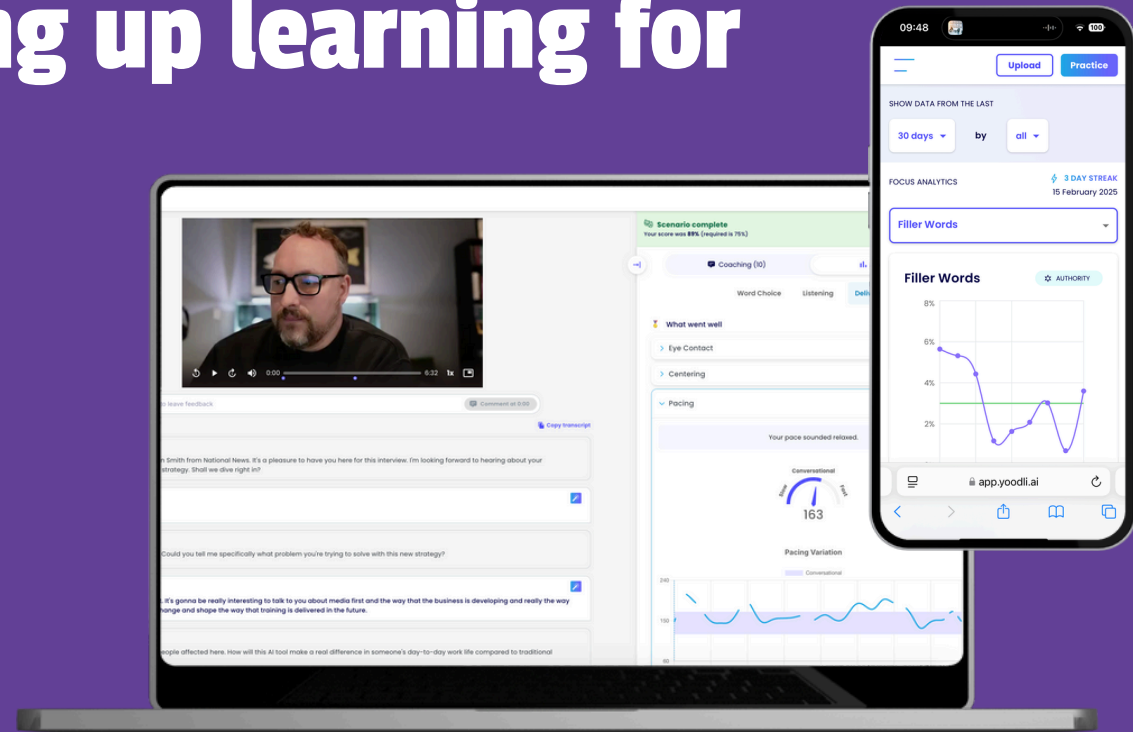




# How AI communication coaches are powering up learning for L&D teams



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# INTRODUCTION

This whitepaper delves into how AI is transforming learning and development (L&D), offering fresh solutions to long-standing challenges.

For L&D professionals, this whitepaper offers practical strategies to maximise ROI on training programmes, improve staff engagement, and foster a culture of continuous learning.

By embracing the innovations detailed here, your team can ensure that learning isn't just an event but a long-term driver of organisational success.

This is essential reading for anyone looking to elevate their approach to training and stay ahead in today's fast-evolving workplace.

Key areas covered include:

- **The Cognitive Science Behind Learning:** Insights into how we process and retain information, and how traditional training often misses the mark.
- **AI's Role in Overcoming Training Gaps:** Addressing the "transfer problem" and ensuring real-world application of new skills.
- **Customised Learning Journeys:** Using AI to tailor training to individual learning styles and needs.
- **Immersive Simulations and Gamification:** How AI creates engaging, practical, and memorable learning experiences.
- **Human-AI Collaboration:** The balance between AI-driven practice and the irreplaceable value of human instruction.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darren Draper is a leadership and development coach working for The BCF Group.

A highly experienced leadership trainer and facilitator, Darren has a proven track record of delivering impactful programs at all levels of business including board level.

Specialising in leadership development, executive coaching, and continuous improvement, he empowers individuals and teams to unlock their full potential and drive meaningful change.

