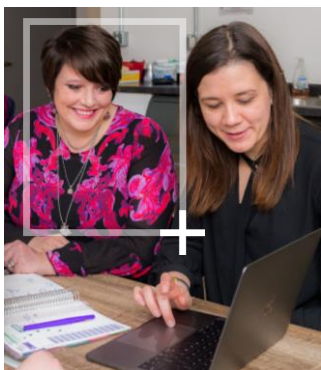




## How can training managers get a seat at the table?

Training needs to be proactive to ensure employees have the skills needed to be successful.



Including L&D managers in upfront planning is a win-win.

One of the biggest concerns that Learning & Development departments are faced with is around the ability to provide training programs that are pro-active in supporting the business goals vs. a re-active approach to fix the business.

Many training programs are developed as a solution to a current problem vs. developing the skills employees need to be successful in the future.

The immediate reaction to an employee who fails to meet their sales goals is to send them to training. Training becomes reactive in an effort to solve a problem vs. a pro-active solution to ensure each employee has the skills needed to be successful in their role.

Most of the executive suite is focused on managing and driving top line growth and profit and dedicate very little time to discussing pro-active strategies around what new skills should be added to the training curriculum.

### The Question:

#### *How Do I Get a Seat at the decision makers table?*

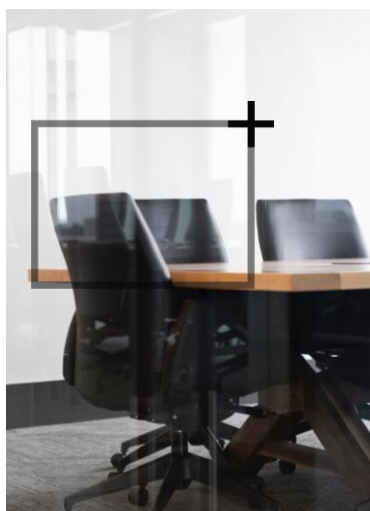
In a recent survey over 85% of L&D department heads stated that they did not have a seat at the table with the key decision makers that they support.

Most L&D managers spend their time building and executing programs but are not included in the annual planning cycle or do not participate in key business strategy meetings.

L&D managers are usually the last to hear about key initiatives and know that it is just a matter of time before they will be called to find a fix around training employees when the initiative does not go as originally planned.

Having a seat at the table with the decision makers who not only control the budget but also the information flow for future goals would be the biggest ROI for both the business and the L&D department.

Make sure your seat is at the right table.



The internal reporting structure can influence the your ability to drive change in process and outcome.

## The Solution: Understand the landscape and step up.

There are two key parts to being invited to take a seat at the table with the key decision makers.

**Internal Structure & Budget Control** – It is critical to understand who the power players are within your organization and who controls the budget. Every organization has many different tables of decision making. Ensuring that you are invited to what I like to call the “Adult Table” vs. the “Kids Table” is step number one.

**Own It** – The L&D department is considered one of many support role functions within an organization. The key difference between great support role functions and average support role functions can be defined in the attitude that your department demonstrates. The way you approach the business will define if you have earned the respect to be invited to the “Adult Table”

## Internal Structure & Budget Control:

1. **Structure** – Internal reporting structure is the number one barrier as it drives the internal communication process. L&D departments usually fall under one of the following structures:
  - a. **Centralized Model** - this can also be disguised with a title of “Center of Excellence”. This structure has the L&D department reporting up to a corporate H.R. Executive who is responsible for translating the division needs to the L&D department. The biggest issue with this structure is that the HR executive usually has other priorities that take precedence. The advantage of this structure is consistency around training across the entire company.
  - b. **De-Centralized Model** – This structure has the L&D department focused on supporting a specific division such as Sales or Operations Training. The advantage of this structure is that the L&D Group usually is provided immediate feedback around the needs of the specific group. The disadvantage is that there is no common training plan across all division platforms, and it tends to drive up training budgets and cost.

There is no right or wrong to either of these structures as both have advantages and disadvantages. Most L&D members prefer the de-centralized model as the communication with the direct stakeholder tends to generate better results vs. going through the centralized H.R. departments.

It is important to look at the path of communication for each structure as that will determine what table you need to sit at to drive the greatest ROI for the training you will deliver.

A 'Follow the Money' approach can put you in the drivers seat.



Stop waiting for the 'C Suite' to call you – be proactive.

2. **Budget** – There is a simple rule as it relates to budget and getting a seat at the table. “Follow the Money”. How the budget is controlled is a key factor in getting a seat at the adult table vs. kids table. Here are two different options found with most companies:

- a. **Bill Back Model** – You build the training and bill it back to each participants business unit. This model is great at controlling costs but puts the burden on the L&D department to advertise and drive interest in training. Many programs are canceled at the end of the year when division heads are scrambling for budget and training programs must be postponed or canceled due to lack of participation
- b. **L&D Assigned Budget** – The L&D department is given a budget at the start of the year to create and execute training programs. The benefit of the assigned budget is around control. The L&D department has the power to drive programming without concern that it will not have participants. The pressure is to ensure the training is aligned with the actual needs of the business and that the results receive high positive feedback.

Most L&D members surveyed prefer the Assigned Budget structure as it gives them a reason to set up a meeting with the key stakeholders to discuss how to best spend the money vs. having to ask the stakeholders to send their employees to be trained.

### Own It:

The following are four key steps on how to approach the business with the right “I Own It” attitude.

1. **Pro-Active Discovery Meetings** – (Stop waiting for the “C Suite” to call you)
  - a. L&D should be pro-active in setting up meetings at all executive levels to understand what drives company priorities. The focus of the meetings should be around the future and should avoid discussion around L&D priorities. These meetings are fact finding missions and are critical for getting buy in from the executives during the next meeting phase.
  - b. Executive meeting ideas should be tested with lower level field managers to ensure that buy in is achieved at all levels of the organization.

- c. Feet on the Street – get out from behind your desk and spend time working with the groups you support in the field. There is no greater credibility than having had a firsthand experience of the work you will support.

**Build a Customer Strategy** – (Show that you understand the business)

- a. L&D must take the discovery information and create a blueprint strategy for how the training they will deliver is on point with the business strategy.
- b. Facts and objectives collected should be showcased in the blueprint strategy and emotional opinions should take a back seat.
- c. Prioritize the urgent vs important concepts and show that you have gained alignment with the business at all levels.

**Build a Case for Change** – (Stop presenting the same concepts every year)

- a. Executives would like to see that your training solution is adding value for the future.
- b. Use as many parallel examples with actual data metrics as possible.
- c. Use the business language or metrics to define what you believe will be the ROI.
- d. Do not present the same training concept that has been used in the past.
- e. Educate yourself about the latest trends being implemented in the training environment.

**Getting on the Same Side of the Table** – (Earn your right to sit at decision makers table)

- a. Getting a seat at the table is not driven by title but value add.
- b. The cost for participation is innovation and wow ideas.
- c. Start providing measurable results to the implemented programs.
- d. Meet with individual members at the table and highlight the value you provide to their specific group.



Build a case for change based on current training trends in the market.

The Training Coalition offers a unique blended model of classroom, online and field based training, customized for today's market trends, your business and the diverse learning style, skills and imagination of your evolving workforce.

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