

Made for learning – Learning at Work Week

By Lynsey Whitmarsh, Managing Director – UK

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As part of the lead up to 'Learning at Work Week', Lynsey Whitmarsh, Managing Director of Hemsley Fraser, spoke about this year's theme – Made for Learning. She explores the concept of learning and how we're always looking at new ways to learn, especially in the workplace.

Read on for the full interview:



From your experience, what do you think contributes to people being better learners?

As humans, we are constantly adapting and finding new ways to learn. The right mindset and enthusiasm are two essential ingredients to being a good learner. Learning isn't always straightforward. There can be many dimensions to understanding something new, which means that the right mindset is vital. Those with a growth mindset are open to challenges and use failures as lessons from which they can learn.

It also takes a certain amount of vulnerability to enable learning because you don't necessarily understand everything about the new skill immediately. From the outset, you need to be clear on your learning objectives - sometimes, this might require critical analysis, which can be painful, but this will allow you to focus and ensure that you don't give up or revert to a fixed mindset.

An open or growth mindset will empower you to learn continuously. If someone has a closed mindset or they do not receive the necessary space to learn, they are likely to become frustrated and give up.

At Hemsley Fraser, we talk a lot about creating space in which to learn. Forbes carried out some research, '[Does Your Organization Have An Effective Learning Culture? Key Strategies To Consider](#)', which found that learning is not just about how much knowledge can be absorbed. The learner needs to start to break down these new pieces of information, or new ways of doing something, and think about how to use that learning back in everyday work life – creating relevant and accessible content to enable this is critical.

How does having a growth mindset help with learning?

A growth mindset for learning starts with accepting that there is always constant room for improvement and feeling comfortable that not everything will be 100% correct. That way, you are open to learning.

To drive forwards and keep learning requires energy, which means that it is important to remain sustainable. By taking a measured approach and learning from the things you have done well and not so well, you can refine and become even better. You can apply this thinking to anything from internal business processes to customer products and experiences.

Growing is a continuous part of life, and it's also a part of being in an organisation - you will never stop learning. We need to avoid thinking, 'I've got so much experience, and I have all the answers already'. Nobody has all of the answers, and everyone can continue to grow and learn from each other - for any organisation to thrive, having a growth culture is imperative.





What is challenging your learning at the moment?

I'm continuously learning new ways of doing things and learning new insights. One of my focus areas is how we gain meaningful insight - this might be through data, conversations or relationships, whether that's with customers or employees. We need to learn from each person and data point, drawing this together to identify

trends and themes. From here, you can develop your strategy for the business, both in terms of employee experience and customer experience. This can be very challenging - it's one thing to gain insight but, then you have to ask yourself, "what am I going to do with it?" Otherwise, what is the point of learning?

How do you stimulate a cultural shift to learning in the workplace?

Everyone needs to feel comfortable that the organisation has a culture that accepts and embraces learning, where you may not achieve perfection immediately, if at all. Instead, in time, you can continuously improve through learning.

Referring back to the point about vulnerability - you have to be open to brave conversations with each other and be able to give feedback in a safe way, without criticising others. We all need to feel able to suggest ways people can improve without threatening or forcing someone to learn something new because if that happens, they are likely to start to shut down and won't feel motivated to learn. We need to raise each other up and help each other learn in positive ways.

At Hemsley Fraser, we've launched our learner portal across the business. We'll be running training sessions with our supervisors, managers and with our head of communities. Some of these expert-led sessions will cover how to build a trust culture with your team and how to have psychologically safe conversations on developmental points. We are encouraging people to want to learn and develop, to feel empowered and to find space. We want our employees to know that they're going on a journey, and we fully support them whether they get it right or wrong and that we encourage continuous growth.

At Hemsley Fraser, what type of learning resources do you have to offer?

We have numerous different asynchronous and synchronous learning pathways. You can use the asynchronous pieces any time, they're online and easy to access, and they're self-driven. For example, imagine you're working from home and feeling anxious about a meeting because you have to deliver a presentation. You might want to access a quick video about how to prepare to present virtually. With this type of on-demand content, you can dive straight into a piece of micro-learning to help support you.

In addition, we have whole curated playlists that take you through different detailed topic pieces, which are great for learners that want to take a deeper dive. These are particularly useful when someone would like to spend more time reflecting on a topic such as 'time management' or 'how to stay motivated'. The latter has been a hot topic over the last 12-18 months - many of us are working remotely, and trying to maintain energy and stay motivated, especially when faced with so many challenges in our personal lives and the workplace.

The different modes of learning are a significant factor. The format and delivery of content are fundamental, and this is a primary focus at Hemsley Fraser. For example, for a deeper dive into a topic area, we have created Fluidbooks which, are interactive, visually engaging e-books. Whereas to present key themes or important messages, we use shorter animations, videos and infographics. Plus, we have call to action pieces, which are animations to help you thrive in five minutes.

We place a heavy emphasis on blended learning and have modules or building blocks that we can pick and mix. You can combine these with instructor-led virtual sessions, ranging from 90 minutes to 3 hours.

A platform, such as a digital hub that will host learning assets, is also important because it provides you with some control over your learning. It will enable learners to connect to new pieces of learning quickly and provide the opportunity to interact with peers and learning cohorts.

What about face-to-face learning?

When the time is right, we'll also re-introduce face-to-face instructor-led training, which has been a core part of our offering for a very long time. Right now, it's very much about how you blend all these different formats of learning together to get exactly the right experience for the individual or team.

Having the right toolbox and the ability to combine different learning assets and content in the right way for your people is vital to providing context and supporting learning.

CONTACT US

UK

+44 345 071 2801

hemsleyfraser.com/en-gb

enquiries@hemsleyfraser.co.uk

US

+1 888-559-0074

hemsleyfraser.com

inquiries@hemsleyfraser.com

GERMANY

+49 69 9203 75680

hemsleyfraser.de

info@hemsleyfraser.de

CANADA

+1 250 999 2656

hemsleyfraser.com/en-ca

inquiries@hemsleyfraser.ca