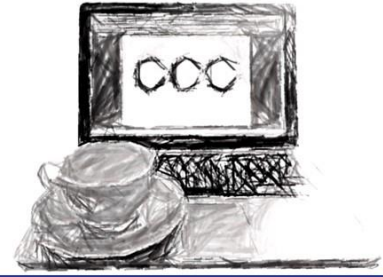




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**CCC-Break 10: 14 November 2019. How can we use the new learning technology and the latest research in neuroscience to maximise the learner experience in intercultural skills training?**

The topics of the new learning technologies and the neuroscience of learning are increasingly being used in discussions about training and learning & development. The discussions hope to inform debates about how people learn, how the learning habits have been changing over the years and how the new trends in these fields could maximise the learning experience.

Gabriela Weglowska who proposed the theme of this CCC-Break offered challenging thoughts on the use of technology and neuroscience in learning, sparking a vivid discussion about the myths and the realities of it all.

Her interactive questions and answers part of the session was conducted on [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com).

## What comes to your mind when you hear the words 'learning technology'?



The CIPD research suggests that 56% of UK's L&D professionals lack the skills to implement new learning technologies. In addition, there is less take-up of learning technologies with regards to soft skills programmes, according to a bench-marking report from Towards Maturity. The report found that technology enables:

- 47% of communication skills
- 43% of team working skills
- 36% of problem solving skills
- 32% of innovation and creativity skills

Sources:

"Preparing for the Future of Learning", CIPD UK Report 2016

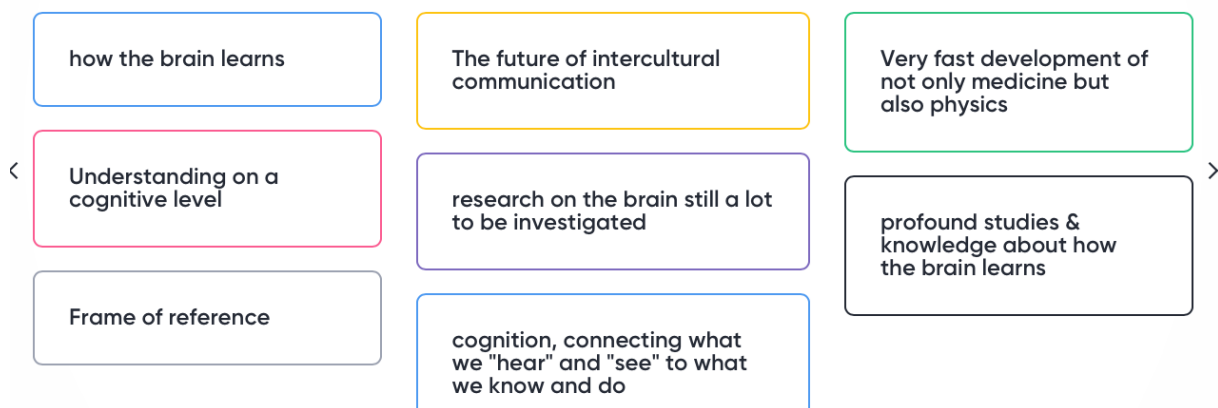
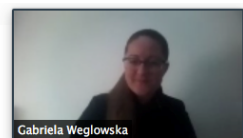
"L&D: where are we now?", Towards Maturity Report 2017-18

In the CCC-Break we discussed the reasons for these statistics. It was suggested that technology is not being used as often as it could be, or that perhaps it's not being used well enough to deliver positive results. This is likely due to lack of skills, knowledge and confidence in this area, amongst the L&D professionals and learners alike. It was highlighted that technology is not for everyone and we can't think that one size fits all. Trainers and learners have varying abilities and access to technology.

On the other hand, virtual training has its benefits: it's flexible, affordable, eco-friendly (e.g. global teams don't have to fly to one training location) and provides access to a global pool of expert trainers.

In summary, technology should be used to enhance learning, not to dominate it or replace a trainer. It's aim should be to positively support the learning experience.

