



## What if nobody expects to do the same job for ever?

We consider how learning and development needs to move with the times.

**What if the world had moved on, yet all of our HR or Learning & Development systems, processes, norms and behaviours were firmly grounded in a previous era? At iManage we sometimes wonder if that is the case. There are lots of these areas that have an impact; Workforces are international, even global, the average age of the workforce has increased significantly, the academic standards of the workforce is much improved - any of these would be worth thinking about. But let's just pick one example from the list of many, the fact that nobody today expects to do the same job for a long time.**

If its true, then what impact should it have on our learning and development approach? Would our existing approaches be relevant? Here are three ideas that seem valuable:

### 1. Specialise late

Surely it would be good for us to encourage the up and coming generation to avoid specialising too early in their careers. There was once a time when the young new hopeful would join as the Assistant Buyer and in some act of providence immediately settle into a procurement specialism that would be theirs for life. Maybe that's no longer quite so helpful within a workforce that expects to have a number of jobs, employers and even careers ahead of them. Why even the very job titles we use encourages early specialism when perhaps we would better prepare people for increased flexibility, adaptability or improved attitude.

## 2. Move them around

Ironically something like the old apprentice model of moving people around each of the departments could do with being resurrected. However, not just for apprentices. I remember being very impressed with DuPont when I worked for them during the late 80's as they frequently shifted in new managers, heads of departments and even CEO's from different disciplines, backgrounds and industry sectors. It didn't seem to matter to them that the individuals had no experience of the business, knowledge of the discipline or even familiarity of the geographical culture which they had just dropped them into. What mattered was that the individual had a suitable attitude and was willing to learn all over again. Think how motivating this was for those that wanted to be involved, as the quality of learning exceeded anything that a classroom could offer.

## 2. Focus on life skills

Our third thought is that our staff would benefit more from the development of true life skills rather than mere technical refinement. It would be an exciting place to work where staff are encouraged to grow as people, not just as procurement specialists or some other discipline. Perhaps we might start organising courses with titles like "How to socialise", "What to do when you disagree", "How to stay in control when everything is falling apart", "Effectively being yourself", or perhaps "Getting others to really engage with you".



**The trouble is it's too easy to keep churning out the same old stuff. To engage the same old learning and development approach, consultants and material. While we do that the world really does move on and our relevance can become increasingly depleted. We need as HR and L&D professionals to recreate our norms of operation in the current climate, not just in the past. In practice that may mean taking some risks, trying out some new thinking and ultimately the determination to shake things up in order to create a truly significant solution for our businesses, all year around.**

