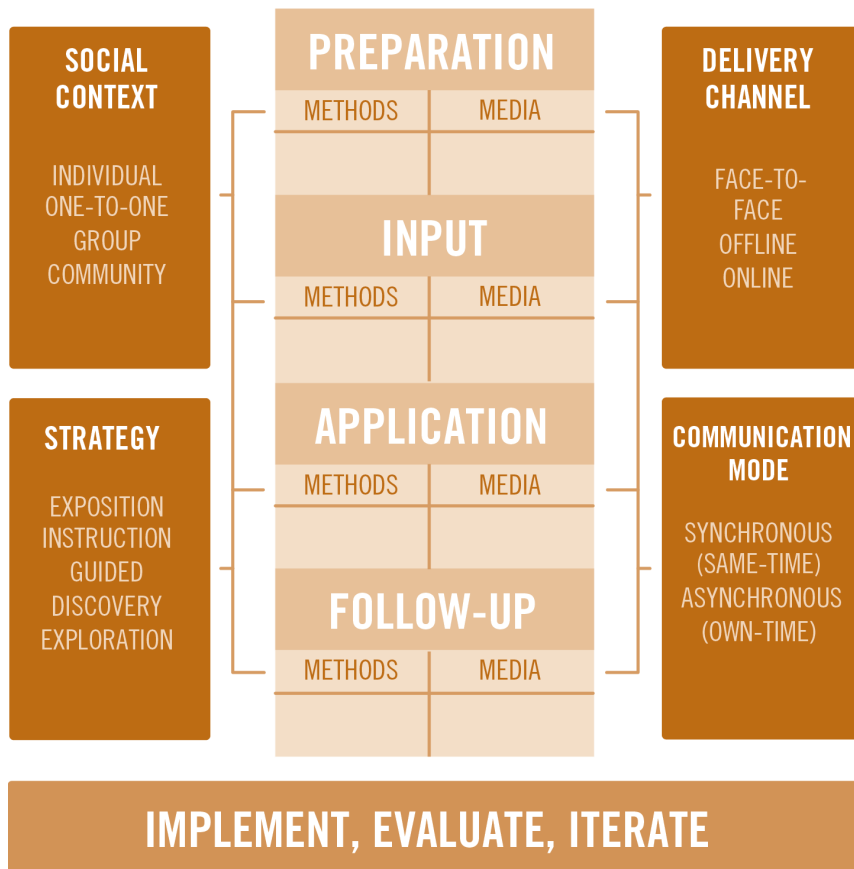
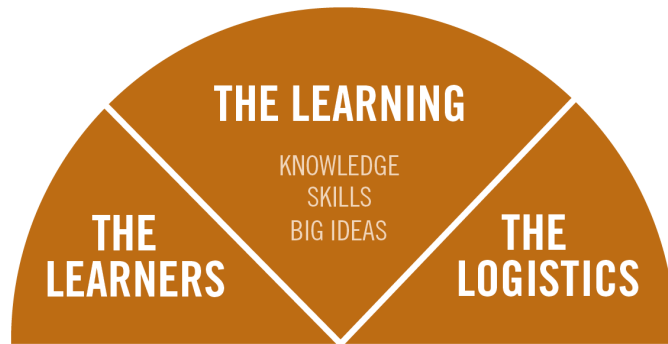