## What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'neuroscience'?



Stella Collins, in her article *'The debate on neuroscience's value to learning and development'* available on [trainingzone.co.uk](http://trainingzone.co.uk), wrote that "it's very difficult to say a single piece of pure neuroscience research demonstrates that we should adopt a new technique or change what we're doing – and that's true of all the sciences".

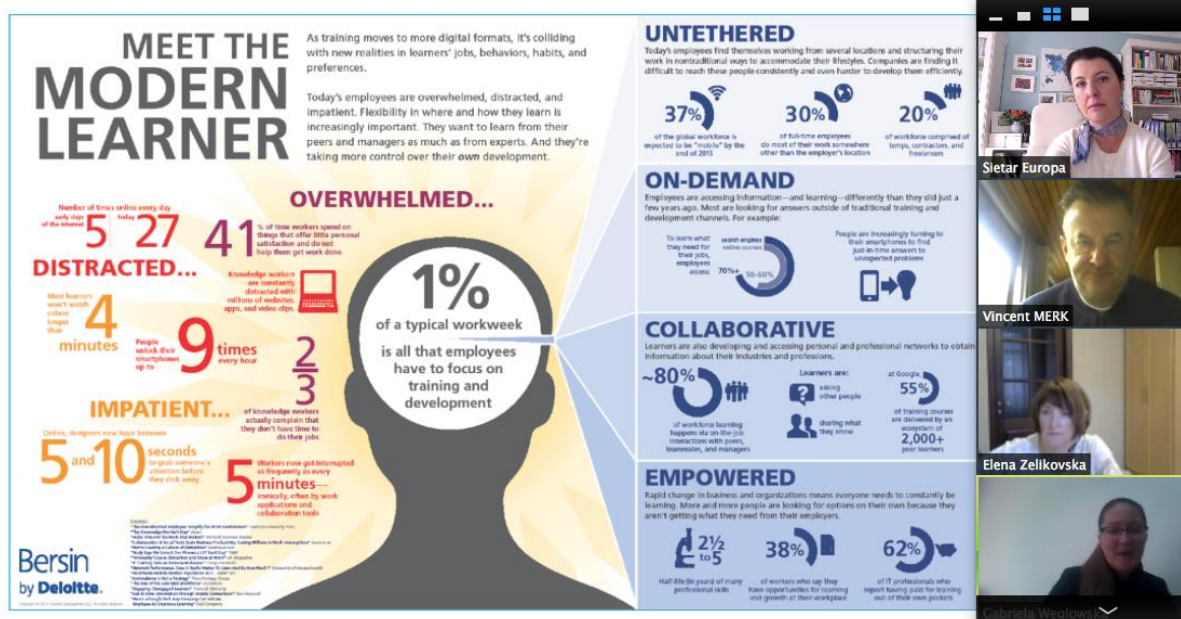
This sparked a discussion that the research in neuroscience still has a long way to go and we're just scratching the surface. Also, the term 'neuroscience' is often used because it's in fashion, because 'neuroscience sells'. Some people think that neuroscience is just a sprinkle of glitter on an otherwise ordinary solution.

There are many challenges with regards to applying neuroscience to learning. For example, experiments rarely happen in real life learning situations. In addition, as Stella points out in her article, "there are more than 7.7 billion people on the planet and each person has approximately 86 billion neurons, each neuron with multiple connections - that makes an awful lot of different brains and a lot of variety in learning across the planet". So we came back to what we said earlier: one size does not fit all.

However, we cannot deny that technology enables further research in the field of neuroscience that hasn't been so far possible. The new knowledge and insights, if used thoughtfully, could indeed help educators enhance and maximise the experience of their learners. Some of the tips were explored at the end of this CC-Break session.