Darren's background in Process change at John Lewis Partnership, coupled with his expertise in retail, change management and data analytics, provides him with a unique perspective on optimising operations and transforming customer experiences through inspiring leadership ownership at all levels of a business.

Darren lives in Oxfordshire, England with his wife and two children.



# THE LINGERING PROBLEM WITH TRAINING: HOW AI CAN HELP US TRULY LEARN

The human brain is incredibly adaptable, constantly rewiring itself in response to new experiences. This is called neuroplasticity. It is what allows us to grow and evolve throughout our lives (Doidge, 2007).

But this same flexibility can also lead to ingrained habits and biases that can sometimes hold us back from learning new things effectively.

Imagine a smooth, untouched beach. This is our brain before we learn something new, full of potential.

Now, picture a sudden downpour, creating channels and rivulets across the surface. This is like traditional training, flooding us with new information and ideas.

But if we don't keep those channels open, they soon disappear, and we fall back into our old ways.

This is where the limitations of traditional training become clear, and we see the need for a more sophisticated approach.



# COGNITIVE SCIENCE UNDERPINNINGS: WHY TRAINING NEEDS A BOOST

Cognitive science helps us understand why simply "telling" people things often isn't enough.

Learning isn't passive; it's about actively making sense of information, connecting it to what we already know, and practising those new skills again and again.

Traditional training often misses these crucial elements, which can lead to disappointing results and a poor return on investment. For example, Cognitive Load Theory shows us that our brains have limits (Sweller, 1988).

We can only process so much new information at once. If we're overloaded, it becomes much harder to learn and remember.

That's why training needs to be clear, concise, and broken down into manageable chunks (Mayer & Moreno, 2003).

Schema Theory also highlights how important it is to link new information to what we already know (Bartlett, 1932).

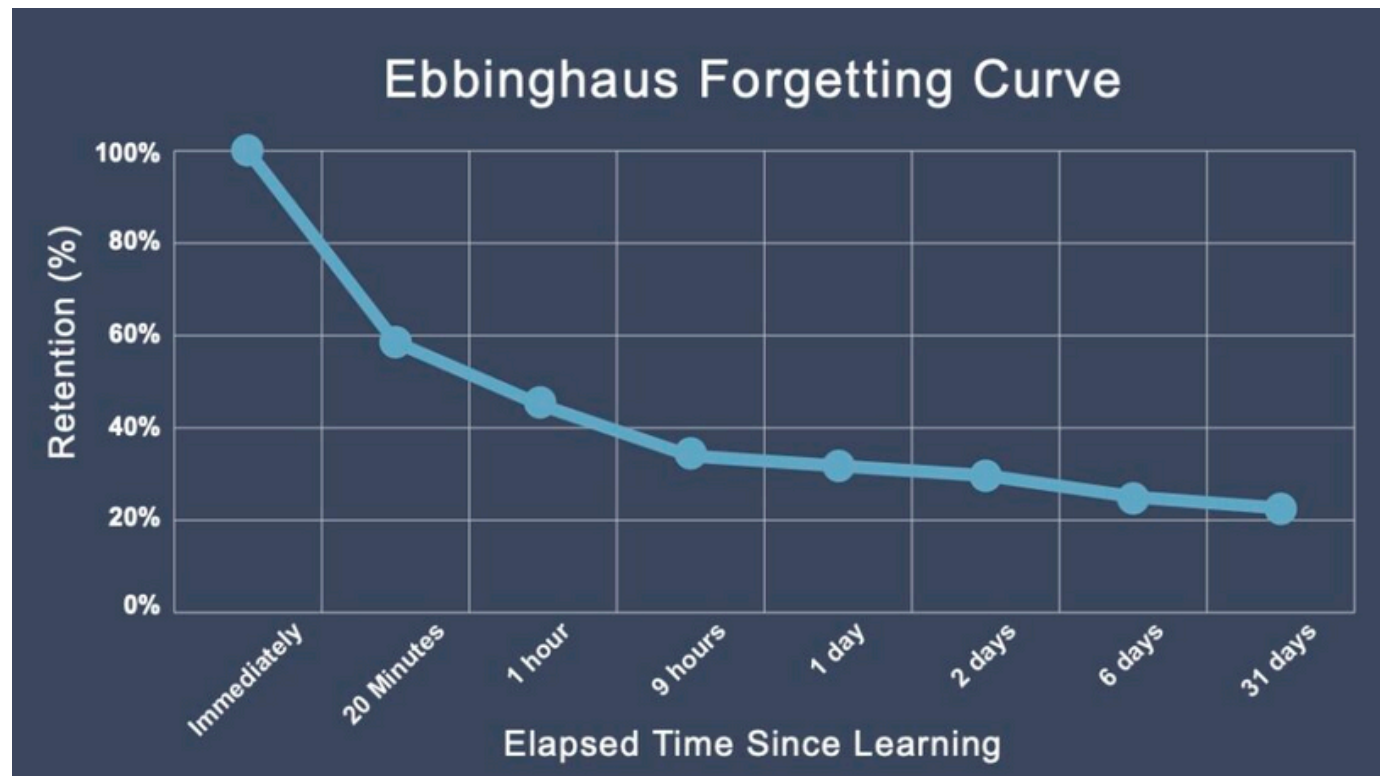
When we can connect new ideas to existing knowledge, it's easier to understand, remember, and use them.

