

Learning and Development Strategy: Goals, Choices, and Tradeoffs



- A disciplined approach to L&D that delivers measurable business impact



- Three core disciplines: explicit goals, deliberate choices, honest tradeoffs



- Shift from activity-based training to capability building aligned with strategy

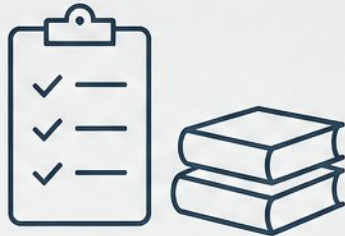


- Leave able to make, defend, and communicate strategic L&D decisions



Starting Points and Shared Pain

FOCUS TODAY



TRAINING ACTIVITY

High volume. Busy. Hard to see impact.



WHAT L&D ASPIRES TO



BUSINESS VALUE

Strategic influence. Clear outcomes.
Sustained impact.



- Activity trap: high volume, courses, completions, low visible impact



- Reactive "order-taker" mode: fulfilling requests without strategic influence



- L&D faces pressure to prove value; executives see unclear business outcomes



- Activity metrics erode trust and push L&D away from strategic decisions

What an L&D Strategy Is and Is Not



- A business case for closing specific capability gaps, not a training schedule



- Strategy: why and what;
roadmap: sequence and ownership



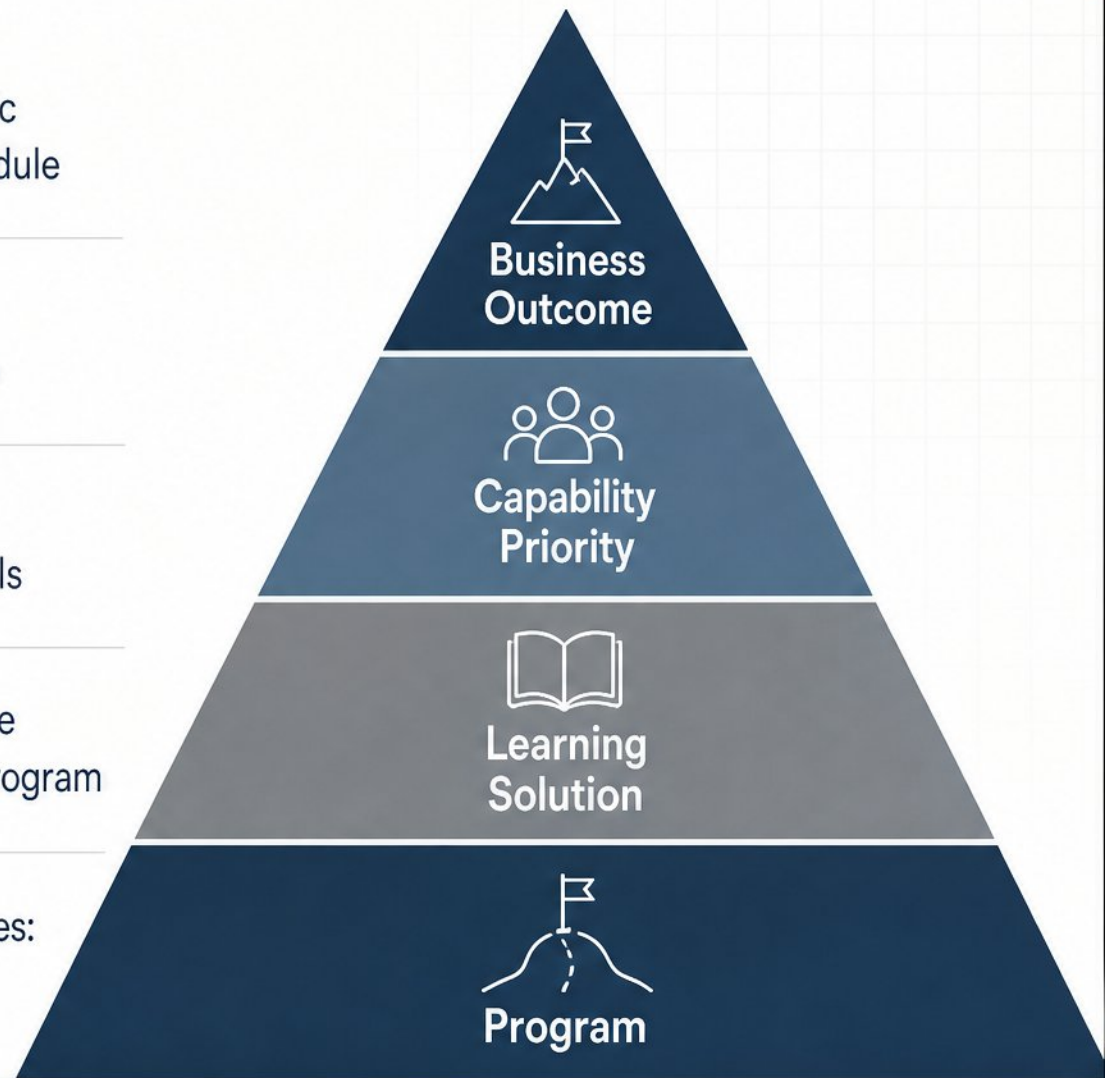
- Training plan lists activities;
individual plans track personal goals



