



HOW TO:

BUILD

A

(and launch)

LEARNING CAMPAIGN



MAAS
MARKETING



TL;DR:

LEARNING CAMPAIGNS

Here you have it. Everything you need to devise and develop robust learning campaigns that actually get you impact.

Marketing for learning[®] is a thing, and after reading this, it's gonna be your thing too!

Why do we need learning campaigns?	3
Adopting a marketing mindset	4
Letting go of long-held beliefs	7
The purpose of learning campaigns	9
How to build a learning campaign	12
Step 1: Define your goals	12
Step 2: Identify and understand your audience	15
Step 3: Organise your channels	17
Step 4: Understand available resource	18
Step 5: Strategise and plan	19
Developing your hook	20
Step 6: Test and iterate	22



Why we need learning campaigns

The world is noisy as hell. Your people are inundated with a cacophony of comms both in and out of the organisation. Getting attention (and keeping it) has never been more difficult - nor has it ever been more pertinent in L&D.

Most L&D functions we talk to these days appreciate that marketing plays a role in raising awareness of learning opportunities within the organisation. And so they're doing some comms - a smattering of boring, corporate emails here, or a cobbled together promotional picture there. These marketing efforts almost always lack any strategic backbone, are usually done last minute and rarely span more than a couple of weeks.

The result is marketing efforts that don't make an impact and just get ignored. It's a true exercise in futility and adds even more noise to our learners' plates. So, what's the fix?

This ebook helps you break down some of the mental silos that are holding back your current marketing efforts, whilst also showing you MAAS' foolproof process for more consistent, long-term and results-focused marketing efforts: learning campaigns.

**Marketing for learning®.
It's our business.**



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First things first...



Adopting a marketing mindset.

Here's a radical notion: your learners don't actually want to learn. They don't open their eyes wide in the morning, jump out of bed and scream to the world: "I wanna upskill myself today." Heck, you work in L&D and I bet you don't do that either.

Your learners are employees of your business, yes. But first and foremost, they're human beings. They're living their lives, working to eat and be merry and generally aren't focused (or indeed interested) on the new learning initiative that you're rolling out. Soz.

It's not that they don't necessarily want to learn, but they aren't - for the most part - intrinsically motivated to learn. They are pulled in 1000 different directions every day, and without understanding the benefits and value of your learning, are unlikely to prioritise professional development.

THE COLD HARD TRUTH:

Marketers know that their audiences are, at their core, mostly disinterested in the products or services they are selling. At least at the beginning. Marketers know that it's their job to build trust with audiences. To prove value. And to keep front of mind.

But in L&D, we don't think that way. We seem to believe that the simple fact that someone works at our organisation creates some tacit contract whereby they're committed to learning at work and upskilling themselves. "They work here, so they should want to learn", right?

The problem with this attitude is that it fundamentally affects our approach when we are building out marketing communications and content. Let me show you what I mean:

MARKETING MINDSET	L&D MINDSET
"No one knows about my product."	"Everyone that works here should already know how important L&D is."
"It's my job to build trust with audiences."	"Learners already trust L&D because it's part of the company they're employed by."
"I must focus on benefits and the 'what's in it for me' if I want my marketing to be effective."	"Straightforward comms that tell learners what is available to them, and where to go, is sufficient to increase audience engagement."
"Even though my brand is well-recognised, I know my audience quickly forgets and therefore I must keep front on mind through consistent comms."	"Ad-hoc communication is sufficient to get people engaged with learning, because they are already bought into the idea of learning at work."



We seem to believe the simple notion that because someone works at our organisation creates some tacit contract whereby they're committed to learning at work and upskilling themselves. "They work here, so they should want to learn", right?

You may think I am being a little bit facetious with how I have laid out the L&D mindset. It's intentional. Whilst I don't often hear L&D practitioners outwardly saying these things, their marketing approaches and attitudes towards employees very clearly communicates that this is how they think and operate accordingly.

And as a result, the marketing just does not have any effect whatsoever.

Let's change that, shall we?



LETTING GO OF OUR LONG-HELD BELIEFS.

