

The 5D L&D Program Design Framework

A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO BUILDING
LEARNING PROGRAMS THAT CLOSE REAL
PERFORMANCE GAPS – FROM NEEDS
ANALYSIS THROUGH MEASURED IMPACT.



DISCOVER



DESIGN



DEVELOP



DELIVER



DETERMINE



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Professional Frameworks | Portfolio | Publications Creative Communications | Graphic Design

WHY THIS FRAMEWORK
EXISTS

Learning Only Matters When It Changes What People Do.

*Every program has good content. Great programs
prove they worked.*

The 5D L&D Program Design Framework was created to close the gap between what a program teaches and what participants actually take back to the job — the handoff where most training quietly fails to stick.

Too often, programs are built around available content instead of a validated need, delivered once, and judged only by how participants felt in the room. The 5D Framework treats impact as something to design for, not assume.

Whether building a single workshop or a full learning program, lasting change begins with a clear, disciplined process — uncovering the real gap, designing for it deliberately, and proving the results once it's delivered.

Discover the gap. Design with intent.
Develop what works. Deliver with purpose.
Determine the impact.



THE 5D L&D PROGRAM DESIGN FRAMEWORK



L&D Program Design Impact

To close real performance gaps, learning must be built with intent - grounded in a validated need, designed toward measurable behavioral change, and proven with results, not just remembered fondly.

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Why Deliberate Design Matters

Learning & development programs succeed or fail long before the first session is delivered. A program built without a validated need, clear objectives, and a plan to measure impact is unlikely to change behavior—no matter how polished the materials look. Organizations that treat program design as a disciplined process, rather than a content-creation exercise, build learning that participants apply and leaders can point to as driving real results.

70%

of training content is forgotten
within a week without
reinforcement

26%

of L&D programs are formally
evaluated beyond a reaction
survey

4x

the impact of programs built
from a validated needs
analysis

The 5D L&D Program Design Framework gives instructional designers and business leaders a repeatable structure for building programs — from identifying the real performance gap to proving the program closed it.

The 5D Framework At A Glance

Each pillar answers a different question – together, they turn a priority into work that gets finished.

D1

Discover

Ground the problem in a real performance gap, not an assumed training need.

D2

Design

Translate the gap into measurable objectives and a structural blueprint.

D3

Develop

Build content, activities, and assessments from the blueprint, then pilot.

D4

Deliver

Roll out the program with clear communication and a logistics plan.

D5

Determine

Measure whether the program actually closed the gap it was built for.



Identify A Real Situation that Needs Change

Ground the program in a real performance gap, not an assumed training need.

Key Actions

- Conduct a Needs Assessment: stakeholder interviews, surveys, and performance data review.
- Identify the specific behavior or skill gap driving the business problem.
- Define the target audience and their current baseline knowledge or skill level.
- Confirm sponsorship and success criteria with stakeholders before design begins.

STAGE OUTPUT

A documented Needs Analysis with a clear business case and success criteria.





Clarification & Definition of Objectives

Translate the identified gap into clear learning objectives and a structural blueprint.

Key Actions

- Write measurable learning objectives tied directly to the performance gap.
- Select the delivery modality – ILT, eLearning, blended, or on-the-job – based on content and audience.
- Map the program’s structure: modules, sequencing, and estimated duration.
- Draft an assessment strategy to measure whether objectives are being met.

STAGE OUTPUT

An approved design blueprint with objectives, modality, and structure.



From Concepts to Reality

Build the actual materials – content, activities, and assessments – from the blueprint.

Key Actions

- Develop content and materials aligned to each learning objective.
- Build interactive elements, scenarios, or practice activities for real application.
- Create facilitator guides, participant materials, and job aides as needed.
- Pilot-test content with a small group and revise based on their feedback.

STAGE OUTPUT

Finalized, piloted program materials ready for full rollout.





Determine Best Training Modality per Audience

Roll out the program to the full audience with a clear communication and logistics plan.

Key Actions

- Communicate the program's purpose, audience, and schedule to stakeholders.
- Train facilitators or configure the LMS/eLearning platform ahead of launch.
- Deliver the program across planned sessions or cohorts.
- Capture real-time reaction-level feedback during and immediately after delivery.

STAGE OUTPUT

A completed rollout with delivery data and participant reaction feedback.



Establish Gap Closure

Measure whether the program actually closed the gap it was built to close.

Key Actions

- Evaluate results across four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.
- Compare post-program performance data to the original baseline.
- Gather manager and participant feedback on applied, on-the-job behavior change.
- Report outcomes to sponsors and identify what to refine for the next iteration.

STAGE OUTPUT

An impact evaluation report with recommendations for the next cycle.



Roles & Responsibilities

Ensure the job descriptions are accurate, comprehensive, and reflect the exact responsibilities and expectations of the role.

Role	Primary Responsibility
Business Sponsor	Confirms the performance gap, approves scope, and owns success criteria.
L&D / Instructional Designer	Owens the framework, builds the blueprint and materials, facilitates evaluation.
Subject Matter Expert	Validates technical accuracy of content and reviews scenarios for realism.
Facilitator / Manager	Delivers or reinforces the program and coaches on-the-job application.
Learner	Completes the program and applies new skills in their day-to-day role.

Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1

Weeks 1-2

Discover

Run the Needs Assessment, confirm sponsorship, define success criteria.

Phase 2

Weeks 3-5

Design

Write objectives, choose a modality, and build the blueprint for approval.

Phase 3

Weeks 6-9

Develop & Pilot

Build materials, run a pilot session, revise based on feedback.

Phase 4

Ongoing

Deliver & Determine

Roll out to the full audience, then evaluate and report on impact.

