

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Paul Matthews interview on Learning Now TV 2018

This is the second time Paul was interviewed on the Learning Now TV channel.

TRANSCRIPT

- Kim Edwards: Paul Matthews joins me in the studio. He is founder, and MD of People Alchemy. He's a speaker, an author and a consultant. Welcome, Paul.
- Paul Matthews: Thank you very much.
- Kim Edwards: Lovely to speak with you. Now, it's your performance consultancy that I'd like to focus on today. Firstly, it's something I think a lot of people and organizations think differently about. I'd like to know really, what is it from your point of view.
- Paul Matthews: It's a good question. A lot of people seem to not really understand where it fits in, particularly in the L&D space. Consultancy is something that is collaborative as a process. You have a consultant and a client, each bring their expertise to a collaborative process. So, consultancy is something very much about doing with, rather than doing to.
- Paul Matthews: So, the consultant brings some processes, some skills, some knowledge, some expertise, some experience, and what the client brings, is their knowledge of their problem space, their issue. Working together, they can come up with a solution, which either on their own, wouldn't obviously be able to do. And of course, if it's performance consultancy, then you are consulting in a client- consultant relationship, but around the idea of performance. So, it's about improving performance. So, in a nutshell, that's kind of what it is.
- Kim Edwards: I see. So, it's not necessarily a consultant sweeping into an organization and looking to transform it single handedly?
- Paul Matthews: No. There's no billowing cape and shiny underpants going on here. That's not what it's about. It's very much a collaborative process.
- Kim Edwards: Oh, so lots of learning, getting to the heart of any problems and issues, and really identifying what they really are. So why should learning and development in particular, take notice of performance consultancy?
- Paul Matthews: And that's again, another fair question, because any general business consultant could say they're doing performance consultancy. So why is L&D need to get involved with this? I

think the answer to that is very much because managers and organizations, typically, aren't good at diagnosing performance problems that are going on around them and their teams.

Paul Matthews: So, what they tend to do, is say, "I've got a performance problem here. There's something going wrong. The people who are doing this job aren't performing well. So, I need to send them off someplace to get fixed, to improve their mojo, whatever it is, to get them to the point where they can perform adequately."

Paul Matthews: And of course, the whole performance appraisals, and performance management systems that are in place, tend to focus on the performer, as opposed to the entire performance system, or ecosystem within which they're operating. So, all too often, there's a problem in the system itself, that's causing the poor performance. So, send them off on a training course may work, but often doesn't.

Paul Matthews: And any L&D person often knows of cases where people have been sent on the same training course every year, year after year. And yet they're still not getting the kind of performance that's required. So, that's really why learning and development needs to get involved, is because the managers who will often come asking for training, and bless their little cotton socks, don't know enough about performance diagnostics in order to figure out really what's going on. And that's because it's very seldom taught.

Paul Matthews: So, really it's about initially, helping those managers through that process of working and understanding the whole performance system, it's systems thinking, because it's a complex thing, and if the outputs from that system aren't what is wanted, then you've got to dig into the system to find out, where are the levers to pull within the system, or how do we change the inputs, so that the outputs are what we want?

Paul Matthews: And that's what performance consultancy is about, is bringing a diagnostics process to that performance system, in a way that you can start identifying those levers, and then changing things in a way that gives the performance that's required. Now clearly, some of the aspects and things going on within the system are the competence, knowledge, skills of the individuals. And if they are lacking, and one of the things that's causing the lack of performance, then okay, training might well be at least a part of the solution, but almost always, there'll be lots of other things going on within that system, that are also potentially inhibitors to the performance.

Kim Edwards: So, there's a lot of education going on here. Not only are you learning yourself and really listening to the organization, and understanding the deeper problems and identifying them, it's almost quite humbling for the organization, the leaders, the managers, the learning and development team as well, to truly understand what really is going on. So, how do you enable all those different people and components and teams, and of course the learners themselves, how do you enable them to change their behaviours, and approach problems differently?

Paul Matthews: You mentioned something there, it's very humbling for the senior teams and so on. And that's one of the problems, is they often don't like being humbled. And one of the reasons for that is if the performance system is at fault, the people who are in charge of that system are of course the managers. So, they would much rather blame the people in the system, for the fault of the system, than blame themselves for the system itself being inoperative, or in some way dysfunctional.

Paul Matthews: So, for them it's often quite a big wake up call. It is them not doing their job around managing that system, including the people in it, effectively. And that's often the barrier, is they still have this kind of paradigm running in their head, that training/learning equals performance. And of course, that's just not true. At best, you might say it equals potential, but certainly it doesn't equal performance. There's so many other things that need to get lined up for that performance system to operate well.

Kim Edwards: This all sounds very sensible, Paul, and it seems almost obvious that every organization, or even the just the L&D team should be taking this performance consultation approach. Why aren't more organizations doing that?

Paul Matthews: I think there's still a lot of the paradigm, that L&D runs at, is we are learning and development. Our title says learning and development. We will go and do training, we'll do learning, we'll deliver this stuff, and that's what we do. And actually, the performance of those people once they're back over the fence in the business, or in operations, is not really our concern.

Paul Matthews: So, they have a service delivery mindset, and a number of large companies I speak with are trying to change the mindset of L&D, into more of a consultancy-based approach, as opposed to a service delivery approach. But that can be tough, to change that whole idea of, who am I when I'm being an L&D person?

Kim Edwards: Well to summarize, what would be your top three things to either look out for, or to think about, or to even just do within an organization?

Paul Matthews: Well, the first thing, is to start identifying where the training requests are coming from. The second thing is to say how can we investigate those training requests, to the point where we really understand that they are necessary, in order to support a true business need. And then, how can we look at the whole performance system, to understand what else we have to do to wrap around that training, if indeed the training is even necessary. Because training in and of itself, standing alone very seldom works either.

Paul Matthews: So, it is a matter of looking at that whole performance system as a system, and helping the managers do that for themselves because they need to be self-sufficient in that.

Kim Edwards: Absolutely.

Paul Matthews: L&D has to start that process.

Kim Edwards: Well, that is a lot of food for thought. Thank you very much, Paul. It's been great speaking with you today.

Paul Matthews: Thank you very much.

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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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