Effective training should therefore tap into what learners already know and help them build bridges to the new material (Anderson et al., 2001).



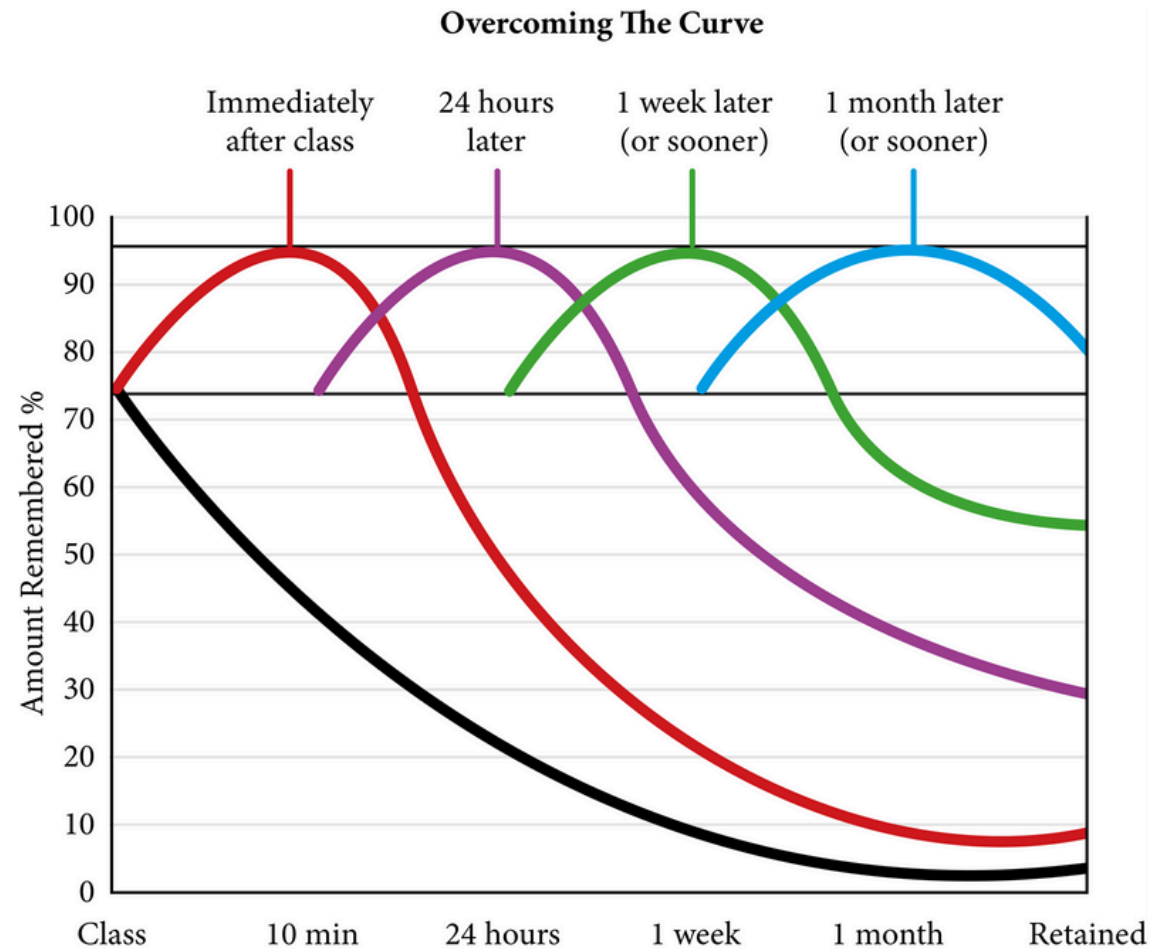
Then there's the Forgetting Curve, discovered by Ebbinghaus in 1885.