**XBL**

**MORE THAN**

**A JUKEBOX**

# THE NEED



## THIS IS THE JUKEBOX

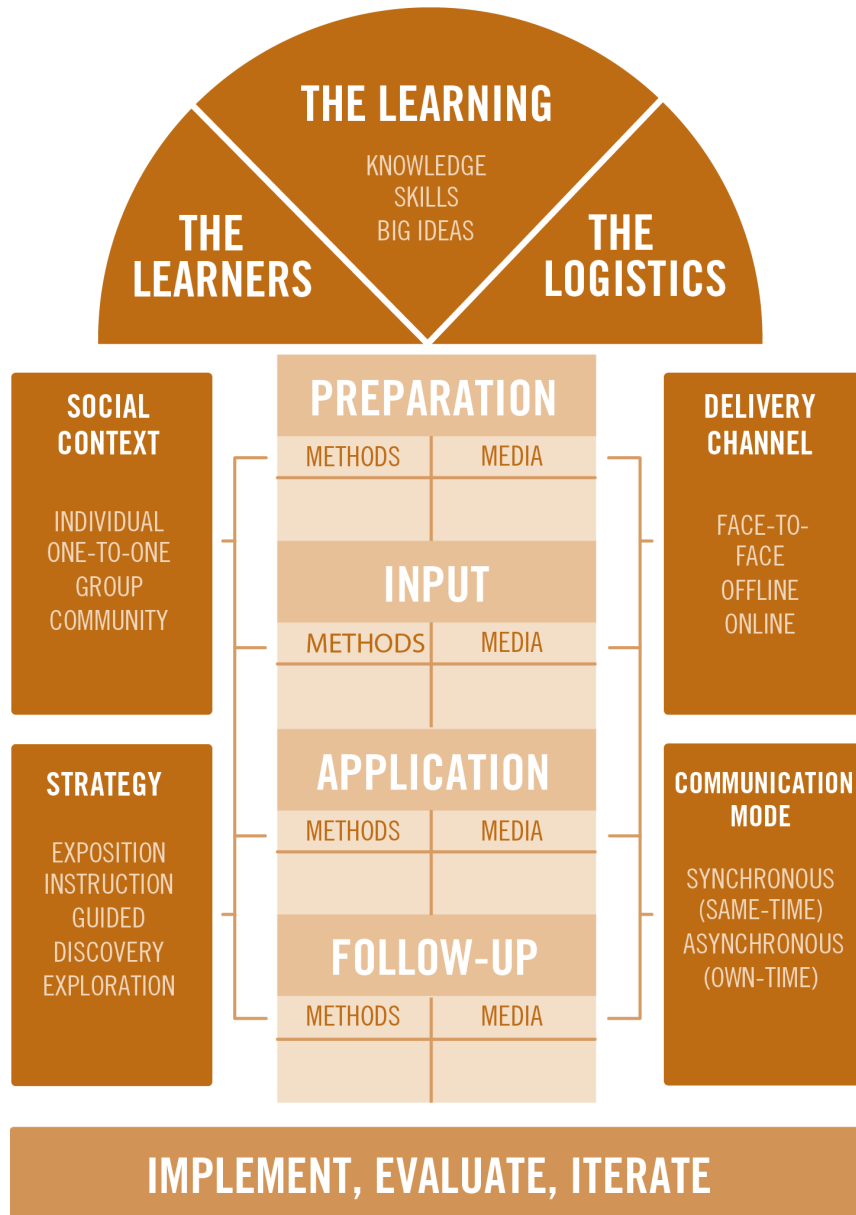
You must admit – it does look a little like one, particularly if you screw up your eyes.

The jukebox allows you to **discover** the secrets of better blended learning in **record** time. That’s if the terrible jokes don’t put you off completely.

The following ten pages take you through the *More Than* process from beginning to end, in a simplified form, without examples, anecdotes, arguments, case studies or any other waffle.

As such, it is designed to act as a summary and a reminder. Hopefully you will find it useful.

# THE NEED



## 1. THE NEED

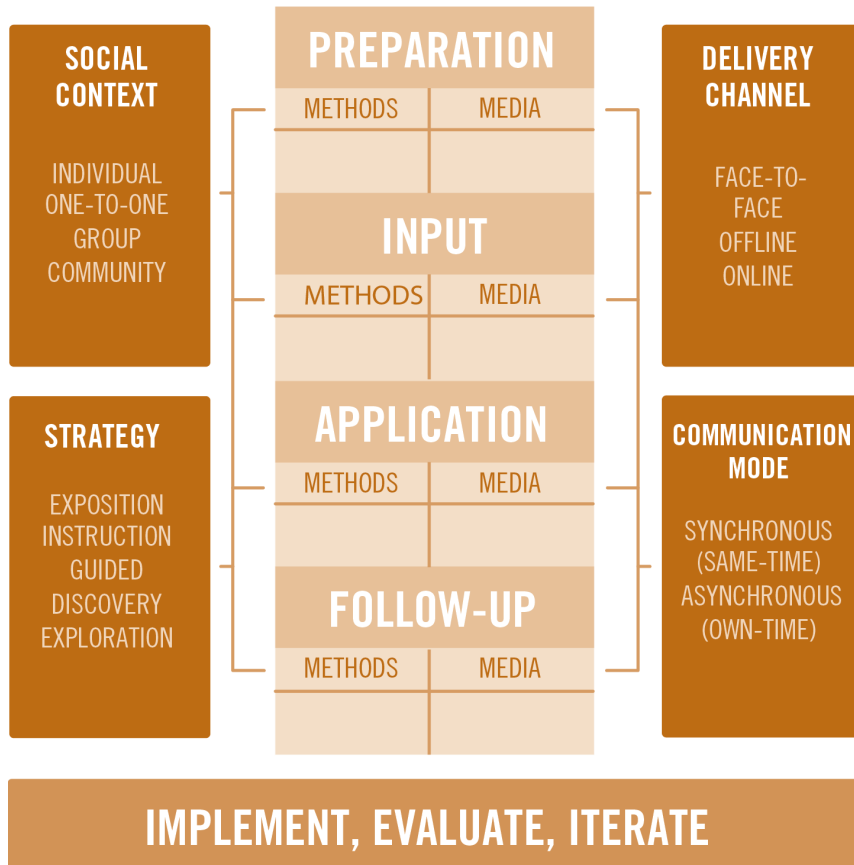
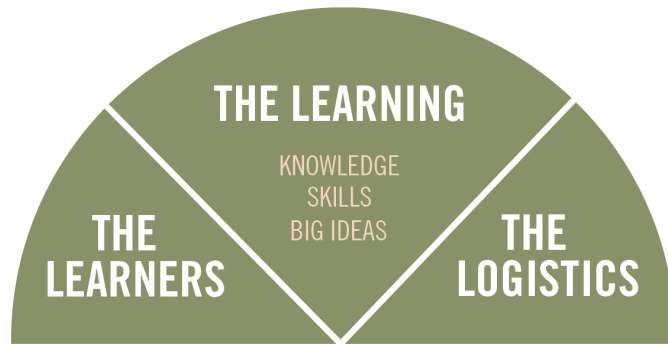
Every design for a blended solution starts with a need that some form of learning intervention can satisfy. Sometimes these needs originate from learners themselves, perhaps because they require the knowledge or skills to carry out a particular task, perhaps to gain a qualification or otherwise improve their employability, perhaps for the simple love of learning.

