

Making Federated Learning Environments Work:

How to Ensure that Corporate Learning “Sticks” Wherever You Deploy It

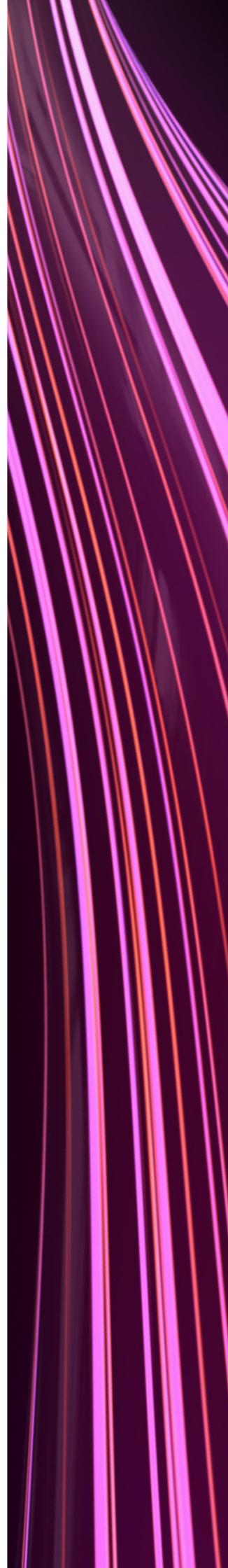
Evelyn, the CLO of a multinational automotive parts manufacturing company, is frustrated. The organization has grown exponentially over the last decade through a combination of the expansion of its core business and several strategic acquisitions. She has been tasked with developing and deploying learning initiatives to support the unification of these disparate groups around a shared understanding of the company's mission, vision, and values and a new management framework.

In support of this goal, Evelyn directs the development and distribution of several enterprise-wide learning initiatives from the company's Center of Excellence (CoE) to various regional L&D units, who in turn, are responsible for making the learning available to their respective learner audiences. The success of the CoE's programs is dependent on the ability and willingness of the local L&D teams to devote time and resources to promoting the programs, however the local teams are often resistant to prioritize global projects for a wide variety of reasons, from competing local priorities to a belief that training from "corporate" is not relevant and will not resonate with their respective learner audiences. Additionally, Evelyn does not have the authority to compel full alignment with CoE initiatives; the local L&D teams operate as independent entities with their own budgets and priorities, and only report to her via a dotted line. Without their support, CoE programs often fail to gain the traction they need to make the desired impact.

This means that Evelyn is left in a quandary: How can she ensure that enterprise-led training initiatives succeed when she does not have direct access to the learner audience or the authority to compel local L&D units to support the programs?

Evelyn serves as a composite representation, inspired by Hemsley Fraser's extensive involvement in shaping and executing numerous worldwide learning solutions. Her story is emblematic of the challenges faced by the leaders of global learning organizations who struggle to successfully deploy global learning initiatives while operating in "federated" learning environments – environments in which enterprise-led learning initiatives are deployed from center and rely on a variety of somewhat independent regional/functional L&D units to engage learners and provision access to learner resources.

In this article, we will explore Hemsley's strategies for surmounting the challenges inherent in federated learning environments and establishing successful global learning solutions that empower employees across the entire enterprise.



The key to successfully navigating federated learning environments is to first understand the root causes of potential resistance to regional/functional L&D teams fully lending their support to global initiatives. Drawing from our experience collaborating with leaders of learning organizations like Evelyn, we have identified the following common obstacles when launching global learning solutions:

- **Lack of ownership and autonomy:** Regional/functional L&D teams may feel that they have no ownership or autonomy over global initiatives, which can lead to resentment and resistance.
- **Misalignment with local priorities:** Global initiatives may not be aligned with the specific needs and priorities of regional/functional L&D teams, making them less likely to prioritize them.
- **Perceived lack of relevance:** Regional/functional L&D teams may believe that global initiatives do not adequately reflect the organizational and cultural contexts of their units and therefore the content will not resonate with their learners.