In order to really pave the way for a new way of thinking, we've got to reframe our brains and break down some of the mental silos that are holding us back and restricting our ability to do marketing for learning® well.

BELIEF 1: LEARNERS WANT TO LEARN

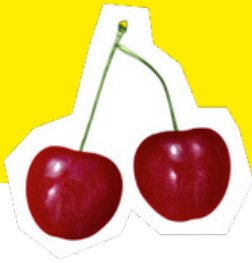
As you have seen above, starting with the attitude that our audiences want to learn is actually having a detrimental effect on our marketing efforts. We'd do well to let go of this view and make space for the idea that actually, most people don't want to learn. But with clever, consistent marketing, we can influence their hearts and minds and prove to them that learning is valuable and benefits them.

See the difference?



BELIEF 2: POOR LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IS A RESULT OF YOUR LEARNING TECH

Is it though? I have seen the L&D industry obsessed with solving the conundrum of poor learner engagement through technology, yet still wrangle with the challenge decades later. So whilst a clunky, dusty LMS and an off-the-shelf library you purchased in 2003 is very likely to disengage, if your learning offering is relatively modern and barriers to access are removed, then tech is not the problem.



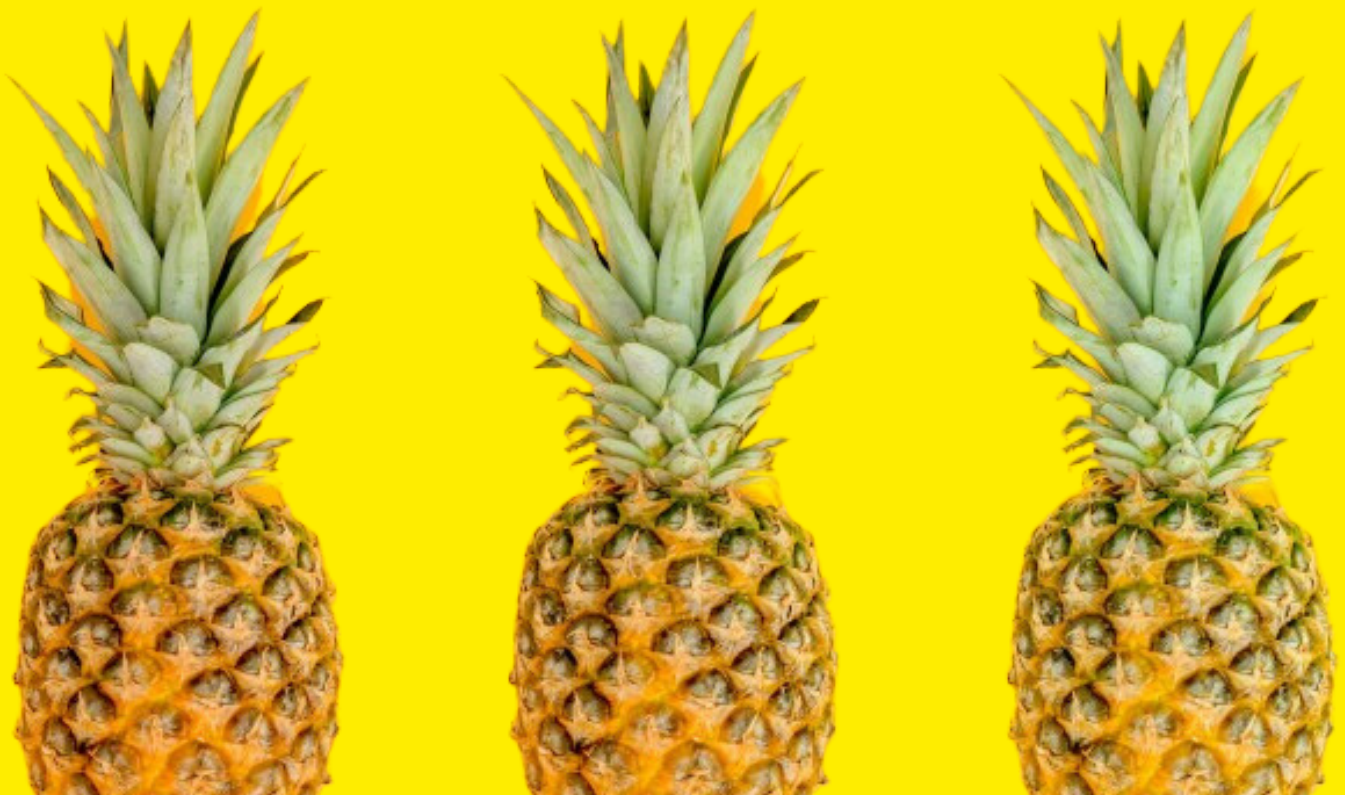
BELIEF 3: NO ONE HAS TIME TO LEARN

The 'lack of time' challenge honestly comes up on every single project we do with our clients. We're repeatedly told that learners say they don't have time to learn. And whilst they may be hearing that from the horse's mouth, i.e. employees saying they can't make time to engage with learning opportunities, I'd argue that's still not the case. They have the same 24 hours a day as the rest of us; they simply don't see the value or merits of your learning, so don't prioritise it.

We all make time for the things we deem important. Your learners don't have time to learn because they don't see learning at work as important.