Alternatively, the need could come from an employer, looking to fix a problem, prepare for or adapt to a change, take advantage of an opportunity, or respond to a regulatory requirement. The momentum may also come from regional or national government, looking to address a skills gap and/or reduce unemployment.

At this very first stage, your initial concern is to make sure that learning really is what's required to satisfy the need, and not some other performance intervention such as better information, more focused incentives or more up-to-date systems.

Once you are sure, the next priority is to home in on the performance requirement – what it is that learners need to be **DOING** differently if the need is to be satisfied. By maintaining this emphasis on performance, you will avoid the trap of believing that the job is done simply because some training event has taken place.

# THE NEED



## 2. THE THREE L'S

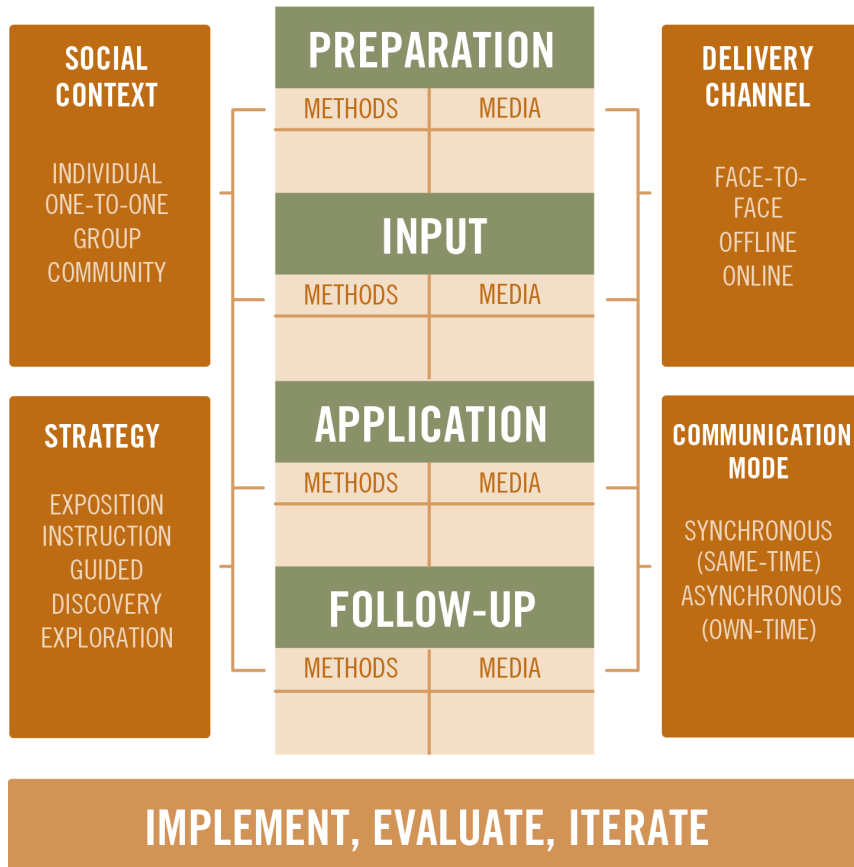
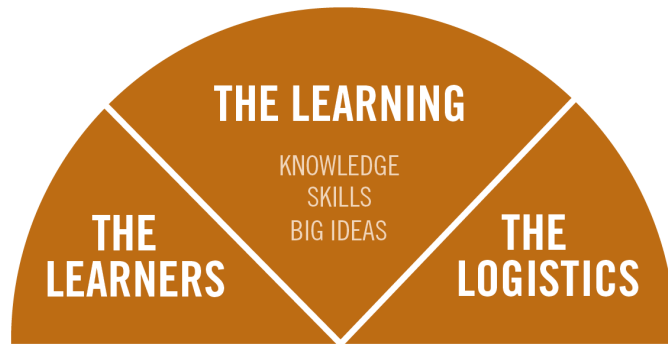
The three Ls provide an easy-to-use framework for analysing the requirement for your intervention. Without thoroughly exploring each of these three dimensions, you can all too easily head off in the wrong direction. On the other hand, if you get your analysis right, your design can often fall easily into place.

