

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Paul Matthews speaking at the CIPD show in London in 2015

This CIPD Learning & Development show was in May 2015. Paul spoke on the topic of performance and capability. This is an excerpt from his session and includes his metaphor about broken glass.

TRANSCRIPT

What actually happens is that people come to L&D, usually, that's one of the first steps. In effect, what they're saying is, I've got these broken people, here they are, can you please fix them? Have you had that? And, by the way, the way to fix them is a two-day training course on, you name your thing, empathy, management, leadership. Yeah, we want leaders, they'll come flying in with billowing capes and shiny underpants, and they'll fix the world's problems.

But see, a leadership course? Well, maybe, but if you don't enable the followers, then actually your leadership course is kind of wasted. One of the metaphors I sometimes use is, if you've got someone who's doing a job and they're here, they're in the middle of their job and in order to do the job they have to move around a bit, but the problem is the floor is covered with broken glass because of all these barriers in the environment, these things that get in the way of them doing what they want to do.

And in order for me to want to walk over that broken glass, I'm going to have to have such a high grade of leadership pulling me to want to do that, so why would I bother? And yet, so many people put leadership programs in place and they fail to try and enable their followers, they leave all the broken glass on the floor. Now, if you can do a leadership program that's going to create leaders in your organization that are as good as Gandhi or Mandela, you go for it, and you can leave the broken glass on the floor if you want and it'll work. But that's not easy and, again, it's not cheap.

So, sweep up the broken glass, different way to look at it. Sorry, I get a bit, sort of ... And now, once you got to the broken glass swept up, by all means, do your leadership programs and they will really fly. But if you're trying to get people to follow across broken glass ... And that's where we're coming back to, is the environment around someone has a massive impact on their ability to do the job that you're asking them to do.

But let's come back to this needs and wants thing. What they come to do is they come to you and they say, what I want is these training courses. What they need might be something different, what they need might be a broom to sweep up the

glass... because people want what they want and actually the operations people have been taught, unfortunately, over the years by learning and development, that we, as L&D people, have a solution to your performance problem, and what we do, typically, is we train people.

I know there's more to it than that, I'm kind of oversimplifying, but very often that's what's there and you get this request. I want ... The best one I ever heard, by the way, was, get this, a three day course on empathy training. That was in a big bank I was doing some work with. That was scary, and they did the training, the training was developed, it was delivered and I said, how did that work? And the lady said, "Training was good." I said, I bet you did a really good training.

Three days for empathy, that's got to be ... And, and I said, but what of the business thing? They said, "Oh, they didn't think much of it. It didn't work." And I said, yeah, of course it didn't work because it was never a training issue in the first place, there was something else going on. So what you'll often find is the business will try and ask you for what they want and it's not what they need, you see this difference?

And if someone just gets what they need ... What they actually need is capability at the point of work, but what they want is some way to gather that, to get it. So you have to have a better discussion with them around what they really need. And that's part of what we're sort of looking into, focus on what people do because that's what they want, they want people doing things, they want people performing. So it's focusing on need.

And so, part of your job as an L&D practitioner, in my opinion, is to help make visible, to the people who are asking for what they want, make visible to them what they really need, and then they'll say, I need that, oh, now you've shown me what that is, I need that. I need a broom for this broken glass, for example. And that might go in conjunction with the training course and all the rest of it, it's never simple, there's always a complex solution in there, I'm afraid, sorry about that. But that's part of your role, I think, is to help differentiate between need and want for these people.

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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