### What are the main challenges for today's corporate learners?

Next, the CCC-Break discussion moved towards the current challenges in the world of learning. We looked at Josh Bersin's research report *'Meet the Modern Learner (2014).'*



According Bersin:

- The average employee spends less than 20 minutes per week on activities that improve their professional skills – that’s less than 1% of their working time dedicated to learning. How much can you learn in 20 minutes per week?
- Today’s employees also spend 41% of their time on things that offer little personal satisfaction and do not help them get their work done. So a big chunk of our time at work is actually being wasted.
- The 2/3 of employees actually complain that they don’t have time to do their jobs - so how can they find the time for learning? They are constantly distracted, ironically by emails, websites and digital collaboration tools.

Work and learning are actually intimately connected. Employees who are able to quickly find and absorb information are more agile, more effective in their work and perhaps better able to deliver the business results. However, today’s employees are not supported to be agile. Instead, they are becoming gradually more overwhelmed, constantly distracted and increasingly impatient.

The CCC-Break discussion led us to explore the following questions:

- Who is considered the modern learner?
- How does the modern learner learn?
- What learning solutions would suit the modern learner?
- What type of technology can we use and in what way can we use it to create effective solutions for the modern learner?
- What neuroscience tips and tricks can we implement in our training design and delivery so that it's effective and engaging for the modern learner?

The modern learners already work online and spend a lot of time in virtual meetings, so why can't they learn online too. They solve problems on-the-spot, likely using electronic devices, so providing them with a flexible, digital access to on-demand learning could serve their needs. They are busy, which is why they discriminate against anything that doesn’t grab their attention within a split second. They interact more with media but they don't watch videos longer than 2 minutes and don't wait for a website to load for longer than 10 seconds.

It isn’t hard to notice that catering for the modern learner is quite a challenge. Ultimately, creating a customised, high-quality, immersive learning experience that’s mobile, instant and in a micro-format requires innovation, imagination and tools that can help make it happen. Should we focus on face to face or digital learning? Perhaps what's needed is a solution that's genuinely blended and give us all the best of both worlds?

### Quick tips from Gabriela as a follow-up to the CCC Break

- **Start with the why.** Learning takes a lot of brain energy. This means that you are more likely to invest the time and energy in learning if you know why you are learning. Make the learning objectives and outcomes very clear; encourage your learners to set up their learning goals and to reflect on how the new skill-set they are working on acquiring is going to help them to achieve these goals.
- **Cultivate curiosity.** Curiosity also enhances our motivation to learn and we remember more when we are curious. Interestingly, curiosity increases with uncertainty, suggesting that a small amount of knowledge can pique curiosity and prime our hunger for knowledge in the same way that the smell or look of food can cause us to feel hungry even if we weren't before [Collins, S. (2016) *'The neuroscience of learning & development'*, Kogan Page: London].

For example, you can:

- a) design preparation activities to give your learners a little taste and spark their curiosity - you want them to look forward to your training session;
- b) add a gaming element to your content - learners who thrive off instant gratification will love this.

- **Challenge your learners in the learning process.** If the content is too easy learners will lose interest. If it's too stretchy or uncomfortable, then the amygdala (a threat detector in the brain) will get activated, learners will shut down and won't learn anything. We need to believe that we CAN learn, in order to have an engaging and effective learning experience. A positive learning challenge can put your learners in the state of flow which is the optimal brain state for learning.
- **Create meaning.** This allows you to anchor the learning. Anchoring means linking two ideas together so that the presence of one reminds you of the other. You can facilitate a brainstorming sessions where learners clarify their existing knowledge and add new knowledge to it. This further embeds their existing knowledge and expands their neuronal networks.
- **Make it relevant.** Tailor your training activities such as case studies to the job functions and the challenges of your learners. The Towards Maturity report mentioned earlier highlighted that 77% of employees want learning that's relevant and timely, however, 46% of learners believe generic online learning is not sufficiently tailored to their needs, and 40% think there is a lack of high-quality digital content to support their business goals.

Thanks for this summary of our CCC-Break discussion to:



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*We would like to take this opportunity and already invite you to SIETAR EU webinar on 22 July 2020, where Gabriela will speak about the Five Secrets from Neuroscience to Accelerate Intercultural Learning.*

# SIETAR Europa Cross Cultural Coffee Breaks

## Summary



Thanks for the intriguing discussions to our participants:

