

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Paul Matthews interviewed by the CIPD in Manchester in 2018

Paul was interviewed at the CIPD Annual Conference in Nov 2018 about the brand of L&D. This video is used as CIPD training course material for some of their qualifications.

TRANSCRIPT

Question: What is L&D brand and where does it come from?

It's really interesting you asked the question that way, because there's almost a presupposition that L&D does not have a brand, and I can assure you it does, even though you might not be aware that it exists, because the brand of L&D is what people talk about when you're not in the room. It's a lovely saying that Jeff Bezos from Amazon used. So, what do they say when L&D's not there? How do they describe L&D? If you were to ask them what do they think L&D does, what would they say? So, go and do that. Go out, talk to the people out there and ask them, "What do you think L&D does? What do you think our purpose in the organization is? What do we deliver? How do we do what we do? When you think of us, do you like what you think, or do you perhaps just think we're an annoyance in the organization?"

So, then the question arises well, if we have a brand, whether we think of it or not, is where does it come from? And it comes from the touchpoints. It comes from every time someone in the organization has an interaction with learning and development, or indeed from people outside the organization. So, really there are three different constituents or audiences for that brand. One is the senior team, the business leaders. The other are the employees who are getting the services from the L&D, and the other are externals, perhaps other providers or other people, other stakeholders who you might interact with. So, that's where the brand comes from.

Question: Why is L&D brand important for organisations?

That question kind of broadens out to how does a brand affect any organization or business? So, why do you go and buy Nike shoes, or Coca Cola, or an Apple iPhone? A lot of that's based on the brand that you're aware of, and what you think that brand represents. And a lot of people will just buy brand, almost regardless of what the product itself, what the specifications of that are in relation to other competitor products. They'll buy brand. So, is your brand good enough that people will buy you?

Question: Why do perceptions of L&D brand differ across an organisation?

This question correctly assumes there's a gap between what L&D thinks its brand is, if it thinks of brand at all, and what the perception of that brand is by others. And the reason is that L&D knows what it does, so they really only have touchpoints with themselves, whereas all of the other people that have touchpoints with L&D are experiencing something completely different. And they're usually experiencing a subset of what L&D can offer. So, therefore the wider set of services that L&D can provide are often completely unknown to the consumers of those services.

So, you get this mismatch, you get people who aren't aware of everything that's on offer from a modern L&D department. The other reason there is a gap is often that things are moving so fast, what L&D needed to provide is changing rapidly. And so therefore whatever brand is there is probably many, many years out of date. So, there is an inevitable gap.

Question: What impact does brand have on the effectiveness of L&D?

If we start thinking about how brand affects L&D, it's the same way that a brand affects any kind of business out there, in that if the brand doesn't give people a sense of who you are and what you do, they're going to be limited in what they're actually going to come and ask you for. If they want a blue widget but don't know that you supply blue widgets, they're unlikely to come and ask for one. They're going to go somewhere else that they know already supplies blue widgets.

So, in a sense, your brand is competitive with all of the other places that people can get learning type initiatives, whether that's Google, or external suppliers, or even people from within the known operational department. And so the question then arises is their perception of your brand useful? Is it exciting? Do they think it's a beneficial thing to have? Or do they see L&D as almost a necessary evil? It's the compliance stuff, it's the things that they've got no other option. They've got to go to the internal L&D department to get. And do they just go there, or would they prefer to go somewhere else if they possibly could?

Question: What steps can you take to improve your L&D brand?

Okay, improving the brand is not just a new logo and a new mission statement or purpose statement. What you've got to be doing is changing the touchpoints that people have so they change their perception. Now of course at those touchpoints you are probably going to have a logo or a name or a mission or whatever, so it's not to say don't do those things, they are part and parcel of it. But what you need to do is develop a brand strategy in effect. So, go and find some mates in marketing and buy them a beer, and find out what they would do in terms of creating a brand strategy. And then from that strategy, start creating

some tactical things that you can do which effectively is what you can do at the touchpoints, which includes your existing touchpoints and new ones that you may choose to create to get new ideas across.

Because the only people that are going to be able to communicate your brand to your audiences, all three of them, are you. It's not going to be anybody else that's going to do it. And in fact, in some ways, you need to do what you do so that it starts to go viral, so that people start to say, "Hey, have you heard what's happened over at L&D?" Now, the issue there is if you do just change your logo and your strap-line and then don't do it, you're going to be branded as inauthentic.

So, to summarise...

Okay, so there are three core messages here that I'd love you to take away and use. One is that you do have a brand, you really do have a brand. So, go find out what it is. The second is that brand has a massive effect on how successful you can be as an L&D professional, or an L&D department. And the third is go out there and change it. Work with it, measure it, get proactive about it.

GET IN TOUCH

Paul Matthews is a renowned authority in the Learning and Development space. Whether you want to call on his knowledge and expertise as a skilled keynote speaker, as a consultant or to run a workshop, he'd love to hear from you.

To book Paul for your forthcoming event, enquire about his availability or arrange an informal chat about any of his services, get in touch today.

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