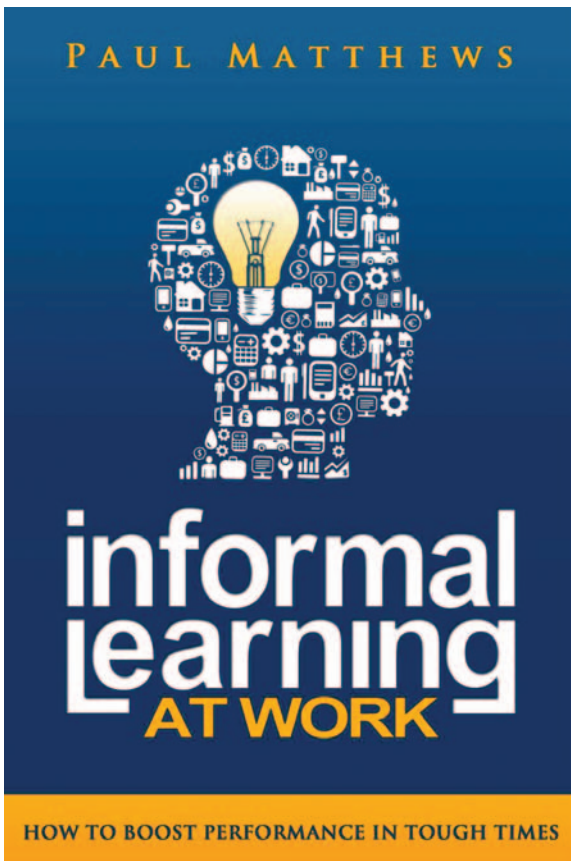


Recommended reading



Informal Learning At Work

by Paul Matthews

Reviewed by Karly Olsen-Haveland, Head of People and Organisation Development (Sales) EMEA at [Google™](#)



“People need to be more agile and responsive to the challenges around them”

Welcome to the learning ecosystem, or ‘learnscape’, of Informal Learning at Work that is Paul Matthews’ fresh approach on a well-known theory that informal learning has more impact than classroom, or formal, training.

L&D practitioners have known this for over forty years, and current technology offers ‘learning on demand’ through how-to videos on YouTube and smartphone apps for individuals to learn practically anything, whenever and wherever they want.

Matthews considers the question of what informal learning is and takes us through its history in all its incarnations including 70:20:10 and on the job experiences. He also briefly discusses the impact of formal learning in the mix and the benefits of the two approaches being used in conjunction to support the learner’s objectives.

It reminded me that nothing is new and fashion is alive and well, and living in L&D departments - it’s how we interpret and use the information that counts.

What he does bring to the fore, that is a challenge for most L&D functions, is that

informal learning in all its guises – such as mentoring, work shadowing, reading a book, delivering a speech - is messy and fragmented and takes place in increasingly complex environments.

This complexity means that people need to be more agile and responsive to the challenges around them and be able to react effectively, and with ‘sufficient skill to get them done sufficiently well’, even if they are not perfect - and that goes against the grain for many traditional trainers.

The focus for L&D staff is that it really is a shift from being order-takers and deliverers to providing consulting support and developing great learning interventions, and in the moment. As Matthews describes throughout the book, the role is a performer support consultant - getting people to be able to work more effectively. It’s all about capability.

There are great examples and tools that put learning advisors on the learnscape, both as part of the demand side and also supply side of the learning process and they all largely focus on ‘following’ the information.

Informal Learning at Work looks at how

to manage the learnscape, and the key to that is to both learn about learning (from the practitioner’s perspective) and also the learners.

Matthews’ description on obstacles highlights some of the issues that many L&D people face and his suggested approaches underpin the informal learning philosophy of the book - many of his suggestions represent small chunks of learning in themselves.

Evaluating informal learning is an area that cannot be measured in the same way as formal learning and there are some great suggestions on how to measure something as intangible, in many cases, as the impact of informal learning.

This book takes a style of learning that has been with us a millennium and more, and shows how even more relevant it is in the digital age.

And to quote the book: Live as if you were to die tomorrow, Learn as if you were to live forever (Mahatma Gandhi).