

As performance engineers (my word for L&D folks), we aim to get to the root cause of the problem, remove barriers and enable improved performance.

We do this by asking the right questions to unlock a conversation and reflection in our stakeholders.

To move from order takers at a drive-thru to performance consulting, we want conversations to look less like *“Can you run a 3-day workshop for my team on collaboration because they need some training and it’s one of my performance objectives for this year.”* to *“Hey, we’ve got this problem and we’d like your help at looking at some possible solutions.”*

**Remember, just because someone tells you they have an L&D problem, doesn’t mean they do.** It’s our job to help them unpack their problem and diagnose what they actually need.

### Key questions for stakeholders and clients

- What are we trying to solve?
- Why is this important?
- Do you have any data on that?
- What’s your evidence?
- How will you measure x?
- What’s your metric of success?
- What exists today?
- What’s the cost of doing nothing?
- Is your audience aware of x problem?
- What value will this work bring for you, them and the business?

This is the complete reverse of what most stakeholders envisage when they’re looking for L&D support. What they expect you to say is “Yes, I’ll find a course for you on that and we’ll get people signed up asap” – the classic box-ticking scenario.

## **But, what if my stakeholder won't listen to me?**

When taking an approach like this, we must recognise that we'll more than likely meet resistance to an untraditional method. You're going to have to challenge a number of pre-existing limiting beliefs and stakeholders just wanting to give them "training".

Some of these beliefs may include:

### **#1: Only a training course can help me and/or my team.**

➔ *How to challenge this...*

Walk through this scenario to the endgame – will this change anything or will you end up at the same place, doing the same things 6 months later? Tell the right story to demonstrate if any desired change will occur with this delivery method.

*Take an evidence-based approach.*

### **#2: I don't have time to do a short discovery with you**

➔ *How to challenge this...*

Again, highlight the benefits to identifying and solving the root cause problem by the stakeholder partaking in a very short (I'm talking 20 mins here) conversation so you can gather the proper evidence to provide the best guidance.

This will save them time in the long run.

**#3: I need my team member to recognise this behaviour, so they need to do an e-learning module or go on an instructional course.**

→ *How to challenge this...*

Hold the stakeholder and/or manager accountable for their responsibilities as a people leader. Simple things like I need my team members to be less direct and more aware of others' emotions can be solved through coaching.

A course or instructional intervention won't solve these issues. Where a good old human conversation can. This is a classic case of managers trying to avoid a perhaps difficult conversation by using L&D interventions as a plaster and hoping that the end users realise the error of their ways somehow.

You might just find that in working through a discovery phase with probing questions, the claimed "L&D" problem isn't an L&D problem at all.



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