**The learning:** First, focus in on the learning requirement. We've already asked what learners need to be doing differently if the underlying need is to be satisfied. We follow-up by asking what they absolutely must know in order to do these things, what big ideas they need to understand and buy into, and what skills they need to acquire and/or put into practice.

**The learners:** If the learning represents our intended finishing point, the learners are where we start. You need to become familiar with your target audience: What expertise do they bring to the learning topic? How interested are they likely to be in learning about the topic? What hopes and fears will they bring to the learning experience? What cultural expectations will they have about the nature of a learning experience? What basic skills and computer literacy are they likely to have?

**The logistics:** Along your path from starting to finishing point, you will encounter barriers and opportunities, and you need to know exactly what these are: the numbers of learners, their locations and availability; the budget at your disposal; the deadlines; the people available to facilitate and support your solution; the equipment, tools and facilities.

# THE NEED



### 3. PIAF

Like Edith Piaf, those using the Preparation-Input-Application-Follow-up structure for their solutions are likely to have 'no regrets'. Why? Because PIAF represents an end-to-end process, which only concludes when the original need has been satisfied.

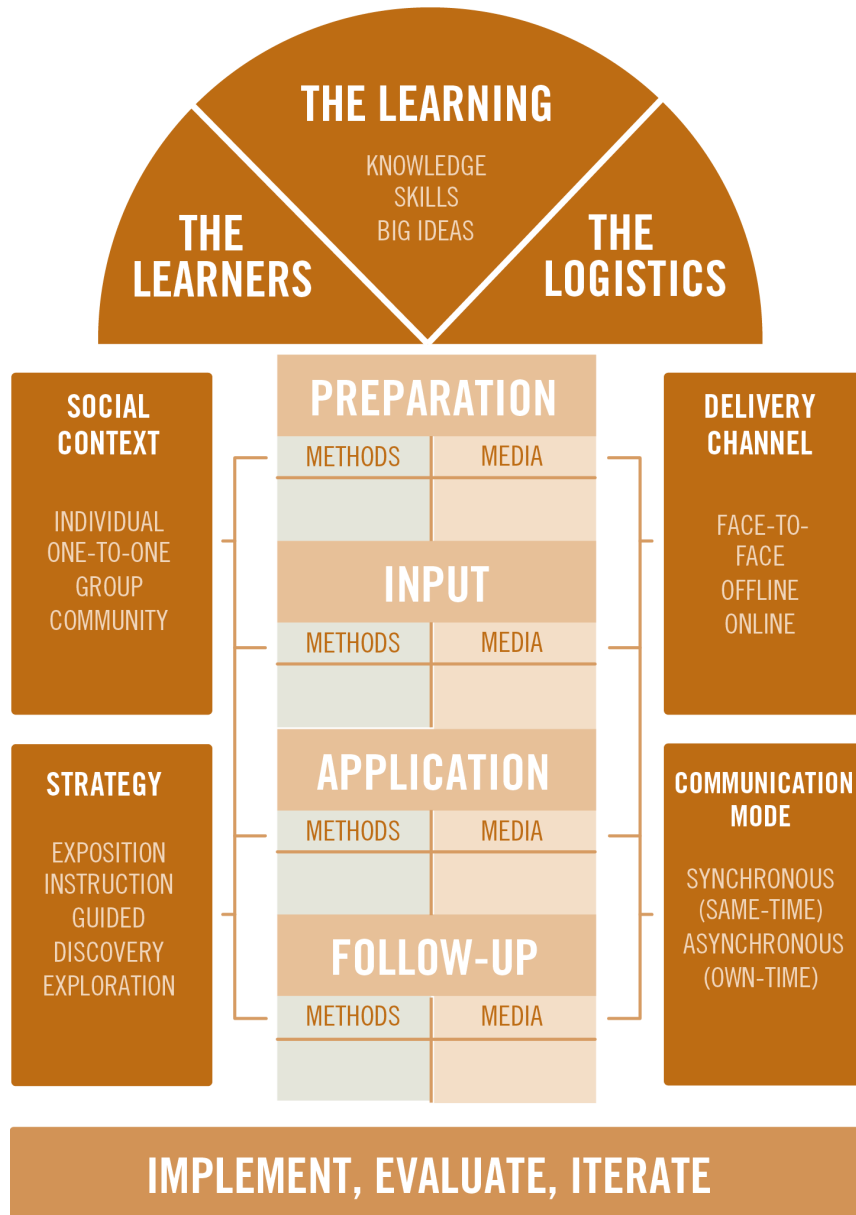
**Preparation:** The purpose of the preparation phase is to align the learner with the intervention, so both are prepared to receive each other.