- Strategy pyramid: business outcome
→ capability priority → solution → program

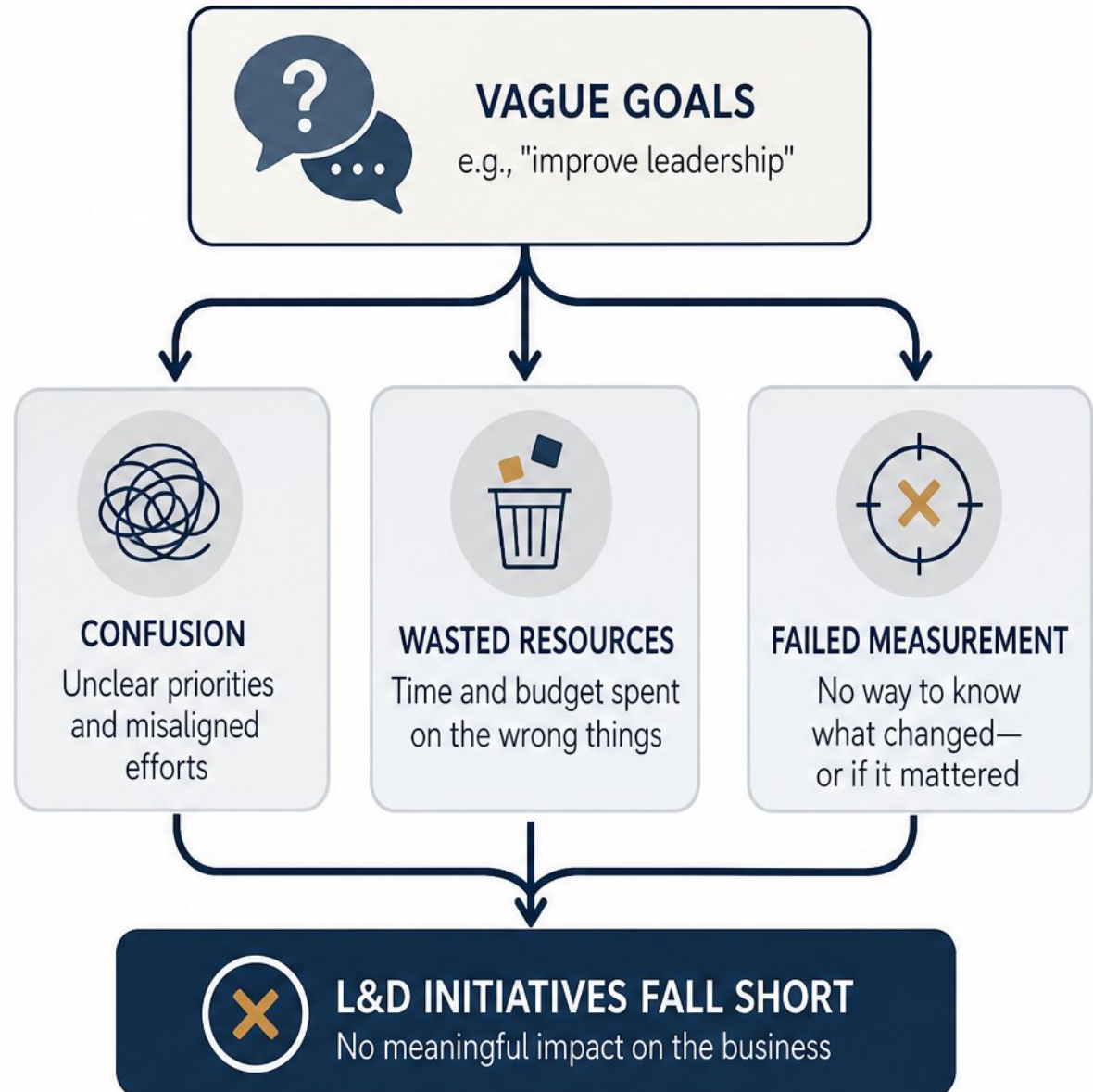


- Align strategy to organizational cycles:
goal-setting, budgeting, reviews



Why L&D Fails Without Explicit Goals

- Activity metrics: courses, completions, smile sheets—not change
- Learning objectives ≠ business-aligned L&D goals
- Vague: "improve leadership" vs. measurable: "reduce time-to-proficiency by 20%"
- Goal ambiguity creates framing, resource, and measurement problems downstream



Core Concepts: Capability, Performance, and Time-to-Value

- Capability building, performance support, and knowledge transfer are distinct jobs
- Time-to-value measures lead time, speed to competence, and business urgency
- Impact chain: input → experience → behavior → business result
- Place each L&D activity on the impact chain to surface true value



Setting Goals That the Business Recognizes



- Translate business outcomes into a small set of focused priorities



- Use leading and lagging indicators, not just completion data



- Tie goals to behavior and business metrics, not course objectives



- Use simple goal templates that work across stakeholder groups



Strategic Choices: Build, Buy, Partner, Curate, or Stop

