

The little book of
**Blended
Learning**

The
CharityLearning
Consortium

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The little book of
**Blended
Learning**

By Harri Candy

The
CharityLearning
Consortium

With thanks to

Clive Shepherd, author of
More Than Blended Learning

Jacqueline Turley,
British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Rachel Winfield, Leeds University Union

Pam Pappenheim, RSPCA

Edited by Susie Finch

Foreword

Blended solutions provide the flexibility you need to meet the requirements of modern learners and increasingly complex performance challenges. It's very difficult to satisfy all demands with a single medium or method.

When you blend, you combine a variety of different approaches so that you're always using the most efficient and effective technique at every stage in your solution. Blending is not about sacrificing quality simply to save costs or meet increasing demands for remote learning.

When you blend carefully, focusing on your needs – of the problem and your particular learners – you can provide even better outcomes than you have done in the past. I'd say that's worth the short amount of time needed to read this excellent book!

Clive Shepherd

Author of **More Than Blended Learning**



Keep all ideas
about technology out
of your mind until
you've fixed on a
suitable method

Clive Shepherd

Bring on the blend

If you want to:

- Smash barriers to training
- Bring learners up to speed
- Quickly contribute to your organisation's goals
- Empower managers to assess skills and competencies on the job
- Reduce cognitive overload
- Send ROI through the roof

... then you need to blend.

Using a blend is an incredibly powerful way to take your learning strategy to the next level. It also gives learners more control and autonomy over their own development whilst ensuring they are fully supported to achieve what they need.

Whether you're just starting out or want to improve your strategy, this little book will give you lots of ideas to achieve blended learning success.

Blended learning
is a mindset. You don't
need a big budget but you
do need a creative,
'let's do this' attitude

What is blended learning?

Blended learning is far more than just some pre-work online before a face-to-face workshop. A blended programme is a series of learning interventions using a range of delivery styles, methods and mediums to create one coherent whole. Each activity supports the others to introduce new concepts, challenge learners and help embed knowledge and skills. The richness of the learning experience comes from interlinking elements of the blend.

What's important – and this should be true for all training – is that the learner is at the centre of everything. Every activity should add a piece to the learning puzzle and, at the end of the programme, learners should be confident and supported to change behaviours and use new skills.



Online materials
give everyone the
same starting point
and can lead to
richer discussions

Rachel Winfield,
Leeds University Union

Case Study: Leeds University Union

When Rachel Winfield, Learning and Engagement Manager, was challenged to create an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programme at Leeds University Union, she knew she had to take an alternative approach to have a meaningful impact.

EDI is a sensitive topic, where fear of offending others often stifles much-needed discussion. To combat this, Rachel put together a programme which started with online materials, which managers and staff completed in their own time. This gave everyone a common framework and language to use.

Managers then led structured discussions in team meetings to explore what everyone could do to improve EDI. The confidence they had discussing the topic sensitively led to suggestions for real change. Since they've been implemented, the organisation's EDI status has improved.



Ensure your
blended approach
is flexible enough to
cater for remote staff,
seasonal teams and
shift workers

Rachel Winfield

The blended mindset

A good way to approach creating a blend is to use Clive Shepherd's PIAF model:

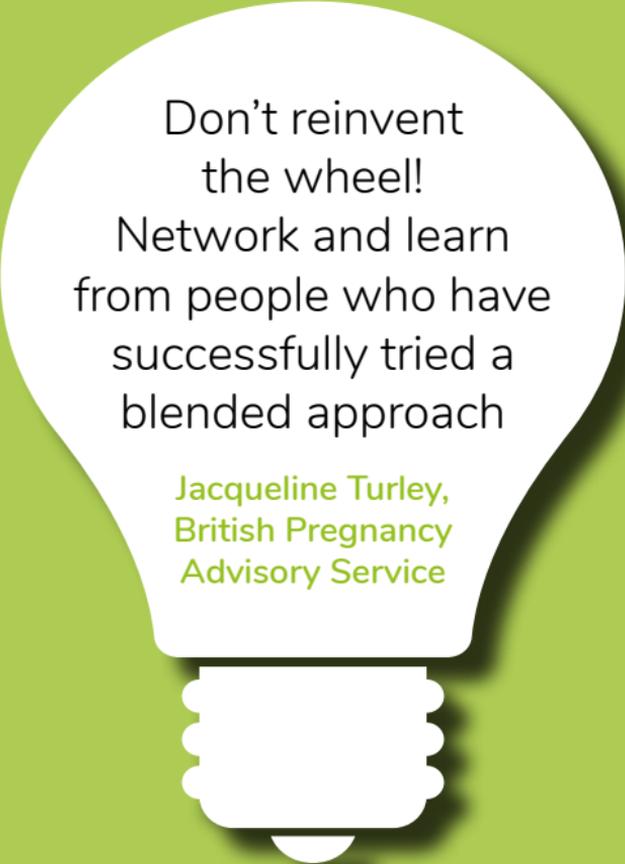
Preparation: How are you helping your learners prepare for the programme?
Could an introductory webinar help?

