All You Need to Know About the Learning Technologies Conference

We're only hours away from Learning Technologies, incorporating Learning & Skills, a huge two-day conference in London. What can you expect from this conference and how can you make the most of it?

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WHAT IS THE LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES CONFERENCE?

Learning Technologies has been running for over 18 years, becoming Europe's leading conference on organisational learning and the technology that supports it. It's a great opportunity to explore the latest technologies for learning – not just what the gadgets are but how people are applying them in innovative, useful ways.

The conference has recently expanded. There are five different tracks filled with speakers and interactive sessions, creating more opportunities than ever to explore learning technologies. Stalls from a wide range of organisations let attendees try out new ways of applying technology for learning.

70 speakers and facilitators will provide keynote addresses, case studies, café sessions, and theory presentations. With so many learning professionals in one place, it's also the perfect opportunity to get into debates about where learning technology is going, to bounce ideas off fellow professionals and hear their insights. As you would expect from a conference with a focus on technology, there's also an online element, with Google hangouts as well as the social media conversations that surround any good conference.

Over 8,000 attendees will get insights into where learning technology is going over the next few years and how to apply it today. For anyone working in or interested in this part of the educational sector, it's one of the best opportunities to expand your skills and get fresh ideas.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE

There's a lot of content at the conference, and only two days to pack it in. So what highlights should you look out for if you attend?

The first day of the conference starts strongly with a talk by Rohit Talwar of Fast Future Research on "Emerging Technologies: How advances in science and technology could transform the ways we live, work and learn." Exploring the amazing power of new technologies, Rohit will consider how they can reshape not just our learning but our lives. How can we use technology to make sense of the emerging, radically different, environment we now live in? Will we use technology to bring real change or just do the same things a little better? This is a chance to be challenged on a big topic.

For something more playful, track five includes an afternoon panel on simulations and games. This is an area of learning that's really opened up in recent years, as our understanding of human psychology and the proliferation of games has shown how powerful they can be. Games can create a safe environment in

which to make mistakes and learn by doing. Simulations can create a shared space for distance learners to interact. Gamification can be used to motivate learning. A panel on this promises to provide plenty of interesting ideas and insights.

Technology is often depicted as isolating, but it can also help us to collaborate. As part of track three, Gemma Critchley of Aviva and Michael Salone of 3-6TY will be talking about how technology can be used to encourage collaboration and recognise people's skills. Drawing in insights from social media and digital marketing, it's a subject very much in keeping with the ethos of the convention – using technology to learn together.

The second day features several interesting presentations on the psychology of learning, starting with a talk from Ulrich Boser, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, on "The key commandments of 'learning to learn,' or how to become an expert in just about anything." Covering six steps in learning to learn better, he'll set out important strategies for an era when we've recognised that learning is about skills, not just facts.

For more on a similar theme, track four includes a panel on learning and the mind. Getting into the myths and realities of neuroscience, panellists will deliver insights into the way the human mind works and how we can use this to learn better.

With more and more learning going online, it's fitting that one of the lunchtime sessions in on the truth about digital learning. It's a chance to explore which technologies work and which don't, how to make sense of the different options, and how your own experience compares with that of others.

Taking us into the realm of the aesthetic, Connie Malamed will be discussing instructional design as part of track one. How information is presented makes a huge difference to how it's taken in. Connie will discuss why design matters for learning and how you can make use of good design. It's a chance to quickly improve your design skills and so ensure that learners take in the most important points of any lesson.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

With all this great content and more, how can you ensure that you're making the most of the conference? Start by knowing what you're looking for. Your mission this year might be to get a better grasp of the psychology of learning or to pick out the latest technologies to adopt. Whatever your focus, identify two or three sessions that will provide the most in that area and make sure you get to them.

That doesn't mean you should be totally single minded. The best way to learn something new is to get outside your comfort zone. Find a talk or a seminar on a topic you've never even considered. That way, you can be sure you'll pick up something you didn't know before.

If you can, get hands on. Your brain can only take so much passive absorption, however interesting the talks are. Finding practical activities to try out will give your mind a change of pace and help refresh you for the next talk.

