

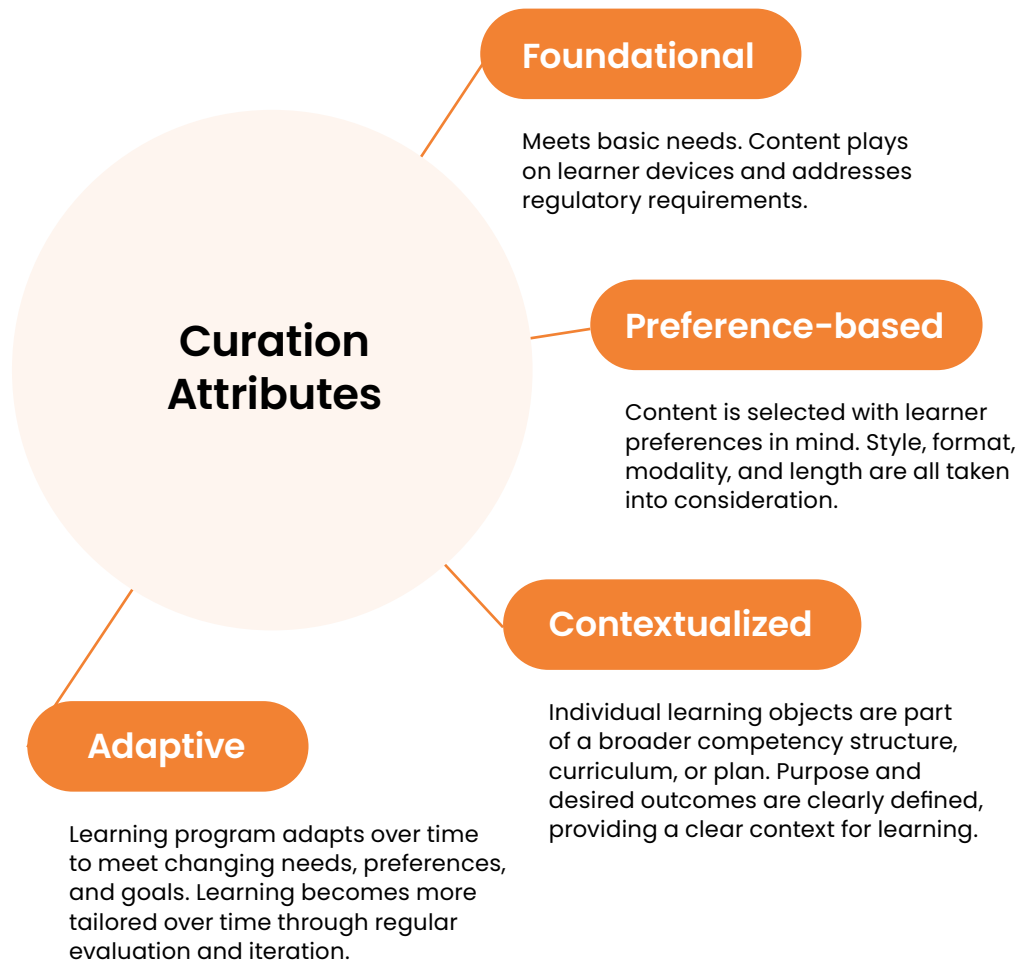


The New Curation Framework:

Building Blocks for a Successful Workforce
Learning Strategy in a Fast-Changing World

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Curation Building Blocks



Modern consumers are accustomed to an eerily personalized search experience, where recommendations reflect the search parameters used and the preferences of the person searching. It only takes a few minutes of scrolling through your favorite social media feed to see the underlying smart curation technology at work—tailoring and adapting future recommendations based on every interaction, click, and page view. Everywhere online media is consumed, the question has shifted from, “Is there enough content?” to, “How do we identify the right content for the right audience at the right moment?”

The same challenging question stumps Learning and Development professionals, especially in a world where expert curation has become the expectation. How do we equip learners with the tools and skills they need at the right moment and in a format that resonates with them? Fortunately, this challenge becomes much easier to tackle with a curation strategy in place.

We live in a world where online content delivery is more tailored and personalized than ever.

