



How Reach is future-proofing its workforce

From training delivery to data-driven learning facilitation



Reach

In the face of a rapidly evolving media sector, Reach must continuously future-proof its workforce by helping them to adapt to constant change. To do this meant completely transforming its approach to learning and development. By implementing magpie as the keystone of its learning ecosystem, Reach was able to

embed a data-driven approach to learning and development. In the year since Reach rolled out its new approach, supported by magpie, its employee engagement score related to learning rose from 6.3 (out of 10) to 7.1. Similarly, the net promoter score that aligns with this rose by 12% in the same timeframe.

About the client



Reach PLC (formerly known as Trinity Mirror) is the UK's largest national and regional news publisher with iconic brands like the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Manchester Evening News*, *Liverpool Echo* and *Daily Record* to name a few. The portfolio also includes a growing number of digital only brands, such as Glasgow Live, Belfast Live and Birmingham Live.

Adapting to a dynamic market



When you think about the way in which we consume news has changed over recent years, it's easy to recognise the dramatic shifts media publishing has undergone - and continues to go through. Few industries have been transformed so profoundly by technological changes. This has led to a difficult trading environment. Over the past decade, UK press industry revenues have declined by more than half.

In February 2018, Trinity Mirror purchased the Northern and Shell group, which included the Daily Express, Daily Star and OK Magazine, to form Reach PLC. For Reach, merging two working cultures compounded the challenge of upskilling its employees. Not only this, but Reach's team underwent direct changes to its composition.

Historically, the Learning and Development team included 30 training managers delivering face-to-face training across the UK. This was condensed down to a single training manager based in London, making it impossible for the team to reach people through traditional learning interventions.

Kirsty Lynch, who became Head of L&D Group Strategy in January 2016, identified the requirement for a new team structure and delivery model which sought to change people's perception of learning, which was behind the times.

“Prior to introducing magpie, there was an outdated view of learning within the business. Learning was something that happened to you through courses or face-to-face sessions.”

Kirsty Lynch, Head of L&D
Group Strategy

On top of this, 60% of Reach employees surveyed indicated that they weren't even aware there were learning opportunities available to them. This was particularly alarming as research has shown that employees' perceptions of a company's training offering has an impact on actual performance (Mabey & Ramirez, 'Does management development improve organizational productivity? A six-country analysis of European firms', 2005).

80% of Reach's content is now consumed through digital channels and this proportion is set to grow. But the skills required for digital are very different to those needed in the traditional newsroom. Reach is committed to giving all employees an opportunity to transition into new roles. However, to achieve this, the L&D team needed to help people develop immediately valuable skills, as well as emergent skills needed in the future.

Reach's team understood that learning was integral to the company's survival. They also knew that if they were to have any kind of impact, they needed to be bold and throw away old methods that proved ineffective. New skills required a new approach.

Reach embraced the power of a data-driven and learner-centric approach. A survey found that 65% of employees felt that they were ultimately responsible for their own learning and development. Kirsty explains that “people did want to learn and take ownership of their development, but told us they didn’t have time.”

Reach’s team knew they needed to support self-directed learning, but didn’t have the tools to deliver the tremendous changes required. Kirsty and the team were basically starting from a clean slate. “The LMS we had was so old that the vendor said that they would no longer be supporting it,” she explained.



“Introducing magpie was such a departure from how L&D used to be done at Reach. magpie is the perfect embodiment of what the department itself offers. We’ll give you the tools so you can make your masterpiece.”

*Fiona MacDonald
Group L&D Business Partner
Reach PLC*

Empowering people to future-proof their careers



Reach

The team needed to optimise the limited resources available to them so they could reach as many people as possible. This meant that traditional learning interventions simply weren't suitable. Any digital solution had to answer these critical questions:

- Will it address the employees' desire to take ownership of their learning and development?
- Is the solution scalable and flexible so that it can support a broad audience?
- Will it easily fit into existing learning infrastructure with a simple integration process?
- Will it provide data that we can draw insights into our learning culture from?
- Will it be simple enough to fit within our budget?

With magpie, Reach found that the answer to all these questions was a resounding yes. magpie was seen as the perfect solution to deliver the step change the business needed. Reach's learning team relaunched as Your Development in 2018, and magpie was the foundational building block of their new approach. magpie gives people autonomy over how they learn, while helping them develop the skills needed to fulfil personal ambitions. At Reach, magpie was used to deliver short, sharp personalised content recommendations that engaged learners and fitted around their busy working lives.


Reach were also impressed by how adaptable magpie was to a range of different contexts and points of learning needs. The team found that magpie could be integrated into the employee life-cycle experience, making it an essential tool within the business.





Featured Playlist


1. Management Toolkit – Recommendations


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Article

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Having Positive Conversations: How to handle tears at work

Self Awareness: 5 ways to become more self aware

Resilience: Resilience in the workplace

15 minutes

8 minutes

5 minutes

6 minutes

6 minutes

One of Reach's priorities was to improve the quality of support they provide to aspiring managers. In response, a custom management toolkit was curated and integrated into magpie. Fiona MacDonald, Group L&D Business Partner, explained that now "magpie piggybacks on everything else we do and is a key part of all our L&D and Talent strategies." magpie was also Reach's first taste of a data-led proposition and was a springboard that helped the team become more data-led in its approach.

magpie gave the team actionable data that provided an insight into the learning culture. This has already been used to inform how they communicate with the organisation, and where to focus their efforts going forward. This revealed to Reach's team that data could be used to change the conversations they had with the business. It could help them challenge long-standing assumptions, and focus on initiatives that would have a genuine impact.

From order-taker to value-maker

In its first year, magpie has already had a positive impact within the business, and has shaped the team's overall approach. "Introducing magpie was such a departure from how L&D used to be done at Reach. magpie is the perfect embodiment of what the department itself offers. We'll give you the tools so you can make your masterpiece."

Generating engagement with a new learning tool can be challenging for any business, but Fiona found that "once people go into magpie, they do tend to return." Already, magpie has managed to generate organic long-term engagement.

Currently, a third of all users are defined as 'super-users' meaning they're using magpie at least 4.5 days per month and engaging with at least 18 resources per month.

Not only has magpie helped the team to integrate with the business and its objectives, but it has also

raised the bar for any learning technologies that Reach integrate. "Working with magpie has opened our eyes to how we could be doing things much better." Where previously, the team didn't have tools that provided sophisticated tracking, they're now focussed on only providing solutions with data at their core across the L&D and talent offering. This includes using new employee engagement tools like Peakon and leveraging forms and data visualization tools within the Google productivity suite to conduct talent mapping exercises.

In magpie, Reach found a solution that fuelled its commitment to innovation in learning. Following the L&D team's relaunch, the business quickly recognized the value it could help deliver, and it became inundated with project requests.

Through a data-driven and evidence-based approach, the team are now strategically aligned with the business and in the position to actually drive the talent agenda rather than triaging inbound training requests.

So far, it seems like the team's new approach is having a positive impact. In the year since Your Development's relaunch, Reach's employee engagement score related to learning rose from 6.3 (out of 10) to 7.1. Similarly, the net promoter score that aligns with this rose by 12% in the same timeframe.

In the future, Filtered and Reach aim to develop the relationship by scaling the benefits of magpie and looking at ways to embed it even more deeply into the organisation.

Want to harness the
power of learning data
in your organisation?

Get in touch with one of our team:

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