- - Core choices: build, buy, partner, curate, or stop
- - Prioritize audiences: leaders, critical roles, frontline
- - Delivery options: instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job
- - Use five filters: uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity
- - Build proprietary content; buy standardized; co-create the middle

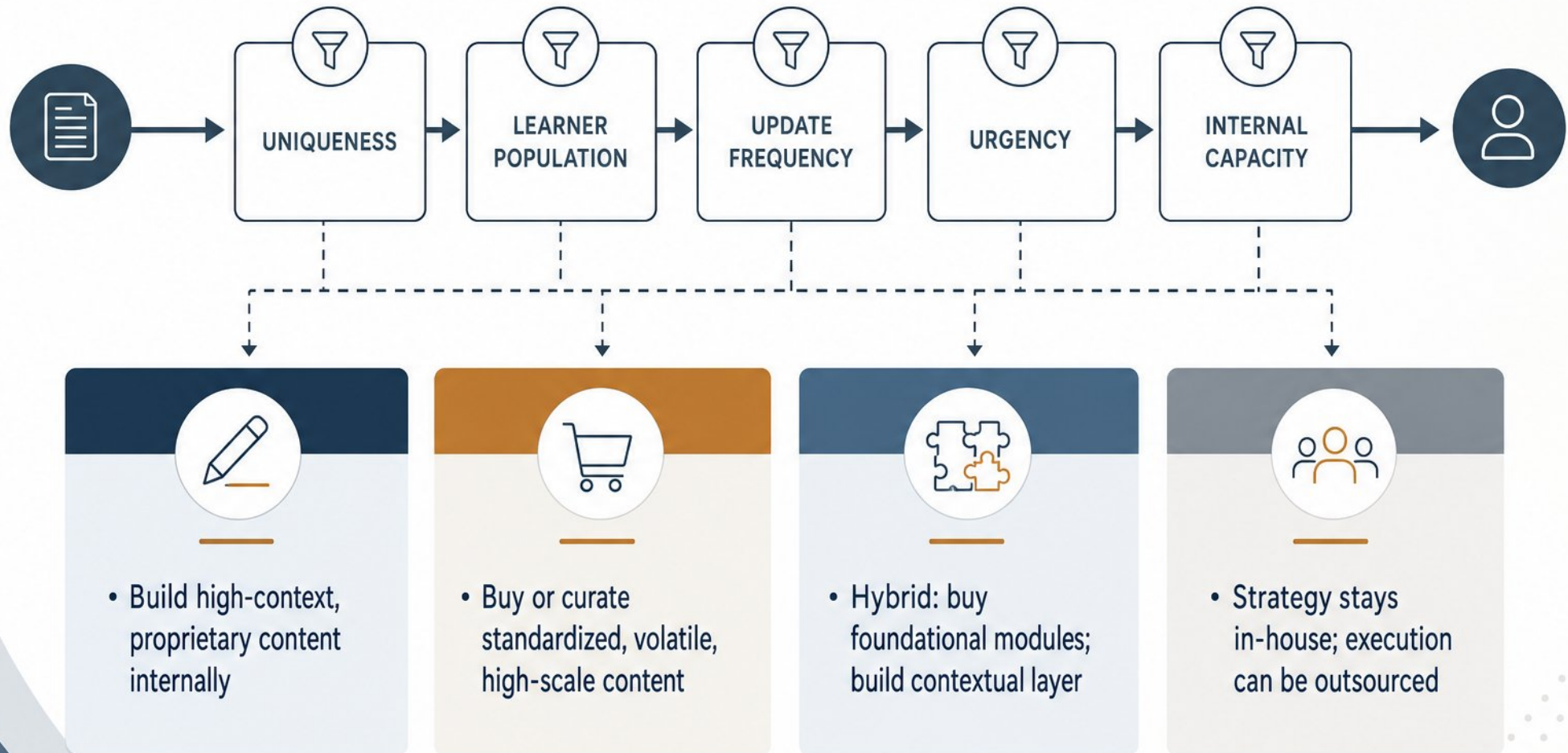
	BUILD 	BUY 	PARTNER 	CURATE 	STOP 
 AUDIENCES	Leaders, critical roles, frontline	Leaders, critical roles, frontline	Leaders, critical roles, frontline	Leaders, critical roles, frontline	Leaders, critical roles, frontline
 DELIVERY OPTIONS	Instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job	Instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job	Instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job	Instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job	Instructor-led, digital, blended, on-the-job
 FIVE FILTERS	Uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity	Uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity	Uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity	Uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity	Uniqueness, population, updates, urgency, capacity