To successfully navigate these challenges and foster a collaborative environment for launching global learning initiatives, it is essential for learning leaders to directly address the concerns of regional L&D units and work towards building a partnership with them. This involves recognizing the unique perspectives and expertise that regional teams bring to the table and establishing a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the success of global initiatives. By proactively addressing the obstacles mentioned above, learning leaders can create a more unified and effective approach to learning and development across the organization.



To engage regional training teams in the development and deployment of enterprise-wide learning, global learning leaders should:

1. Offer locally relevant options

One of the primary tenets of adult learning is that the learner must feel that the learning experience is relevant and immediately applicable. When developing content for a global audience, this means that organizations must prioritize cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Providing content and delivery methods to suit different cultural norms and preferences ensures that training materials are accessible and relatable to learners from various backgrounds.

Actionable strategies:

- **Involve local stakeholders in content development.** Rely on local stakeholders to ensure that content is relevant to their audience.
- **Translate content into local languages.** Organizations should invest in translation services and provide training materials in multiple languages to cater to diverse learners. Incorporating visual aids and non-verbal communication techniques can also enhance understanding and engagement.
- **Allow facilitators to “tailor in the moment.”** By incorporating relevant contextual and cultural references for local audiences, facilitators can create more meaningful and impactful learning experiences and keep learners engaged.
- **Offer “cafeteria-style” learning options.** Offer a variety of learning resources to support a variety of learning styles and learning in the flow of work.

2. Get early buy-in

Communication and collaboration are essential for the success of federated learning. In a federated environment, it is critical to foster strong collaboration between the CoE and regional/ functional L&D teams. It is important to involve all stakeholders early in the planning and implementation process to ensure that everyone is aligned with the goals and objectives of the program.

Actionable strategies:

- **Cultivate a champions group.** Identify individuals in each group who are willing to help to promote learning and development initiatives to their peers. They can do this by talking about the benefits of learning, sharing their own learning experiences, and encouraging others to participate in learning programs.
- **Develop localized promotional campaigns.** Craft messaging to resonate with each local audience and use local channels for distribution. This includes engaging both local and global employees to help make it feel less like a HR / L&D initiative but to ensure strategic alignment.

3. Let the data drive your strategy

Leveraging data to inform learning strategies is crucial for developing and executing learning initiatives that effectively cater to the unique requirements of regional learner audiences. This data-driven approach promotes ongoing enhancements, personalization, and improved decision-making, ultimately resulting in more successful learning outcomes. Moreover, data provides regional stakeholders with the assurance that centrally deployed training programs align with their teams' needs, enabling them to allocate time and budget with confidence.

Actionable strategies:

- **Use data to build engagement and commitment.** Analyze existing data to help build compelling 'factoids' about the need for this program and the desired impact.
- **Measure what matters.** Build a reporting strategy that tracks key data sets, including regional trends, functional trends, and content consumption. By exploring the impact of learning content across organizational demographics, you can understand how different personas engage with varying learning assets and communications outreaches and adjust your promotional campaigns to target different audiences with the most appropriate content.
- **Optimize decision making.** Regularly evaluate data to support informed budget and resource allocation decisions. Access to data that illustrates how learners interact with the learning process enables both centralized and local stakeholders to make more informed choices regarding the quantity and timing of deliveries and how to evolve the program to better cater to the unique requirements of each learner group.

At Hemsley, we regularly employ these strategies in our approach to the design and implementation of global solutions. Our content is designed in multiple formats to meet the needs of a variety of learning styles and can be tailored to meet the unique needs of each distinct learner audience. Hemsley's facilitator network spans the globe, which means that workshops can be delivered in language by facilitators who understand the cultural context of the region. Additionally, we offer an innovative approach, HF Symphony, to helping clients maximize the usage and impact of their learning programs through a combination of the right promotional activities and data insights.

About Hemsley Fraser

Hemsley Fraser is a complete learning and talent development provider that delivers engaging, performance-boosting, and change-enabling learning and development services to organizations of all sizes, everywhere around the world.

We have been innovating continuously throughout our 30+ year history and are known as a global leader in providing both blended and digital learning experiences that deliver strong results. Thanks to our full-time staff of 200 expert professionals and 750+ on-demand associate designers and facilitators, we are able to provide a full suite of learning services wherever and whenever you need us.

Contact us

Want to learn more about how Hemsley can support your next learning initiative? Please reach out anytime.



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