Before you embark on developing learning campaigns to raise awareness and engagement with your learning, make sure you have challenged your own mindset and attitude towards your learners.

The success of your marketing relies on it.



THE PURPOSE OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS.

Oftentimes, when marketers are developing marketing strategies (and the campaigns that exist within them) they are determining how they can consistently stay front of mind. Within this, they'll usually explore two different angles of communication:



BRAND BUILDING ACTIVITIES

These work to build brand awareness and foster trust and affinity towards the brand - these aren't usually product (or in your case, learning) focused and instead lean into capturing hearts and minds consistently over a period of time.

PRODUCT/EVENTS FOCUSED CAMPAIGNS

These efforts usually are a much larger and more concerted effort to get eyes on a specific product/service/experience. In L&D's case, this would be promoting your new learning platform landing, or that brand spankers leadership programme that's been 2 years in the making. It could even be your big push to engage people with learning, in a bid to shift culture.

Whatever it is, the result is a constant hum of activity - designed to raise awareness, build engagement with the brand and ultimately get a customer to transact. The emphasis is to keep the brand present in the mind of buyers, so when they have a need, or are ready to transact, they think of you.

The goal? Be where they are.



Consistency in comms never seems to be our focus.

In my time working in the world of learning, I've seen every permutation of a 'campaign' fathomable. Learning at Work week. A flurry of emails about your new learning initiative that's going live in a week. Lunch and learns. Sound familiar?