A Curation Framework: **Laying the Foundation**

Foundational curation building blocks:

Here's a simple example. A Learning and Development team has a single objective—to provide training for all new hires as part of the company onboarding process. The L&D team will need to select a training option—whether in person, online, or a combination of both—to satisfy all relevant regulatory requirements. It will also need to accommodate each learner's language, location, and access to technology. These are their foundational building blocks, the essential elements of any curation exercise—the nonnegotiables. Consider the following questions:



Where will learners be accessing the content?

This will determine what requirements exist regarding technical specifications, mobile responsiveness, and the best mix of online and in-person training.



What language(s) does my population speak and prefer?

While seemingly obvious, this requirement is essential and often overlooked at the start of the curation process.



Are there regulations requiring training in my population's region(s)?

In many regions, training on harassment prevention, business ethics, and information security is required by law. Understanding these requirements is foundational to a successful curation exercise.



Assuming all of the foundational building blocks have been satisfied, our learning team can now consider ways to tailor the learning experience to the population's unique preferences. Style, format, and desired content features are critical pieces of the curation process and arguably the most powerful indicator of a learning program's initial adoption and early engagement.

A Curation Framework: **Laying the Foundation**



Content variety is vital when addressing learner preferences in a group of any size. In large groups, it is crucial to take into consideration a wide range of stylistic preferences. No two individuals' preferences are identical, so a single homogeneous content solution will likely fall flat for at least some percentage of the total learner population. One strategy to avoid this common curation pitfall is building choice into the learner experience. By focusing on an end goal to train our population on a skill, we can select various content objects aligned to that skill, allowing learners to choose their preferred experience. For example, when training new managers on effective delegation techniques, there might be 3 to 5 activities available, any one of which could satisfy the learning requirement. In this case, learners have the choice to learn in the way that most closely matches their preference set, meaning they are more likely to come back again and again.

Contextualized learning programs provide grounding and purpose for learners, so nobody is left wondering, "what's the point?" after completing a learning activity. After addressing the foundational curation requirements and building in choice for a wide range of learner preferences, we can think about the broader context for learning- the "why."

Building context into learning begins with considering how each training component fits into the broader professional development ecosystem. How does one activity connect to the next? What skills are connected to each learning activity? How do these skills tie to different job roles



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or company values? At this stage, the questions are getting bigger and more complex. Fortunately, contextualization doesn't have to be overly complicated. It can begin with a simple set of competencies built around existing events and observances. The beginning of the year is a great time to send out refresher training on annual goal planning or Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) because there's a clear context and purpose for learning those skills.