**Input:** The input phase acts as a catalyst for action. It's usually the most formal part of the blend – the bit we commonly call a 'course', although it could be as simple as a coaching session.

**Application:** In the application phase, the learner applies what they have learned to real-life (or at least to highly authentic tasks). In longer interventions, the input and application phases are likely to loop, so there are regular opportunities to apply what has been learned.

**Follow-up:** The follow-up phase is actually the longest, with the aim of embedding the learning into everyday behaviour. Throughout this phase, the learner is able to 'pull' from available resources, including coaches, experts, colleagues and content.

# THE NEED



## 4. METHODS

At every phase in the intervention we need to select methods that will achieve the aims for that phase, given what we know about the three L's – the learning, the learner and the logistics.

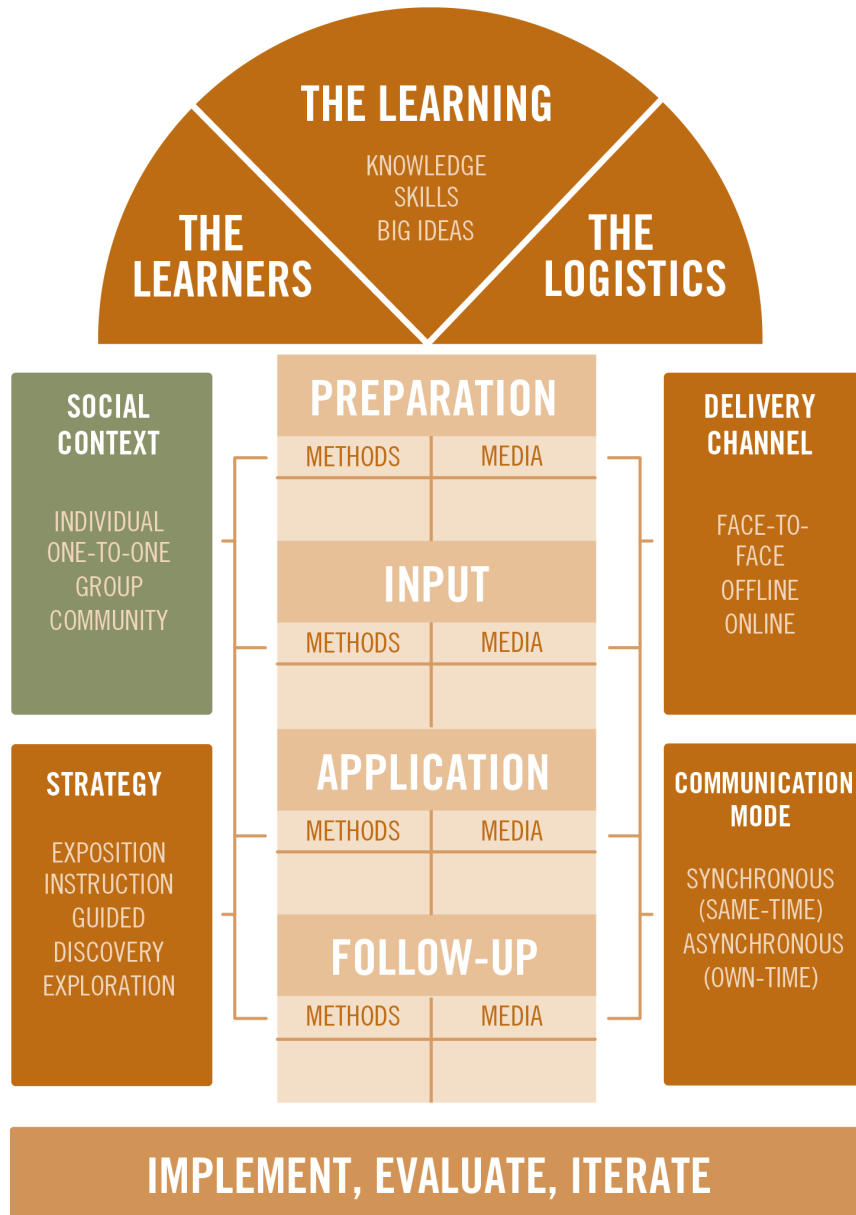
Learning methods are the tools we use to facilitate learning. Importantly, they – and not technologies – are what determine whether a solution will be effective, which is why we have to get these right first.