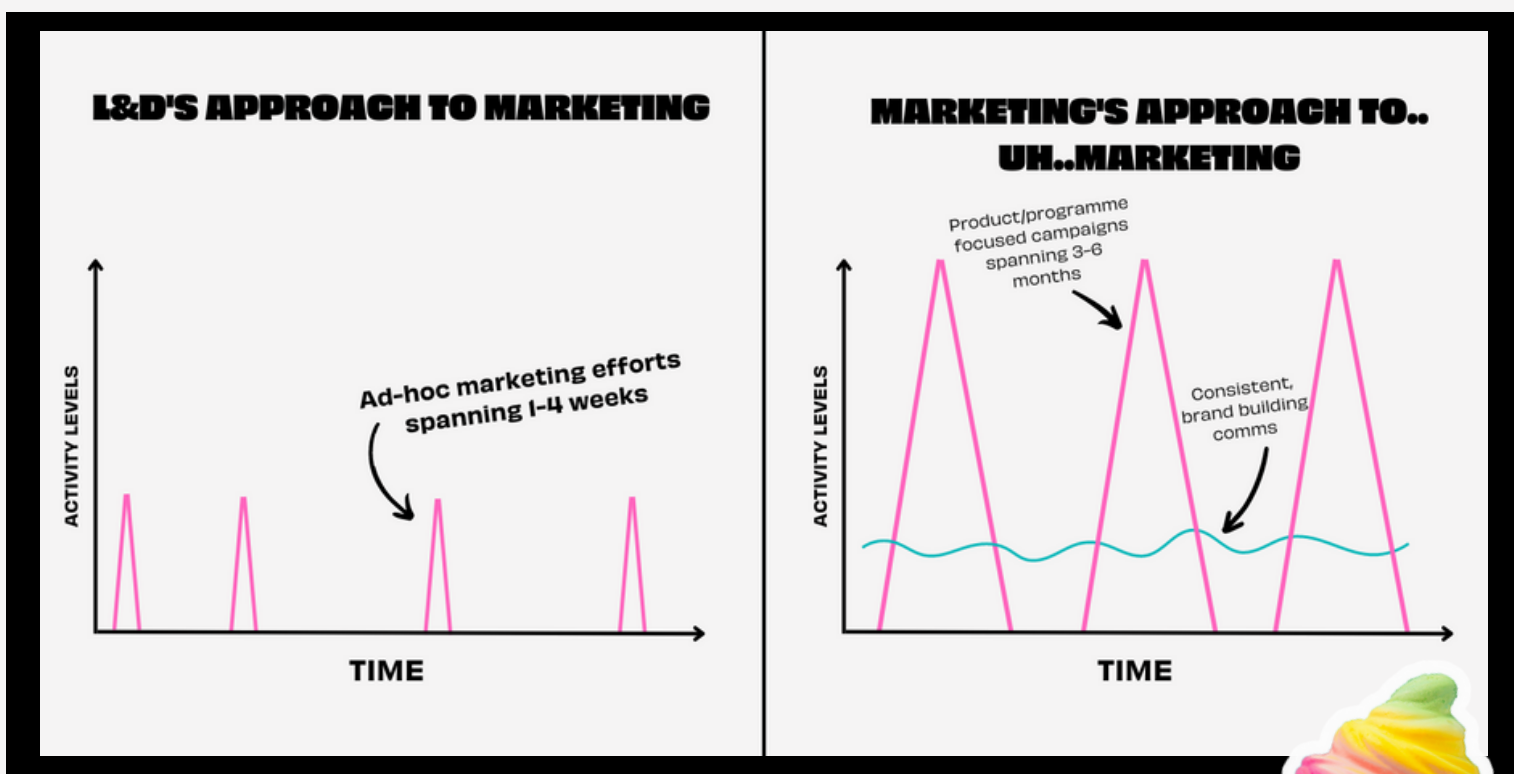
The reality is, whilst these efforts to get people to engage with L&D are reasonable, they are rarely consistent. We often see L&D operate with very severe peaks and troughs in their marketing and comms activities. There's a lot of noise for a few short weeks, and then it all goes rather quiet again. When it comes to winning hearts and minds, this is no bueno.

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Whilst some communications are better than none, if you've ever done marketing like this before, I'd expect you haven't often seen any substantial results from your efforts.

And that's because in order for marketing to be effective, it needs to be consistent.



THE RULE OF 7:

The Rule of 7 states that a prospect needs to "hear" the advertiser's message at least 7 times before they'll take action to buy that product or service. The long-established Rule of 7 tells marketers how they might maintain contact and visibility with clients to earn their trust and business.

This ebook is going to focus on showing you how to build product and/or event focused campaigns (the pink lines in the graph) to raise awareness of your learning opportunities, and more importantly get people engaging with your learning experiences over time.

HOW TO BUILD A LEARNING CAMPAIGN.



Here we've broken down your campaign planning into six core steps; follow this foolproof process for ultimate campaign success.

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR GOALS

Whilst this step is one of the most critical for building out your campaigns, it's often an area I see as vastly overlooked by L&D overall. I don't know whether that's because we're scared of collecting data, or just don't really believe that goal setting is important when it comes to campaigns, but either way, it's not widely practised as far as I can see.

So, when planning your learning campaigns, always start with this step first. Ask yourself: "What am I trying to achieve with this learning campaign?"

Make sure you're specific too. Saying something like "get more people learning" is quite intangible and will be quite difficult to measure against.

We also recommend that our customers measure success in two different ways, marketing effort success and then learning success. And that's because whilst learning and marketing are inextricably linked in this context, marketing cannot impact the quality of the learning product itself.