Input: What's the best way to convey core information and do learners need to be in a particular place to receive it? Could a video, web resource or online module do the trick?

Application: What opportunities will people have to practise their new skills and behaviours?
Do they need to be observed? If so, by whom?

Follow up: How are you going to support people back in the workplace?

This method is an effective way of planning any new learning and development initiative.



Don't reinvent
the wheel!
Network and learn
from people who have
successfully tried a
blended approach

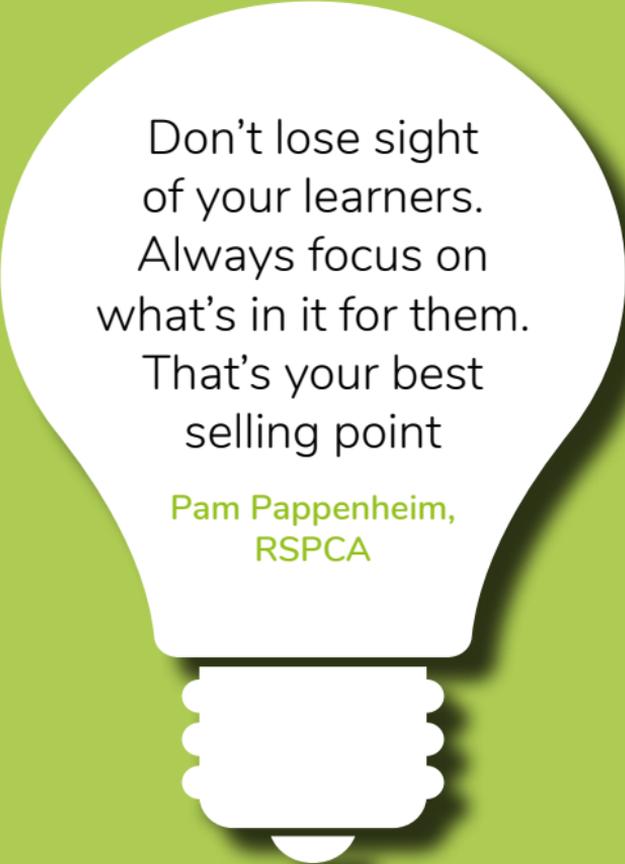
Jacqueline Turley,
British Pregnancy
Advisory Service

Your audience

Using a blended approach means you can create a truly sensational, impactful and long-lasting learning experience. However, it's easy to get carried away. To be successful, keep your learners at the centre of everything. For example, you could include an immersive escape room training experience. However, it will fail if your learners are too uncomfortable to take part, or don't have the skills or technology to access it.

Exercise: Reuse and recycle

List what you already use and what people are familiar with, such as eLearning, workbooks, webinars, case studies or on the job projects. What can you do to make these more effective? What other, similar delivery styles and methods could you build up to?