A blended solution should not involve a trade-off between effectiveness and efficiency. The idea is to select an effective strategy and then – without compromise – choose the most streamlined mode of delivery. Quality is a given.

Learning methods are surprisingly timeless – Socrates would have had much the same choices available to him back in ancient Greece. Having said that, there are lots of available methods to choose from.

To make it easier to decide on the right methods, we can group them according to the **social context** in which they occur (the learner alone, learning one-to-one, learning in a group and learning as part of a wider community) as well as the **strategies** that they employ (exposition, instruction, guided discovery and exploration). We'll be looking at those next.

# THE NEED



## 5. SOCIAL CONTEXT

Learning methods can be usefully categorised according to the social context in which they occur. Mixing social contexts within an intervention is one way in which you can blend.



**Self-study** is learning alone. It can range from, at one extreme, reading a book to engaging in a complex computer simulation at the other.



**One-to-one:** We can learn one-to-one with an instructor, a coach, a mentor or a subject expert. This process can be conducted on-job, off-job or remotely.



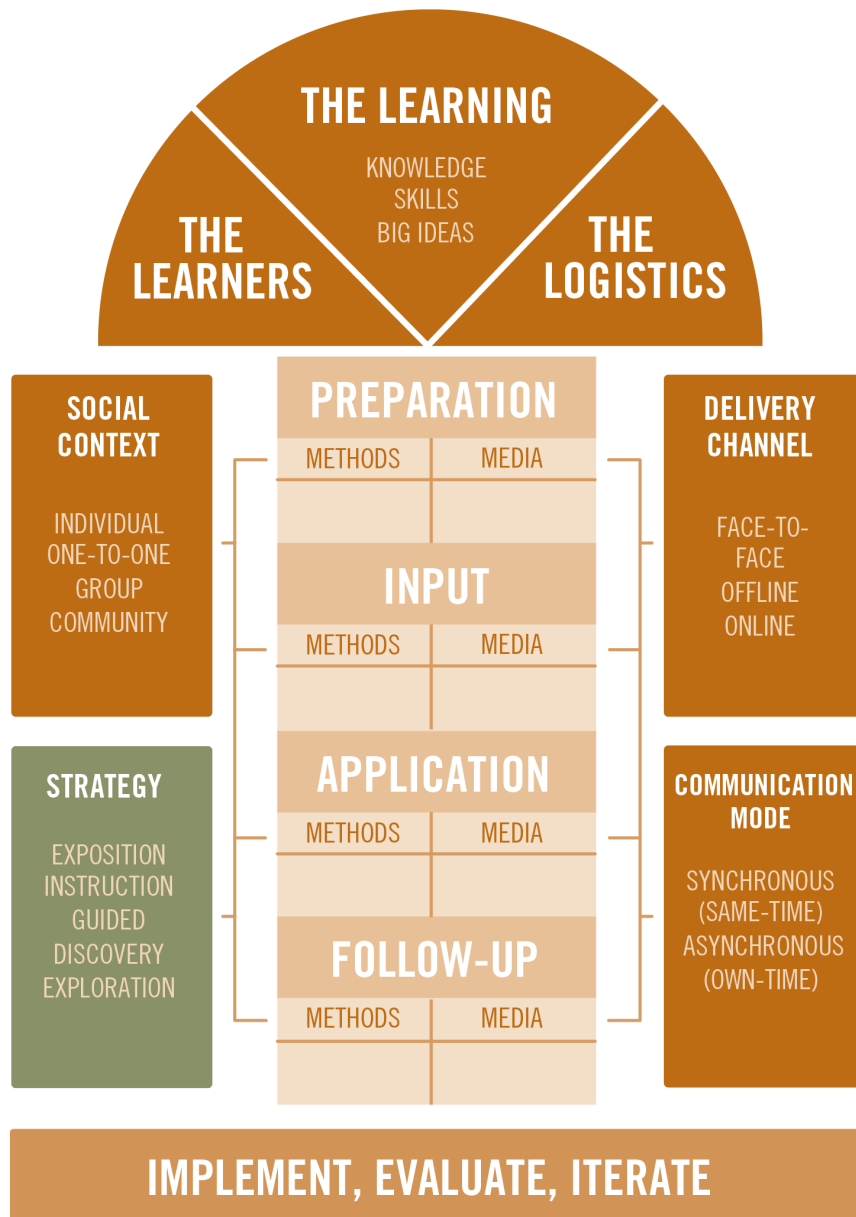
**Group:** When we learn with a group, we expand the resources available to us as learners to include our fellow learners.