Here's a couple of areas you could consider monitoring:



MARKETING MEASUREMENTS	LEARNING MEASUREMENTS
Engagements with emails	Repeat visits to learning experiences
Engagements with socials	Improvements in performance
Visits to articles on your intranet	Changes in behaviour
Increase visits and repeat visits to learning experiences	
Increase registrations to learning content	

Whatever your goal, make sure you establish them from the outset, and don't forget to benchmark before you start your campaign. After all, you can't see where you've gone if you don't know where you came from.



Don't forget to make your goals SMART.

Hopefully, most of you are familiar with the concept of SMART goals, but just in case you're not, here are the parameters you must adhere to in order to develop SMART goals. We strongly recommend your goals utilise this format as they're easier to measure and monitor.



They must be SPECIFIC, detailed and meaningful. Use action words where possible.



They must be MEASURABLE. How will you evaluate success? Use tangible data and metrics as much as you can.



They must be ATTAINABLE, realistic and within your scope; no one wants a goal that's unachievable.



They must be RELEVANT and align with company goals and vision. Ideally, it improves some aspects of the business too.



They must be TIME-BASED and have a clear deadline.



STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

Please do not overlook this step – a clear view of who you are targeting with your campaign will help your marketing be more effective and create more resonance with your audience. Our recommendation is to go through the process of developing learner personas, as they help us better understand who it is that we're targeting, which enhances our ability to influence and persuade, i.e. instigate an action.

READ IF YOU ALREADY HAVE PERSONAS

"I already have personas", I hear you mutter under your breath. Whilst that may be true, I'd ask you to reflect on your current personas and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do your personas provide you with ample insight into your audiences' motivators and pain points when it comes to learning?
- Do your personas go into deeper detail than a target audience's job title, ie People Manager, Leader etc?
- Do your personas feel like real people to you and your L&D team?

If you've answered no to any of these questions, then you need to develop more robust personas. Lucky for you, we can show you how.



Rather than me go into loads and loads of detail for how to create personas here, I'm going to direct you to two other meaty resources that we've created to help you better understand the process of persona creation:

- **[How To Create Kick Ass Personas - webinar recording](#)**
- **[A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Learner Personas ebook](#)**

We have seen many, many learning campaigns overlook this crucial step in the planning process and I can genuinely say the results are almost always underwhelming.

Prioritise understanding your people, as this depth of knowledge is going to make your marketing (and even your learning) better!



STEP 3: ORGANISE YOUR CHANNELS

Every time I sit down with a client to discuss how they reach out to their audiences, the response is basically always the same. Most conventional L&D departments aren't exactly drowning in communication channels to reach learners. Pair that challenge with internal comms often holding the reins on a lot of the global comms and suddenly just getting a message out to someone appears to be quite challenging.

However, don't be despondent. You actually have so many more channels than you think you do, especially if you explore utilising people in your business as the conduit for your message. Here's some of the most common channels we've leveraged in learning campaigns that we've developed for clients:

- Emails, both en-mass and segmented wherever possible
- Social channels such as Teams or Yammer
- Communities
- Intranet, such as articles or hosting PDFs
- Screens in communal areas
- Posters in communal areas
- All-hands calls
- Business Partners
- And many, many more

Once you have defined your goals and know who you're targeting with your campaign, you should be in a great position to identify which channels are going to be the most effective at carrying your message.



TOP TIP:

Don't use TOO many channels, as this can sometimes spread you very thin. We recommend focusing on 2-4 key channels and putting all your energy into these. Your marketing efforts are more concentrated and aligned as a result.



Learn more about how L'Oreal leveraged over 15 internal channels to get their employees engaged and excited about learning on our podcast.



STEP 4: UNDERSTAND AVAILABLE RESOURCE

This step is another hugely overlooked aspect of strategy and planning. Whenever we start working with a client we always make sure to ask them a really important question:

"How much time and energy does your team have available to commit to marketing?"

There's very little point in developing a multi-channel strategy that is complete with loads of cool promo videos and social posts and weekly emails if your team only has 2 hours a week to create stuff.