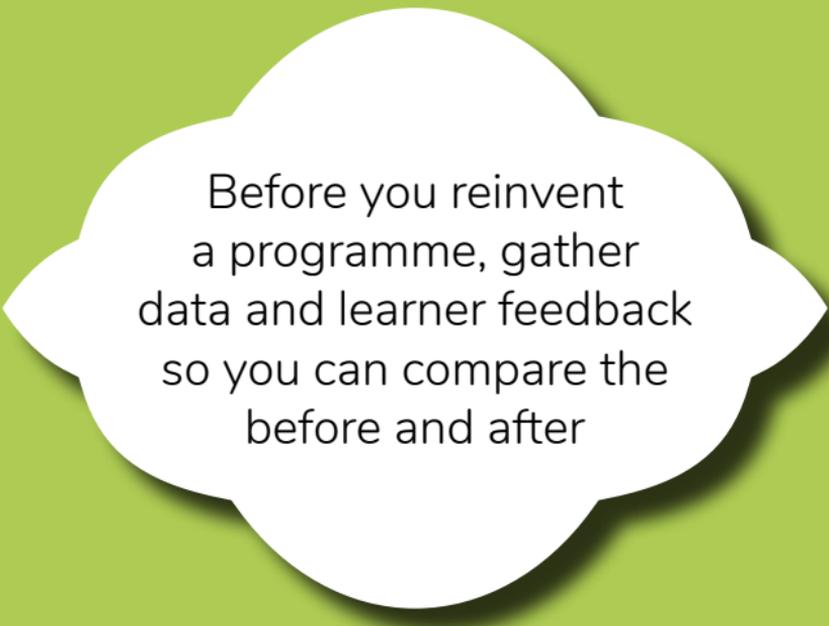
Don't lose sight
of your learners.
Always focus on
what's in it for them.
That's your best
selling point

Pam Pappenheim,
RSPCA

Case Study: RSPCA

Pam Pappenheim, Digital Learning Consultant at the RSPCA, worked with the Behaviour Team to keep staff and animal centre managers current in their continuing professional development. Keeping skills sharp was a challenge when training meant a day away from work. Pam teamed up with subject matter experts to provide concise webinars, paired with resources to apply knowledge and skills, followed by formal assessment.

Those attending live sessions could ask questions. Those who couldn't attend could watch recordings and make use of resources. In the rare case that a learner failed an assessment multiple times, their manager provided additional support. Feedback shows animal centre staff find it easier to access learning, and benefit from being able to rewatch recordings to remind themselves of key information.



Before you reinvent
a programme, gather
data and learner feedback
so you can compare the
before and after

Let's get started

A good place to start is with an existing course, reimagining it with a blended mindset. Using an existing course means you'll hopefully have some metrics which you can use as a baseline to measure your new programme against.

Warning! Whilst you might be excited to try out blended learning with a service-critical programme, this could make stakeholders uneasy. You might get greater support starting with a less critical programme, then building up to something bigger.

Tip: Get the right mix

The best courses and resources for blending are usually in topics that benefit from a mix of theory, practice, on-the-job application and learner feedback. Safeguarding is a classic example of this.



Check with stakeholders
and experts that your
objectives cover all bases –
it's much harder to fill
in gaps later

Define learning objectives

Clear and coherent objectives will tell you, the organisation and your learners what the programme will cover, the level of detail and what success will look like. Consider the following:

- **Business objectives:** What do learners need to **do** in their roles to be successful for the organisation?
- **Performance objectives:** What do learners need to **demonstrate** to prove they can do these? These are L&D's activities
- **Knowledge objectives:** What do learners need to **know** to be able to demonstrate this? This shapes L&D's content

Tip: Think SMART

Make sure your objectives are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound. Bloom's taxonomy (a model for classifying learning objectives) can help you create measurable objectives.



