Step by step guide to planning a learning programme

Step 1: Identify the need

Talk with key stakeholders to identify the need. Establish where performance is currently and where it needs to be – be specific. Check if learning is the answer to addressing this gap, part of the answer or if something else is needed as an alternative or alongside learning. Examples of alternatives or additions to learning could be improved guidance materials for learners to use during their work; improved work or communication flows; more effective management; or addressing barriers to effective performance at work e.g., bullying, or poor supply management.

Step 2: The learning objectives

Set these out in clear, simple language. Write them in terms of what the learners will be able to do in their work because of the learning.

Step 3: The learners

Clarify who they are, how many there are, where they are based and what their normal working times are. Check whether any of them have special needs. Try to establish what their attitudes to learning are both in general and in relation to this specific topic.

Step 4: The learning programme

Choose the best method or combination of methods for meeting these learning objectives and meeting the needs of learners. Learning methods could include coaching, face to face workshops, webinars, shadowing, projects, discussion forums, reading or research. Bear in mind that if you wish to develop skills or change behaviours learners need the opportunity to practise, receive feedback and develop confidence – this takes time. It is essential that encouragement to apply the learning to work is integral to the learning programme.

Step 5: Plan delivery

Consider timings, sequence, location/access for all the learners, preparation, and follow-up, who will facilitate or support the learning, materials and equipment and assessing and evaluating the learning.

Step 6: Communicate, communicate

Make sure everyone involved is informed. This may include other people involved in organising the programme, key stakeholders, line managers and of course, the learners themselves. Make the most of opportunities to communicate with both learners and their line managers directly, to set out the benefits to them of the learning and encourage preparation to get the most from the programme, setting a task. Do not forget to communicate practical information about where, when and how the learning programme begins.

Step 7: Preparation

Make sure all the practical preparations for the learning programme are made, such as booking of premises or setting up of webinars and provision of facilities, equipment and materials. Make contingency plans for anything you can anticipate may go wrong.

Step 8: Flexibility

Be flexible and adaptable during the learning programme. Monitor the progress of learners and how the practical arrangements are working.

Step 9: Follow-up

Make sure you follow up the learning to encourage application in the workplace. Learners may find individual coaching or peer support through discussion forums or team meetings helpful. Encourage line managers and key stakeholders to review progress in applying the learning. Update training records.

Step 10: Evaluate

Gather information to identify if the learning programme has had the impact on performance that was intended. Consider what worked well in the learning programme, what could be further improved and what has been learnt for designing future learning programmes.