It shows how quickly we forget things if we don't actively try to remember them.



This is why spaced repetition, retrieval practice, and opportunities to apply learning are so important (Cepeda et al., 2006).

Training programmes need to build these in, so learning becomes an ongoing process, not just a one-off event.





Finally, we must be mindful of our own biases. Things like confirmation bias and anchoring bias can cloud your judgement and make it harder to take on new ideas (Kahneman, 2011).

Good training should help people recognise and challenge these biases, encouraging them to think critically and objectively.



# THE TRANSFER PROBLEM AND ITS IMPACT ON ROI

Traditional training, while good for sharing knowledge and getting people excited, often struggles to overcome these cognitive hurdles and help people apply what they've learned on the job.

This is the "transfer problem" (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

People go back to old habits, and training does not lead to real change. This not only affects individual performance but also the return on investment (ROI) for the organisation.

When training doesn't lead to real improvements in how people work, the organisation doesn't get the benefits it paid for.

This can show up as lower productivity, more mistakes, unhappy customers, and even people leaving their jobs.

These problems can cost a lot more than the training itself, leading to wasted resources and frustration all round.

Research suggests that this transfer problem can be a major drain on resources, with some studies estimating that only 10% of training spend leads to real change on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

So, tackling this transfer problem isn't just about helping people learn better; it's about making sure training actually delivers results and provides a good return on investment.

When training leads to real performance improvements, everyone benefits.



# POTENTIAL OF AI

To truly grasp the transformative potential of AI in training, let's delve deeper into how these intelligent systems can revolutionise the way we learn and develop.

Imagine a learning experience that adapts to your individual needs and preferences.

This is the promise of AI-powered learning platforms.

By analysing your performance on assessments, observing your learning style, and tracking your engagement, these intelligent systems can dynamically adjust the pace and content of instruction, ensuring you're never overwhelmed and always challenged just the right amount.

This tailored approach, known as adaptive learning, optimises cognitive load and paves the way for efficient skill acquisition. It's like having a personal tutor who knows exactly how to guide you towards mastery.

But AI can do more than just personalise your learning journey.

It can also act as a tireless and insightful coach, providing immediate feedback and guidance.

Through the power of Natural Language Processing (NLP), AI systems can understand and respond to your input, offering helpful hints, clear explanations, and words of encouragement.



This instant feedback loop helps you identify areas for improvement, correct mistakes in real-time, and cultivate a growth mindset.

Picture an AI tutor that can analyse your writing and provide specific feedback on grammar, style, and clarity, helping you become a more effective communicator.

One of the most exciting applications of AI in training is creating immersive simulations and scenarios.

These virtual environments mimic real-world situations, allowing you to practise new skills in a safe and controlled space.

This is particularly valuable for developing interpersonal skills, such as communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

Imagine stepping into a virtual customer service interaction where you can practise handling difficult customers and receive feedback on your performance, all without the pressure of real-world consequences.

AI can also optimise learning by intelligently incorporating spaced repetition and retrieval practice, techniques proven to enhance memory retention.

AI-powered platforms can schedule reminders for you to revisit key concepts at increasing intervals, ensuring that information is transferred from short-term to long-term memory. This is incredibly helpful for remembering complex procedures or technical information.