Always keep the
learner journey in mind
and ensure that
everything flows

Exercise: Delivery method mapping

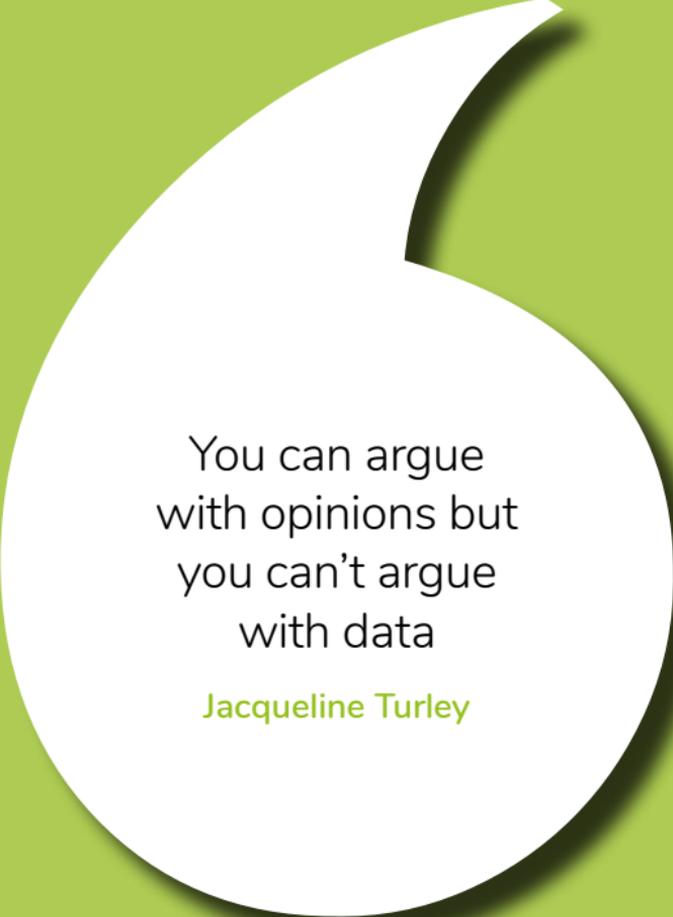
Now you need to match your objectives to the delivery method, and ensure it makes sense to you and your learners. This can be tricky. Sticky notes and whiteboards will be your best friend for this task!

Step one: Create a table with objectives on the left and columns on the right for potential delivery methods.

Step two: For each objective designate a first, second and third choice of delivery method.

Step three: Compromise and refine so it makes sense.

For example: A learning objective might be met with knowledge delivered via a handout, followed by questions in a webinar, then a face-to-face role-play. But it might make more sense to deliver the Q&A and role-play together.



You can argue
with opinions but
you can't argue
with data

Jacqueline Turley

Case Study: BPAS

Jacqueline Turley, Learning & Development Manager, wanted to transform training at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). A traditional classroom approach could only cater for a handful of learners at a time and the dropout rate and cost per delegate was eye-wateringly high.

She started a blended learning pilot with nurse midwife practitioners, delivering information via online resources, videos and eLearning modules, combined with expert-led webinars. Skills were then assessed in the workplace by senior nursing staff and documented in personal training journals.

This method of assessing competency showed that the same high calibre of learning had been achieved in the new blended format. To date, not a single learner has failed to achieve their required competency level.



A blended programme
is one coherent whole.
No one wants to create a
'Franken-course'!

Map the journey

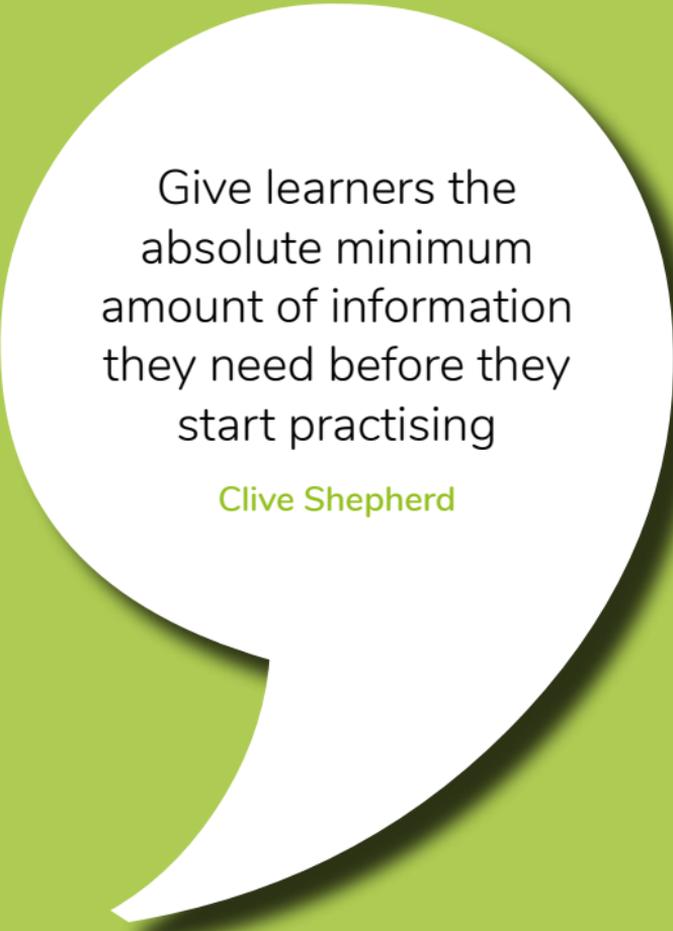
Every good adventure starts with a map, which tells you how to get to where you want to go. So, even though you haven't built your course yet, you need to plot the journey to ensure that all of the steps are there. This is how your learners will experience your programme.