**Community:** Increasingly we reach out to a wider population to learn, beyond the small groups that we typically encounter in a formal learning setting. This form of learning could happen in a physical space (such as at a conference) but it is more likely to take place online.

Each of these social contexts has major advantages, but also some significant drawbacks. The art is to use each option in those situations in which its benefits are maximised and its limitations minimised.

# THE NEED



## 6. STRATEGY

Every learning solution, formal or informal, employs one or more of the following four basic strategies, whether or not the decision to use these strategies has been made consciously:



**Exposition** is the simple delivery of information from subject expert to learner, typically as part of a formal syllabus. Examples include lectures, presentations and prescribed reading.



With **instruction**, a more systematic process is applied, starting with the formulation of specific learning objectives and culminating in some form of assessment. Instruction can take place in the classroom, through self-study e-learning or on the job.



**Guided discovery** is also a carefully structured process, but the emphasis here is on setting up activities from which the learner can gain their own insights and come to their own conclusions.

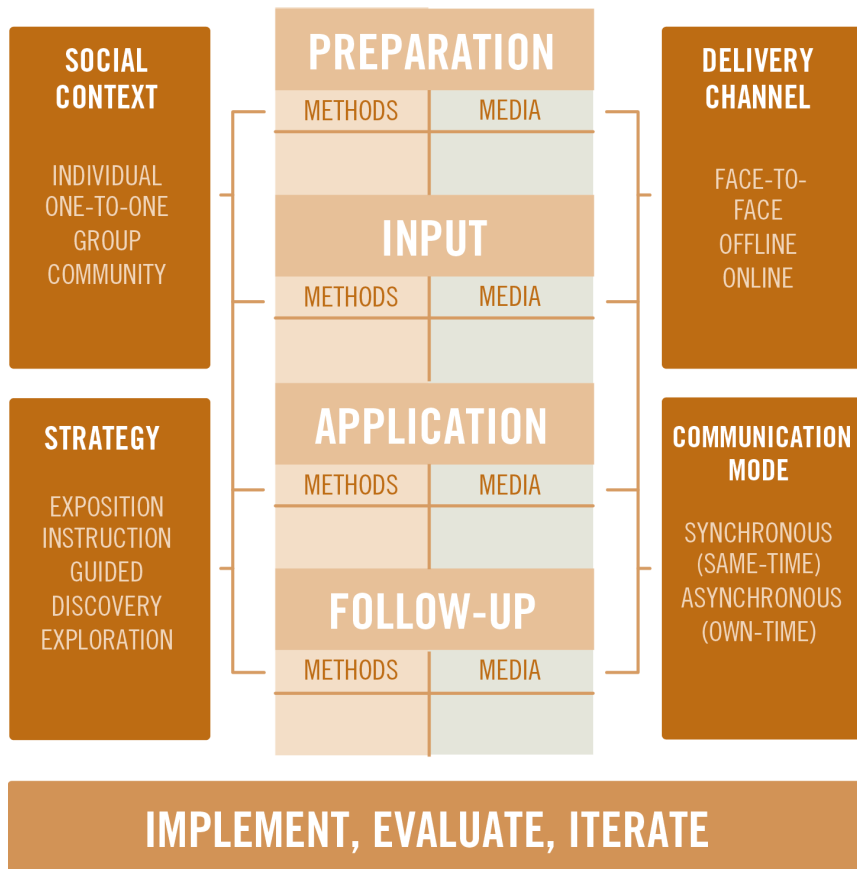
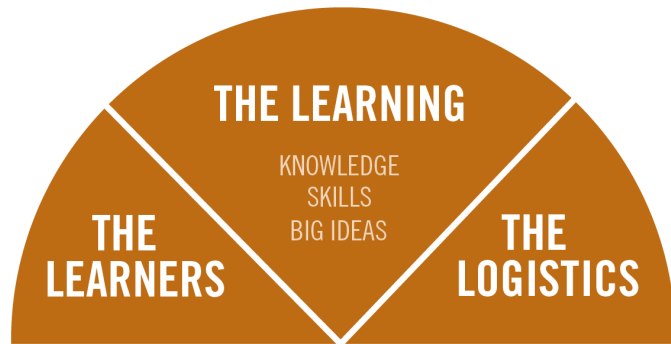


**Exploration** hands over control to the learner to make all the choices from available resources.

Different strategies will be suitable at different phases in an intervention and for different learning objectives and target populations. Mixing strategies is another form of blending.