Take the opportunity to network. A conference of 8,000 likeminded people is a great place to meet others like you, people you can turn to for advice and support in future. Get chatting with other attendees at the talks you go to. Strike up conversations in the hallway. Get online and include the event's hashtags to make connections. That way you can keep talking about learning technologies long after the conference is over.

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KEY SPEAKERS

With so much talent on display, who are the speakers to look out for at the conference?

Consultant, author, and speaker Connie Malamed is renowned for her work in online learning, visual communication, and information design. She has over twenty years of experience transforming clients' content into interactive learning experiences, putting her at the forefront of learning through interactive technology. She is the author of Visual Design Solutions and Visual Language for Designers and publishes the eLearning Coach website and podcast, so if you enjoy her presentation at the conference, there's plenty more out there to find.

David Kelly, executive director of The eLearning Guild, has been a consultant and director in the learning, performance, and training field for more than 15 years. An expert in the use of technology to enhance training, education, learning, and organizational performance, he has worked with organizations including ATD, eLearn Magazine, and LINGOs.

Blake Buisson is the Director of Brand & Marketing Communications for LinkedIn Learning, placing him at the spot where social media and online learning meet. A tech industry veteran, he has six years of experience in HR, recruiting, and talent development.

It's a sign of the prestige of Learning Technologies that they've attracted Nigel Willson, Global Strategist at Microsoft. Over nearly two decades, Nigel has worked across the technology giant, gaining experience in consultancy, architecture, program management, and strategy and innovation. His current focus is on creating innovative solutions for clients in the professional services sector.

For details of other speakers and when you can hear from them, check out the conference's speakers pag
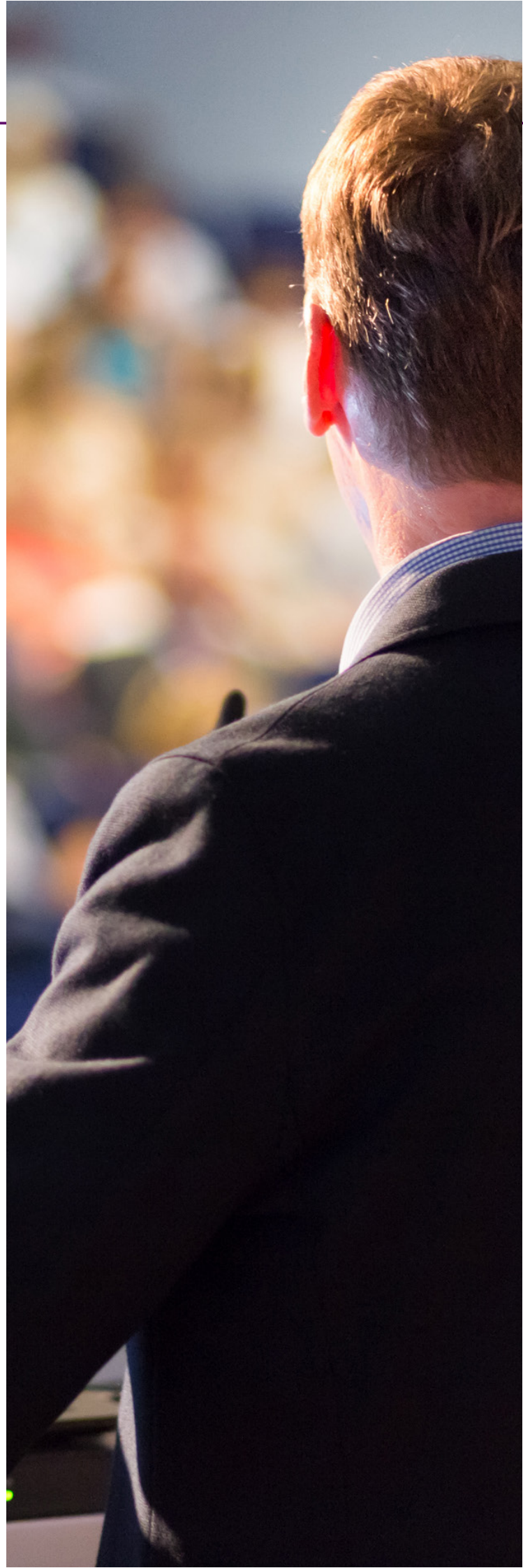
KEY THEMES IN LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

The conference organisers have picked out their key themes, and many of them fit with what we see as the emerging educational themes for the next few years.