Remember to include:

- Every website learners will need to access
- How long each piece of content takes to complete
- Each venue learners will need to travel to
- Everyone they'll need to speak to
- Plus anything else you've included in the course

Tip: Visualise the journey

It's helpful to set everything out in the order it needs to be accessed. Clearly label any prerequisites too.



Give learners the
absolute minimum
amount of information
they need before they
start practising

Clive Shepherd

Exercise: Refining the learner journey

Ask a friendly learner – or someone else who hasn't been involved in the design of the programme – to take your map and walk it through.

Make a note of the following:

- Any travel time involved
- The number of clicks to access content
- How the content flows – check that there isn't a lot of 'hopping about'
- Any barriers, such as passwords, requirements for printers, or any other possible technical or practical issues

Gather feedback and refine the learner journey based on this. This step is absolutely critical. It's far easier to rectify issues at this stage, before you've actually built anything.



Prep your senior
leaders – they're your
best advocates for
encouraging others
to get on board

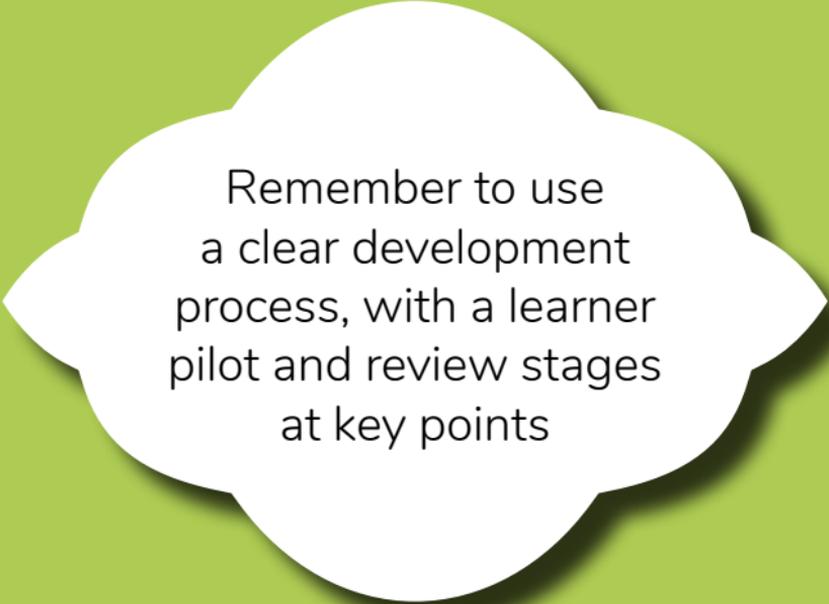
Rachel Winfield

Sweeten your stakeholders

You might wonder why the head of volunteering, regional account manager or finance director would care about your blended transformation. Do not underestimate how much attention you and your team might attract when you start trying out something new. Whenever you are potentially affecting the quality of service delivery, or the cost, expect these people (and more) to be interested and cautious.

Exercise: Identify allies and detractors

Figure out what concerns people might have and tailor individual approaches to appeal to them. For example, the head of volunteering might be more interested in how flexible the course is for people. Budget holders will likely be more impressed by how much money it could save.



