

## *Matching the Right Learning Intervention to the Needs of Individuals at Aviva*



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**Garry Goldman**

Head of L&D Delivery at Aviva

### Client Background

Aviva is a British success story. The insurance, savings, and investments group - which grew from the merger of several businesses, including Norwich Union, General Accident and Commercial Union - today operates as a single global brand in 28 countries. In the UK, which accounts for approximately one third of global sales, Aviva is a leading provider of life and pensions products and the largest insurance services company.

The group's progressive attitude to development is reflected in a new 'total approach' to learning. Aviva's philosophy is that effective development is best achieved through a combination of learning from experience (projects, assignments, moving within areas); learning through others (feedback, coaching, mentors) and learning from instruction (formal courses, reading, online articles).

Implementing this new philosophy for learning required a significant change for Aviva, where the frequent response previously was to send anyone requiring training onto a formal development course. Now, Aviva has signed an innovative managed learning contract, with KnowledgePool, which is not only delivering cost savings but is also enabling the group to match the right learning intervention to the needs of individual employees.

### Visibility of the Training Spend

In 2009, Aviva UK spent £8.2m externally on training and developing its 25,000 UK staff. Just under half of this spend was managed through five core capability 'academies' operated by HR (leadership, customer service, sales, financial literacy and operational effectiveness); the balance was booked by the business directly with suppliers.

“These bookings were causing a problem because different parts of the business would purchase similar courses from different providers, which meant that we lost any potential economies of scale and any value from bringing people from across the group together for training,” said Garry Goldman, Head of L&D Delivery at Aviva. “It was also difficult to keep track of it all because the training was being booked outside of any standard process. Some 500 training suppliers were engaged over the year, few of whom had a formal contract with Aviva. It was not an effective use of our assets.”

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Aviva put plans in place to resolve this situation. “We were determined to spend our budget providing the most appropriate learning to the right people in the right areas,” said Garry Goldman. “We actively manage our talent but we weren’t actively managing our training spend to ensure that the right people were benefiting, in the right way. We also wanted to simplify the whole process of choosing training for our employees.”

These drivers led Aviva to search for a managed learning provider. “We wanted a partner that we could work well with, an organisation that was a natural fit with our culture and one that could provide a world-class, easy-to-use booking system,” said Garry Goldman. “KnowledgePool met all of our needs. A decisive factor was that they’re vendor-independent. Other organisations that had been down this road told us they’d been pushed towards their vendor’s own training providers. That didn’t appeal to us. We wanted to stop defaulting to formal development and we felt this would be difficult to achieve if our managed learning provider had a bunch of trainers out there, needing work.”

In partnership with KnowledgePool, Aviva aims to reduce its spend on externally provided development by up to 37%. The savings will come from having a clear demand plan, aligned to business priorities, tightening up administrative inefficiencies, eliminating the duplication of training and ensuring that the right development needs are met through the most appropriate learning approaches.

### **Meeting the Learning Needs**

To deliver Aviva’s requirements, KnowledgePool has created a dedicated team of advisors who can respond to individual learners and route all of their training enquiries to the most appropriate intervention every time. The team members involve themselves in a continuous process to keep up-to-date with all of Aviva’s in-house delivery options, so that they can give accurate and appropriate advice to any given learning query.

“If someone wants to book a course, we have to make sure it is absolutely the right choice for them,” said Garry Goldman. “Depending on the learning need, it may be that an external training course is not the best option. A less formal approach such as coaching, on-the-job training or an internal assignment may be a better alternative. The fact that KnowledgePool can give this advice is a key ingredient in making our total approach to learning successful.”

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KnowledgePool is also helping Aviva with ‘demand planning’, which involves analysing historic training activity, training booking/evaluation data and capability development priorities to forecast future training needs and likely volumes .

To facilitate strategic and operational decision making, Aviva has re-established a Learning Board, which sets the learning strategy for the group and for each area of the business. Below that, it has also created a Learning Council which makes operational decisions on how these learning needs will be met. A representative from KnowledgePool sits on both of these bodies, to better understand the learning requirements across the business, to report back on delivery outcomes and to present recommendations for improvement.

### Supplier Management

KnowledgePool now manages all of Aviva’s training suppliers and it has incorporated its learning catalogue and booking system into Aviva’s employee portal (Aviva World).

“We have removed the purchase codes for any training that doesn’t come through KnowledgePool, so no one should be booking any training independently,” said Garry Goldman. “If a department wants to use a particular supplier for a particular project, we can bring them into the model, so they can be measured and evaluated. It puts our supplier relationships on a more professional level and we have empirical data to prove their worth. This takes away the potential conflict of dealing with individual suppliers who may have been recommended internally, for example because they were someone’s friend.”

KnowledgePool works to sophisticated service level agreements and submits a single monthly invoice for training as well as a monthly report giving Kirkpatrick level 1 and 3 evaluations for all training undertaken. KnowledgePool also provides benchmarking data which enables Aviva to compare its performance against other organisations.

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"The data and metrics enable us to cross-check what we're actually doing against what we should be doing," said Garry Goldman. "In the past, we spent a lot of time creating spreadsheets, trying to track the activity. We now have reliable and valuable management information which gives us clear visibility of what we are spending, where and why."

The managed learning experience is helping Aviva to achieve its goal of empowering all staff to take responsibility for their own learning.

"We're now in a much better position to give people the appropriate development that they need to build their careers," said Garry Goldman. "Also, by better aligning learning with the business needs, we're helping to ensure that our people have the necessary skills in place that will help the organisation to succeed."

"We were determined to spend our budget on providing the most appropriate learning to the right people in the right areas. Depending on the learning need, it may be that an external training course is not the best option. We wanted a partner that we could work well with and KnowledgePool met all of our needs. The fact that they can match the right learning intervention to the needs of individual employees is a key ingredient in making our total approach to learning successful. We also have reliable and valuable management information which gives us clear visibility of what we are spending and where."

**Garry Goldman**, Head of L&D Delivery at Aviva