Games and learning might seem like a novelty, but it's one of the most powerful and underrated areas in education and learning. In the past twenty years, electronic games have become a mainstream pursuit, making them an invaluable way of engaging learners. Along the way, they've provided great insights into how people think and how we take in information.

Mobile delivery is increasingly important. When everyone has the internet at their fingertips twenty-four seven, there are opportunities to take learning into the world like we never could before. How can we use that to make learning more engaging? What is the future of education and training on the move? The answers aren't clear yet, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be asking the questions.

The challenge of design is often overlooked, but it's critical for any trainer or educator. How you present information makes a huge difference to how memorable it is and how professional you appear. A little basic design learning can make lessons much better, and technology is providing the tools to make good design easier.
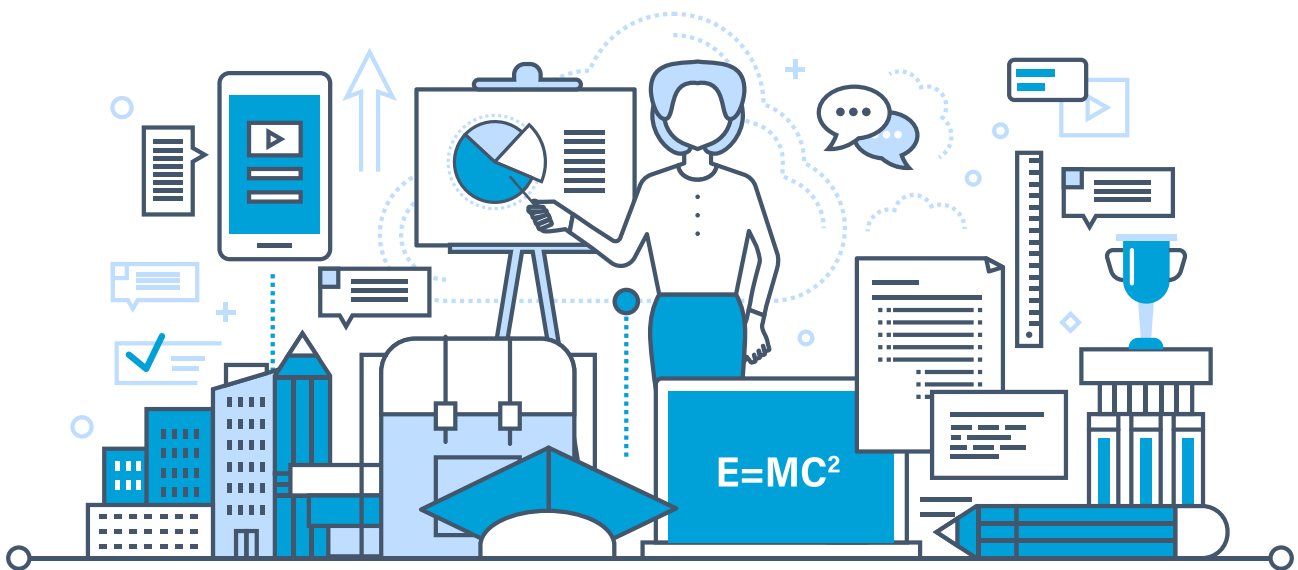
GET OUT THERE AND LEARN ABOUT LEARNING

The Learning Technology conference is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about where technology is going in the training sector. If you want to be at the cutting edge of learning and to gain some valuable training skills, then conferences like this are well worth your time.

Even if you can't make the conference, there are always other options to use technology in learning. At Webanywhere, we build world-leading Learning Management Systems using the latest design and technology. With over 3,000 ready-made video e-learning modules to support your business, we're among the many great learning options technology now offers. So tap into a great source of learning technology and give our learning systems a go.

To learn more about how Webanywhere can help you take full advantage of learning technologies and e-learning solutions, please get in touch today

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