And who said learning can't be fun?

AI can inject an element of playfulness into training programmes by incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and personalised challenges.



This gamification approach can make learning more engaging and rewarding, encouraging you to actively participate and strive for mastery.

We're already seeing the power of AI in action on popular learning platforms like Duolingo.

Duolingo, the language learning app, uses AI to personalise lessons, track your progress, and provide feedback on your pronunciation.

By embracing these AI capabilities, organisations can create more engaging, effective, and personalised learning experiences that foster genuine skill development and lasting behavioural change.



# LEARNING WITH PURPOSE: HOW AI CAN GUIDE US

Learning effectively isn't just about absorbing information; it's about having a clear path and the right support along the way.

Think of it like building a house – you need a blueprint and the right tools to do it properly.

That's where systematic learning comes in.

It's a structured approach with clear goals, bite-sized learning chunks, plenty of practice, and helpful feedback to keep you on track.

And now, with the help of AI coaching tools, we can make this process even more effective.

These tools act like a personal guide, offering tailored learning plans, feedback that adapts to your needs, and reminders to help you remember what you've learned.

It's like having a dedicated coach in your pocket, helping you build those skills and make lasting changes.

This approach is backed by learning experts who stress the importance of clear goals, structured learning, and ongoing support (Gagné et al., 1992; Merrill, 2002).

Plus, these AI tools can track your progress and highlight areas for improvement, ensuring your learning journey is efficient and tailored to you.



# THE POWER OF HUMAN INSTRUCTION AND AI-AUGMENTED PRACTICE

To really unlock the power of learning, achieve lasting change, and get the most out of training budgets, we need a more comprehensive approach.

This is where combining good old-fashioned human instruction with the power of AI comes in.

Human instruction, led by skilled trainers and facilitators, is essential for setting the scene for effective learning.

It provides context, inspiration, and the human connection that can spark a love of learning and encourage people to embrace new ideas and behaviours.

Good trainers can understand learners' needs, adapt to different learning styles, and provide the support and encouragement needed to overcome challenges and build confidence.

They can also create a safe and supportive environment where people feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things.

Human interaction helps build a sense of community and shared purpose, which can be a powerful motivator for learning and change (Vygotsky, 1978).

But human instruction alone isn't enough.



To really embed new knowledge and skills, and make those changes stick, people need ongoing support and chances to practice and apply what they've learned.

This is where AI-augmented practice comes in, acting like a carefully controlled support system that helps those seeds of learning grow.

AI can offer a learning journey that's tailored to every individual.

It can adapt to different learning styles, use performance data, and consider individual goals to make sure everyone gets the right information and support at the right time.

This helps avoid information overload and makes learning more efficient.

AI algorithms can provide instant feedback and guidance, encouraging a growth mindset and helping people develop skills faster.

This feedback acts like a guide, reinforcing what's been learned and helping people avoid falling back into old habits.

AI can also create realistic simulations and scenarios, giving people a safe space to try out new skills and build confidence.

These simulations allow for risk-free experimentation, helping people to embed new behaviours without the pressure of real-world consequences.

And finally, AI can provide ongoing support through spaced repetition, reminders, and opportunities to recall and apply knowledge, making sure that learning sticks and becomes a part of how people work.





# AI AND HR MODELS: PARTNERSHIP

This approach, combining human instruction with AI-augmented practice, works really well with existing HR models and frameworks.

It allows HR professionals and AI to work together, each playing to their strengths.

For example, the 70:20:10 Model (McCall, Lombardo, & Eichinger, 1996) highlights the importance of learning through experience (70%), social learning (20%), and formal training (10%).

While on-the-job and social learning provide invaluable experiential learning opportunities, formal training, ideally delivered through in-person sessions, remains crucial for establishing a strong foundation of knowledge and skills.

This is where the human element shines, allowing for dynamic interactions, real-time feedback, and the fostering of a sense of community among learners.

AI can then be used to support and extend this formal learning through personalised content, adaptive learning pathways, and ongoing reinforcement and practice opportunities.

The AGES Model, from DDI (Development Dimensions International), focuses on attracting, growing, engaging, and supporting employees throughout their time with the organisation.