Build proprietary content; buy standardized; co-create the middle

A Practical Build-Buy-Partner Framework

FIVE FILTERS: EVALUATE YOUR LEARNING NEED



Resource Tradeoffs: Budget, Time, Talent, and Attention



- **Fixed resources:** budget, staff time, business hours, learner attention



- **Tradeoff patterns:** scale vs. customization, speed vs. depth, reach vs. impact



- Surface **hidden and opportunity costs** in every L&D plan



- **Communicate tradeoffs** to stakeholders in business terms

LEAN RESOURCE STACK



*Focused. Intentional.
Designed for impact.*

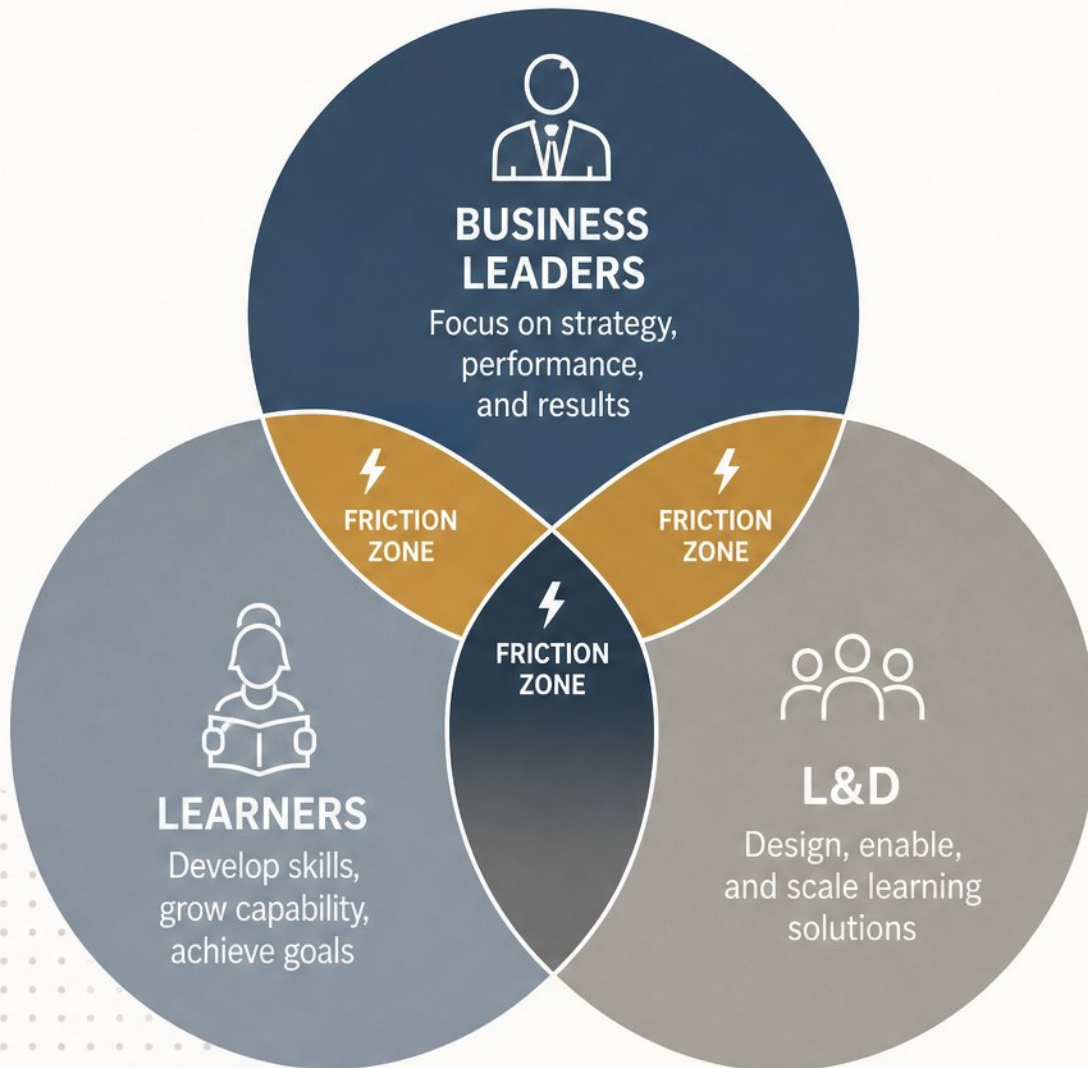
VS.

OVERSTUFFED RESOURCE STACK



*Diluted. Overwhelmed.
Risking outcomes.*

Stakeholder Tradeoffs: Business Leaders, Learners, and L&D



- Business leaders prioritize strategic alignment; L&D often reports activity metrics
- 65% of executives expect L&D programs to directly support business goals
- Learners face tradeoffs: mandatory vs. self-directed, depth vs. speed
- L&D operating model choices: advisor, broker, or shared service
- Misaligned expectations around speed, cost, disruption, and visible outcomes

Making Tradeoffs Deliberately

- ✓ - Use a decision checklist: business goal, evidence, alternatives, cost, risk
- ✓ - Reject or defer requests that don't link to explicit business goals
- ✓ - Build a portfolio: mandatory, strategic, and discretionary learning
- ✓ - Document tradeoffs—keeps decisions consistent and defensible



Case Review: Three Realistic L&D Strategy Scenarios

 - Scenario 1: Two business units compete for a limited budget	 - Scenario 2: Immediate sales gap versus long-term leadership needs	 - Scenario 3: Digital adoption goals against classroom quality standards
 Goal	 Goal	 Goal
 Choices	 Choices	 Choices
 Tradeoffs	 Tradeoffs	 Tradeoffs
 Decision & Defense	 Decision & Defense	 Decision & Defense



- For each: define goal, list choices, surface tradeoffs, decide and defend

Action Planning: Bring It Back to Your Organization



- Pick one real L&D decision from your current context



- Define the business goal and list available choices



- Name two tradeoffs and identify stakeholder concerns



- Specify the data needed before deciding



- Draft a one-page decision brief to use after today

ONE-PAGE DECISION BRIEF



BUSINESS GOAL



CHOICES



TRADEOFFS (NAME TWO)

-
-



STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

-
-



DATA NEEDED BEFORE DECIDING

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

- Apply goal-choice-tradeoff discipline as a repeatable habit
- Audit current L&D activity against explicit business goals
- Move from order-taker to trusted business partner
- Connect every learning initiative to measurable business outcomes



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