A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CREATING MEASUREABLE HYPOTHESES FOR YOUR LEARNING EXPERIMENTS

WHY THE BEST L&D TEAMS USE EXPERIMENTS

The world we live in is changing at an unprecedented rate. The half life of skills is diminishing fast, with some skills only having an 18-month window.

This means the days when L&D teams would spend months building courses will soon be long gone.

Today's fast paced and uncertain world requires a more agile and adaptable approach.

The best L&D teams don't spend months building out extensive learning programmes and then sit back and wait to see if they're effective.

They don't have to guess what learners want, will engage with or what will make a difference to their business.
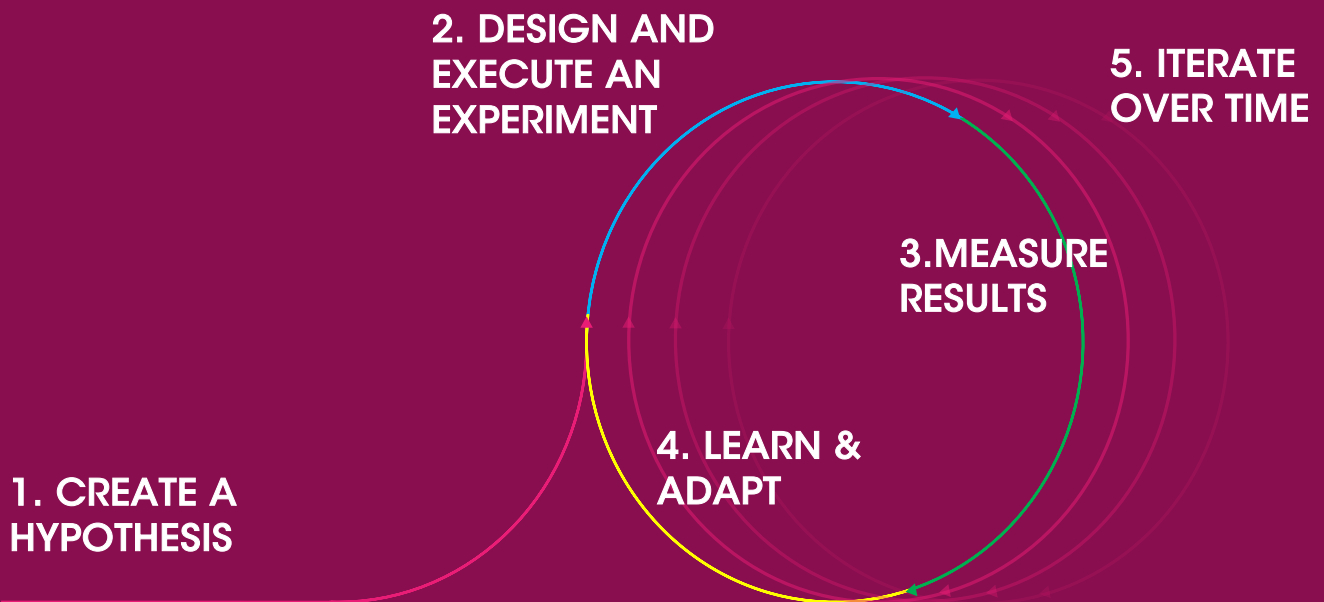
Why? Because they experiment.

And they know that a good experiment starts with a solid hypothesis.

This guide will take you through a step-by-step process to help you craft solid hypotheses for your learning experiments.

A GOOD HYPOTHESIS CREATES A CONTINUOUS CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENT

A hypothesis is the first step in setting up any experiment. It's important to get your hypothesis right as it's the basis of your entire experiment.

1. Start with a solid hypothesis
2. Design and execute an experiment to test the hypothesis
3. Measure the results of the experiment
4. Learn from the experiment and adapt your approach
5. Continuously iterate by designing and executing further experiments so you've got an ongoing cycle of improvement

2. DESIGN AND EXECUTE AN EXPERIMENT

5. ITERATE OVER TIME

3.MEASURE RESULTS

4. LEARN & ADAPT

1. CREATE A HYPOTHESIS

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WHAT IS A HYPOTHESIS?

A hypothesis is an assumption that your learning strategy builds on. It would have to hold true for your idea or initiative to work.

Let's say you have an idea about using more user-generated video. Peer-to-peer learning can be highly effective.

Next ask yourself the question: What would have to be true for this idea of using more user-generated video content to work?

In other words, how would you know if using user-generated video content is working?

Perhaps you think learner engagement will increase.

So, your hypothesis is along the lines of:

We believe that employees are more likely to engage with learning programmes if those programmes include more user generated video content.

This is a start but we can certainly improve it. Let's look at how.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD HYPOTHESIS

A good hypothesis is:

1. Testable
2. Measurable
3. Precise

Let's go back to our hypothesis and see how it performs against each of these criteria.

We believe that employees are more likely to engage with learning programmes if those programmes include more user generated video content.

1. It isn't testable as we haven't defined specific variables to measure
2. We haven't defined a measurement of success
3. It isn't precise – we're talking about 'learning programmes' as opposed to a specific programme

So as you can see, this isn't a very good hypothesis.

Let's look at how we can apply the three criteria to improve this hypothesis.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD HYPOTHESIS

To make the hypothesis testable, measurable and precise, we can use the 4Ws framework:

- **Who** do we want to impact?
- **What** variable do we want to change?
- **Where** do we want to see the change happen?
- **When** do we expect to see the change happen?

Let's put this into practice:

- **Who** do we want to impact? The sales team
- **What** variable do we want to change? Engagement
- **Where** do we want to see the change happen? The sales training onboarding programme
- **When** do we expect to see the change happen? Within one month

Let's apply these and rewrite the hypothesis:

The sales team's engagement rate will increase by 20% in one month if we use at least one user-generated video in the sales training onboarding programme.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD HYPOTHESIS

This is a much better hypothesis because:

1. It can be **tested** through an experiment by creating a user-generated video and adding it to the sales training onboarding programme

2. It has a clear **measurement** associated with it – 20% increase in engagement

3. It's **precise** as it's focused on the sales team and their onboarding programme rather than all employees

Next we're going to look at how the L&D team at one of our customer organisations, used an experiment to increase engagement to 185% in one month.

It all started with a solid hypothesis.

WHAT DOES A GOOD HYPOTHESIS LOOK LIKE

So what does a great hypothesis and experiment look like in practice?

Let's look at an example from one of our customers who are a leading manufacturer in sustainable non-combustible stone wool insulation.

The company wanted to raise awareness of their sustainability goals and to engage their employees with their strategic 2020 objectives.

They came up with a hypothesis to test:

"If we ask employees to submit their sustainability ideas in an online Fuse community, engagement will increase to 60% in one month in that community."

Next let's look at how they went about testing this hypothesis.

HOW TO TEST A HYPOTHESIS

The team understood that to test the hypothesis, they would need to have very specific tactics that would be designed to answer the question the hypothesis put forward.

So to test the hypothesis, the team created a campaign where they asked their employees to come up with sustainability ideas and submit them though one of their Fuse communities.

They gave employees very specific instructions on how to do this.

MEASURING THE RESULTS

After one month, the team found that engagement in the community increased to 185%.

Let's re-examine the hypothesis:

"If we ask employees to submit their sustainability ideas in an online Fuse community, engagement will increase to 60% in one month in that community."

This surpassed the 60% target they set in their hypothesis.

So based on this outcome, we can say their hypothesis was accepted as true.

Having a clear hypothesis to test enabled the team to really focus on the right activities to drive employee engagement.

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