AI can help with each of these stages, from recruitment and onboarding to ongoing development and even offboarding. HR can use AI to create a more personalised and engaging employee experience at every step.

The Kirkpatrick Model (Kirkpatrick, 1994) provides a framework for evaluating training effectiveness.

AI can provide valuable data and insights at each level of this model, helping HR measure learner satisfaction, assess knowledge acquisition, track behaviour change, and demonstrate the impact of training on business results.

This data-driven approach allows HR to continuously improve training programmes and show their value to the organisation.



# WHY THIS APPROACH IS CRUCIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

This synergistic approach, combining the strengths of human instruction with the power of AI-augmented practice, is essential for achieving sustainable behaviour change because it addresses the key factors that influence habit formation and skill development:

- **Motivation and Engagement:** Human instruction provides the initial spark, while AI keeps learners engaged and motivated through personalisation and gamification.
- **Cognitive Engagement:** AI helps to manage cognitive load, ensuring that learners can effectively process and retain new knowledge.
- **Practice and Application:** AI provides ample opportunities for practice and application, allowing learners to reinforce desired behaviours.
- **Feedback and Reinforcement:** AI delivers personalised feedback and reinforcement, guiding learners towards mastery and preventing them from falling back into old habits.
- **Continuous Learning:** AI supports a continuous learning cycle, providing ongoing opportunities for skill development and refinement.



By addressing these key factors, this integrated approach creates a powerful engine for sustainable behaviour change, ensuring that learning translates into lasting improvements in performance and organisational effectiveness.

It's a holistic approach that recognises the complexities of human learning and leverages the strengths of both human instruction and AI-augmented practice to achieve optimal outcomes.



# CONCLUSION: EMBRACING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The integration of AI into learning and development represents a significant leap forward in how organisations empower their people.

By addressing traditional training challenges—such as cognitive overload, the forgetting curve, and the transfer problem—AI offers a smarter, more personalised approach to building skills and driving behavioural change.

The combination of human instruction and AI-assisted practice provides the best of both worlds:

- Human trainers bring empathy, inspiration, and context to learning.
- AI enhances this with personalised feedback, adaptive learning paths, and tools that support ongoing skill development.

For organisations, this approach ensures a measurable return on investment by improving knowledge retention, fostering long-term behavioural change, and enhancing employee engagement.

It allows L&D teams to align training more closely with business goals while also creating more inclusive and accessible opportunities for professional growth.



# ABOUT THIRTY SEVEN

Thirty Seven is a AI powered communication and speech delivery companion created by the team at Media First and The BCF Group.

It has been designed to reduce the cost of your training while simultaneously increasing its effectiveness and accessibility.

It is like having a dedicated coach for each of your employees that sits with them 24/7 and offers guidance and coaching on their communication style and techniques when needed.

And it helps your people develop and improve their skills whenever they need it through realistic roleplays.

Thirty Seven covers management and leadership skills, coaching, networking, presentations, media training, sales and customer services.

Learn more about Thirty Seven by visiting [www.37.space](http://www.37.space)



# ABOUT MEDIA FIRST

Media First has over 40 years of experience in designing and delivering specialist communications training.

They have their own TV and radio studios in Winnersh, Berkshire, which is just outside of London, UK.

Media First work with over 40 per cent of the FTSE100 as well as thousands of smaller organisations, charities and businesses.

They have a range of bespoke training services including media, presentations and crisis management training.

Learn more about Media First by visiting [www.mediafirst.co.uk](http://www.mediafirst.co.uk)



# ABOUT THE BCF GROUP

The BCF Group has been helping organisations develop their talent, inspire their people and overcome obstacles and challenges for the past 25 years.

It prides itself on delivering leadership, management and coaching training that empower individuals to achieve extraordinary business results.

BCF training programs ignite passion and inspire action by developing exceptional people, equipping them to conquer challenges and navigate the complexities of the modern business world.

It has joined forces with Media First and Yoodli to create Thirty Seven and ensure its extensive experience, insight, and methodology are available whenever you need them.

Learn more about The BCF Group by visiting [www.thebcfgroup.co.uk](http://www.thebcfgroup.co.uk)





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