The point of this step is to be really real with yourself about what's possible and attainable within your current capacity. Better to develop something that's within your grasp rather than create a strat that's setting you up for failure from the outset.

STEP 5: STRATEGISE AND PLAN



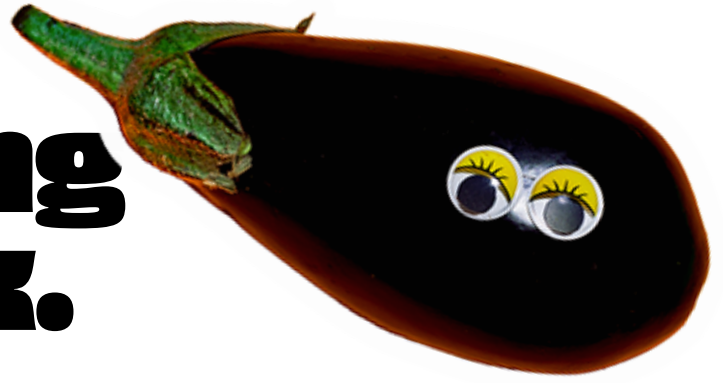
Here's the really meaty bit of your learning campaign – this is where you're going to define:

- what you're going to do,
- how you're going to do it,
- who you're going to do it to,
- when you're going to do it and
- where you're going to do it.

Your strategy should define the how, what and who of your campaign, whilst the plan is a really detailed document (usually a spreadsheet) that determines the release schedule and cadence of your comms across a defined time period. If you want a template for a marketing campaign plan, email me at ashley@maas-marketing.co.uk and I may well share one with you 😊

These strategic documents are usually quite hefty when we do them (I'm talking 5k+ words) because there's a lot of detail about the campaign positioning and the psychology of how we're going to connect with audiences using our hook.

Developing your hook.



Most great marketing campaigns have a hook of some kind. If you're not sure what I mean, just think about brands such as Nike or McDonald's. Chances are their marketing hooks come to mind straight away: Just do it and I'm lovin' it. I reckon you're probably also visualising their logos by now too, and feeling some emotions about the brands as well. That's some bloody good marketing. Anyway, I digress.

These hooks are designed to grab your attention and well, bed into your mind like a fish hook might. Think of it as your lure to entice your learners to your learning offerings.

When done well, they're incredibly effective, so do explore how you can create a clever hook. Consider the following:

- Hooks should be short, no more than 5-7 words tops
- As simple as possible, whilst also being clever
- There shouldn't be any cognitive energy required to understand the hook. If it does, you need to revisit bullet 2
- Leverage word play, puns or lean into brand where possible

The next page shows a couple of my favourite examples of clever marketing hooks (I'd like to point out that the use of ladders in your marketing is not essential).



POW!



STEP 6: TEST AND ITERATE

Testing, learning and iterating is a vital aspect of marketing. Most digital marketers are a little bit fanatical about quality behavioural data from their audiences because it allows them to adjust their approaches and hopefully, improve their effectiveness over time.

Just like the sentiment in step 1, getting data about your marketing performance is crucial for securing future success. As well as defining your goals and benchmarking against them, make time to test your efforts with audiences in a bid to learn even more about what works (and indeed what doesn't) with them.



There are loads of ways you can test your marketing efforts:

- Altering the contents of an email such as copy, subject line or imagery. Make sure to A/B test here, i.e. only change ONE component at a time. Split your list into two groups and send a version to each group. Add link tracking in emails to see which gets the most engagement or traction.
- Mixing up email length, try short emails and longer ones (just never make them longer than 250 characters (i.e., one side of A4). I'm serious, don't do it.
- Experimenting with colour psychology and the colours of your buttons or banners
- Playing with tone of voice; does a casual or a conversational tone tend to resonate better with audiences? Who knows unless you experiment!

The key here is to always be playing with your marketing and thinking about how you can use the marketing efforts you are already undertaking to get an even deeper understanding of your audience.



If you want to learn more about leveraging data to help you evolve your approaches, have a listen to this Marketing for Learning® episode from Hannah on our podcast.

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Great, we've got just the thing for you.

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AND it's LPI certified, cheaaa!

SKILL ME UP! >





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