable behavioural outcomes. If the attention economy framing gains traction in PMS thinking, it may accelerate demand for shorter, narrative-driven learning content integrated into performance workflows rather than delivered as standalone modules. The implicit elevation of employee expectations as a design constraint suggests that learning investment decisions may increasingly be evaluated against engagement benchmarks drawn from consumer content standards.

Validation Status: passed