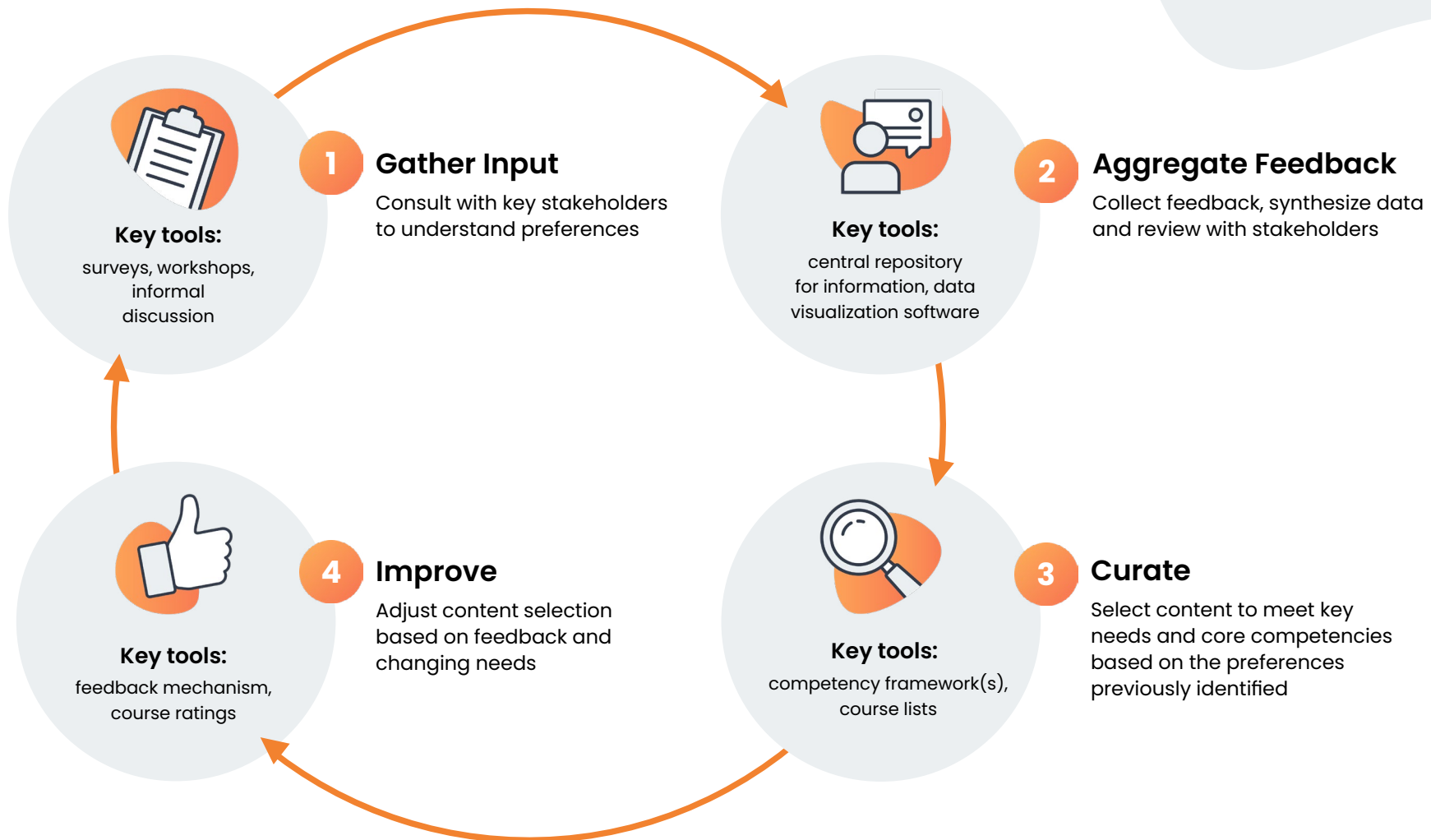
When we curate the context surrounding learning, there is a clear path to success for learners at every level within the organization. Every aspect of an employee's career should link to learning, including onboarding, goal setting, performance improvement, and career progression. This lays the foundation for ongoing adoption and organic growth for the learning program across the entire organization.



Adaptive curation is the final curation block and adaptivity is arguably the most important to consider. Adaptive learning programs continually evolve, taking past successes and failures into account to improve outcomes moving forward. Adaptive curation requires sustained work to update and refresh content based on changing needs, preferences, and current events. Achieving a truly personalized and adaptive learning experience requires a systematic approach, a dynamic library of content, and the flexibility to evolve. All of this begins with a pragmatic curation alignment process.

Curation Alignment: The Process

Regardless of learning goals and objectives, curation alignment should occur at the start of each curation exercise. This method for establishing a baseline set of preferences can apply to any group of learners. These may evolve, but the initial preference is critical for new program launches or content rollout. The process breaks down into four parts:



Gather Input:

Arguably the most crucial stage of the Curation Process, this can be done formally using a survey approach or informally as part of a workshop/ planning session. In this stage, teams identify the content attributes that resonate with their audience, including seat time, preferred course features, style, and modality.

Aggregate Feedback:

After gathering input, look at all of the feedback in one place to identify trends and common themes in the dataset. Simple data visualization tools and spreadsheet software are valuable tools to use during this stage.