Needs Analysis Criteria

Use the criteria below to score each role from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Roles scoring 15+ justify the investment in full design and development.

Business Impact

How directly would closing this gap affect a key business metric?

Score: ____

Gap Severity

How large is the difference between current and required performance?

Score: ____

Audience Size

How many people would this program need to reach?

Score: ____

Urgency

How time-sensitive is the business need driving this request?

Score: ____

Feasibility

Do we have the access, content, and resources to build this well?

Score: ____

Measuring Impact: Four Levels

Build measurement into the design from the start – if only reaction levels are evaluated, the program's real impact is unproven.

1

Reaction

Did participants find the program relevant, engaging, and worth their time?

2

Learning

Did participants gain the intended knowledge, skill, or confidence?

3

Behavior

Are participants applying what they learned back on the job?

4

Results

Did the application of learning move the business metric it targeted?

The Program Blueprint

01

Learning Objectives

Measurable, observable statements of what participants will be able to do.

02

Modality & Structure

The delivery format (ILT, eLearning, Blended) and how content is sequenced.

03

Content Outline

The topics, scenarios, and activities that build toward each objective.

04

Assessment Strategy

How mastery will be checked – quizzes, demonstrations, or applied projects.

05

Timeline & Resources

The build schedule, owners, and budget required to deliver the program.



Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

PITFALL

Skipping the Needs Analysis

Fix: Ground every program in a validated performance gap before building content.

PITFALL

Objectives that describe topics, not behaviors

Fix: Write objectives as observable, measurable actions learners will take.

PITFALL

One-size-fits-all delivery modality

Fix: Match modality to content type, audience, and real-world constraints.

PITFALL

Evaluation stops at a smile sheet

Fix: Build all four levels of evaluation into the plan from the start.

PITFALL

Treating the pilot as optional

Fix: Pilot with a real audience before the full rollout and revise the design.

Metrics & KPIs to Track

Completion Rate

Percentage of the target audience finishing the program.

Learning Gain

Pre- to post-assessment score improvement.

Behavior Application Rate

Percentage of participants applying the skill on the job, manager-reported.

Business Impact

Change in the performance metric the program was built to move.

Time-to-Competency

Time for a participant to reach expected proficiency.

Cost Per Learner

Total program cost divided by the number of participants trained.

Sample Scenario

A company applies the 5D Framework to reduce how long new sales reps take to reach full quota.

DISCOVER

L&D partners with sales leadership and finds that new reps take 4 months to hit quota vs. a 2-month goal.

DESIGN

Objectives are written around product knowledge, pitch delivery, and objection handling.

DEVELOP

Content is built with a senior rep as SME; role-play scenarios are piloted with 5 new hires.

DELIVER

The program launches to all new-hire cohorts, facilitated by senior reps and sales managers.

DETERMINE

Time-to-quota drops to 2.5 months within two cohorts; the program is refined based on manager feedback.

Key Takeaways

1

A great program starts with a validated need, not an assumed one.

2

Objectives should describe what learners will do differently, not just what they'll be exposed to.

3

Piloting before full rollout catches problems while they're still cheap to fix.

4

Measurement should extend beyond satisfaction scores to real behavior and business impact.



QUICK-REFERENCE CHECKLIST

The 5D Framework, One Page

- ☐ Needs Analysis completed and validated with a real performance gap
- ☐ Learning objectives are written as measurable, observable behaviors
- ☐ Delivery modality matched to content, audience, and constraints
- ☐ Materials piloted with a real audience before full rollout
- ☐ Facilitators or LMS prepared and communication plan in place
- ☐ Evaluation plan covers all four Kirkpatrick levels
- ☐ Results compared against the original baseline
- ☐ Findings reported to sponsors with recommendations for the next cycle



Bring the 5D L&D Program Design Framework to Your Team

Content is easy to produce. Impact is not.

- **Discover** – start from a validated performance gap, not a content request
- **Design** – write objectives people can actually be measured against
- **Develop** – build and pilot before you scale to everyone
- **Deliver** – launch with a real communication and support plan
- **Determine** – measure whether it actually moved the number it was built to move

Too many programs are built backward — content gets created first, and the business need gets reverse-engineered to justify it afterward. Participants sit through it, rate it politely, and go back to work exactly as before.

The 5D Framework flips that order. It forces the gap to be named before a single slide gets built, and it holds the program accountable to proof — not just attendance.

A program that changes behavior is designed differently from the start: with a clear target, a tested draft, and a plan to check whether any of it actually worked.



Sheila Mayoral

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"I help organizations turn good intentions into structured, repeatable systems that drive clarity, alignment, and measurable results".

Bringing Structure to Complexity. Turning Strategy into Results.

Sheila Mayoral is a strategist, author, and designer who works at the intersection of HR, learning and development, and organizational operations. With more than 15 years of cross-functional experience, she partners with leaders to simplify complexity, strengthen performance, and build systems that scale.

Her work spans strategic operations, HR technology, project management, organizational effectiveness, process optimization, learning and development, and change enablement—across industries that include commercial real estate, healthcare, manufacturing, government, insurance, financial services, education, and professional services.

Sheila created the Cognitif Design Framework Series to share practical, results-driven resources that help leaders think clearly, make confident decisions, and create lasting impact.

WHAT I BRING TO THE TABLE



STRATEGIC THINKING

Aligning people, process, technology, and strategy to move organizations forward.



PRACTICAL FRAMEWORKS

Creating simple, repeatable models that leaders can apply immediately.



EXECUTION FOCUS

Bringing structure, accountability, and clarity to turn ideas into measurable results.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Helping teams learn, adapt, and build better systems over time.

“ Good intentions start the conversation. Structured systems create the change. ”



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Technology. Learning. Execution. Impact.



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