Remember to use
a clear development
process, with a learner
pilot and review stages
at key points

Get building

Now you need to build the programme. This is usually the easy bit! But there are some things to bear in mind:

- **Timescale:** Allow yourself more time for building a blended programme. They're more complex than a standard face-to-face course, coaching series or online module – although they're worth it
- **Training:** Include a 'train the trainer' event to bring your team up to speed on how to facilitate the new-style course
- **Comms:** As you're approaching the end of your build, create communication materials. Managers will need to know what has changed so they can support people. You might also need marketing materials for learners. Keep it visual: Infographics or short videos can be more effective than a plain email



Blended doesn't mean
optional – allow learners
to skip prerequisites and
you'll be doing everyone
a disservice

The moment of truth

Congratulations, your programme is live! Unfortunately, you can't put your feet up just yet. Any new way of doing things is going to take some time to embed. No matter how many information sessions, briefing documents or marketing campaigns you've run, expect some teething problems. This is especially true if sections of the programme are prerequisites for later parts.

It can be tempting to bail on a new approach and revert back to what is safe and familiar but that won't help you in the long run. Stick with it. View each problem as an opportunity to fine-tune your approach. Listen carefully to the feedback you receive and take appropriate action.



Create working groups
to test new, innovative
ideas before going into
full production

Onwards and upwards

Hopefully you will have kept data gathered from your original course. You're going to need that now to compare against your new blended approach. You might want to compare, for example, the number of people trained, the level of competency achieved and the time taken to reach it.

Remember to:

- Ask managers for feedback: Is the programme helping teams get up to speed quickly and gain more confidence with skills?
- Ask learners how they're putting learning into practice

Now celebrate your successes, learn from your errors and be proud of the transformation. As you and your learners get more confident, start experimenting with more adventurous activities, such as personalised learning journeys and digital scavenger hunts.

Find out more at clc.link/blended



We've deluded
ourselves into thinking
we can achieve meaningful
learning through a single
event or resource

Clive Shepherd

Quick tips for success

Before designing your blend

- ✓ **Get your stakeholders on board:** They'll be your biggest advocates if you bring them in early. Listen to and reassure them of any concerns and bring them on the journey with you
- ✓ **Define your objectives:** There are lots of different interpretations of blended learning. Make sure you're all working towards the same goal
- ✓ **Borrow team members from other departments:** Co-opt others to create a team with the skills you need
- ✓ **Reuse and recycle:** What learning methods, resources and technology are people already using? Could you utilise or build on these rather than starting with something completely new?

Quick tips for success While designing your blend

- ✓ Nothing needs to be perfect to be successful, but it does have to get done!
- ✓ Give yourself enough time. Include time for reviews, reworks and corrections
- ✓ Use a clear development process, including review and feedback sessions at key points
- ✓ Ask your learners what they think, what works well and what needs amending
- ✓ Create marketing materials for your programme
- ✓ Hold engagement sessions with line managers
- ✓ Position any actions for managers – such as on the job assessments – as part of their existing role rather than an addition to it

Quick tips for success After designing your blend

- ✓ Celebrate how much you have managed to achieve
- ✓ Give lots of support to the programme in its first few weeks, so you can pick up on any glitches or teething problems and quickly resolve them
- ✓ Hold an open and honest 'lessons learnt' session with the project team. Focus on the good practice you want to take forward and recognise the challenges you faced. How will you prevent those challenges from coming up in the next project?
- ✓ Plan the next programme

About the Charity Learning Consortium

We are a one-stop shop dedicated to providing affordable and effective learning solutions for charitable organisations. Membership includes a suite of eLearning, charity-specific video content, a learning management system and access to a vibrant community for members to connect and share good practice. You also get a whole host of other goodies as part of an annual subscription.

Hundreds of charitable organisations benefit from collaborating with us. Bringing them together enables the Consortium to offer cost-effective, quality eLearning to more than a million people across the UK. Our collaborative approach paves the way for learning and development success, with ongoing support, fantastic networking opportunities, relevant workshops, and an inspirational Charity Learning Conference & Awards.

charitylearning.org

About the author

Harri Candy

Harri Candy is an online learning specialist with experience creating award-winning blended programmes in the charitable sector. She has worked across industries – from manufacturing to construction, hospitality and healthcare – and brings her wealth of experience to every project she takes on.



Her real passion is helping learning and development practitioners improve the way they engage – with one another within their departments, with their learners and with managers and teams within their organisations.

elk-online.co.uk

“Blended learning is about combining different approaches to achieve maximum impact”

Martin Baker
Charity Learning Consortium