Curate:

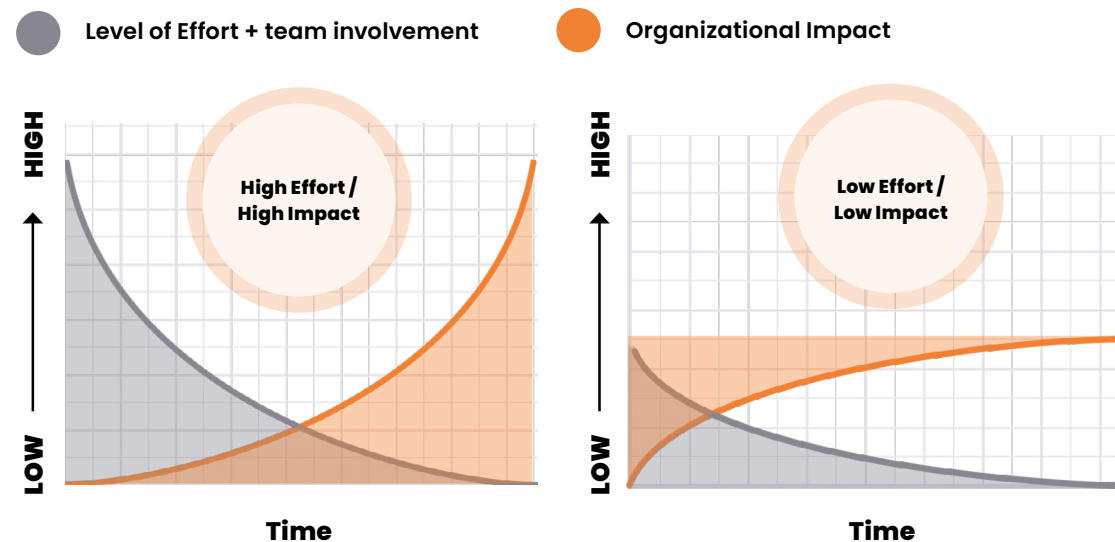
After identifying general content preferences, it's time to begin the course selection process. At this stage, teams select the content aligned to their core competencies and training goals. When choosing content, teams should account for a range of learner preferences while keeping high-level feedback in mind.

Improve:

Learning professionals and teams often view curation at the start of the content selection process, limiting the success of a learning program. Adaptive learning requires adaptation throughout the curation process. As teams learn more about what works, curation becomes more tailored to each learner population. Adaptive learning requires adaptation throughout the curation process.

Time Investment: Maximizing Value

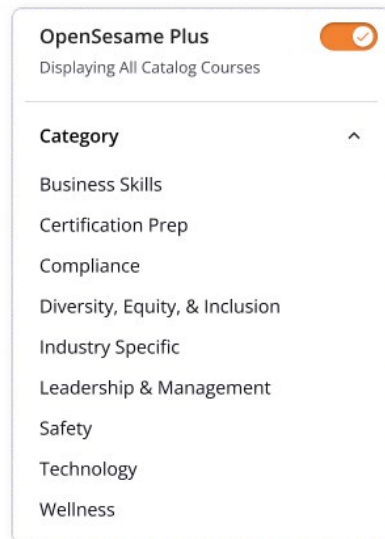
Like most long-term strategic initiatives, curation requires a substantial time investment at the start, which pays dividends in the long run. Teams who put in the time and effort upfront to identify foundational requirements and preferences see more success and higher organizational impact down the road.



All too often, L&D teams approach curation as a single project to be completed all at once and seldom—perhaps never—revisit. A moderate level of effort is exerted at the start of course selection, which gradually decreases to essentially zero sustained effort over time. We'll call this a Low Effort / Low Impact approach.

Ideally, curation should be an ongoing exercise that requires continued effort and investment to maximize value over time. Our High Effort / High Impact model starts with substantially more effort at the start of the process, followed by a continued sustained effort at a low to moderate level, depending on the organization's needs. As shown, this leads to increasing impact as time progresses due to higher initial adoption and higher program retention over time.

Bringing It All Together: A Comprehensive Approach



We see expertly curated online content experiences all the time via social media, shopping sites, music streaming platforms, and more. While it may seem daunting to mimic these experiences as a learning professional, it is by no means impossible. If we can understand a population's needs from the foundational level upward, we can begin to achieve a level of personalization to keep learners engaged and coming back for more.

Having a curation alignment process enables learning teams to understand preferences upfront, which takes some initial time investment but is well worth it in the long run.

Over time this data becomes richer, making the learning solution stickier, leading to real, measurable results. With a solid foundation, the focus shifts from finding the right content to tailoring content selections, adding even more personalization and consistent incremental improvements that make learning more valuable and impactful each day.





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