# THE NEED



## 7. MEDIA

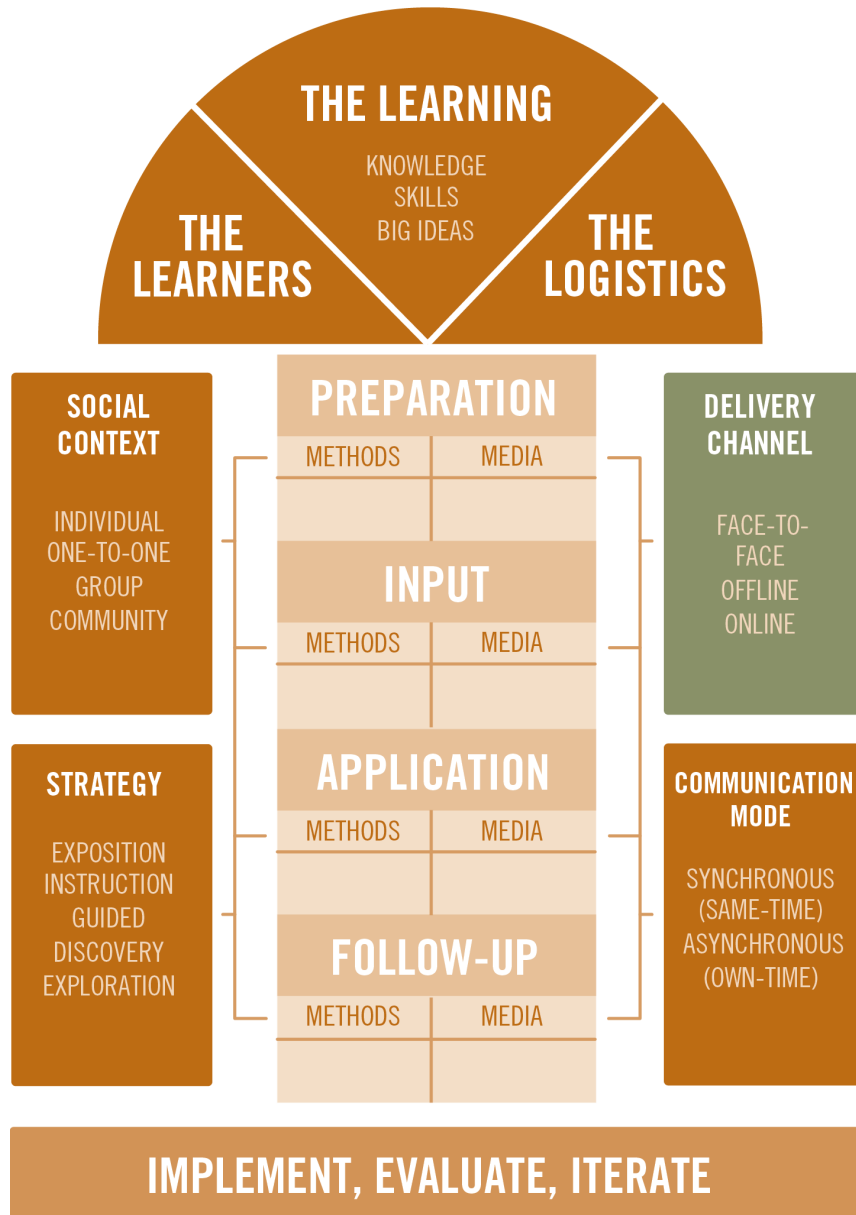
At each phase of our blend, we will have chosen methods which we believe will lead to effective outcomes for our population of learners. Our next task is to decide how we will make each of those methods a reality, without compromising on their effectiveness. We deliver our methods using learning media.

Unlike methods, the range of media at our disposal is ever expanding, and the rate at which our options are increasing is accelerating. One hundred years ago, a teacher or trainer would have been restricted to face-to-face communication, a blackboard and printed materials. Their twenty-first century equivalents need to make sense of the potential provided by Twitter, iPhones, Kindles, YouTube, Skype and Wikipedia, to name just a few.

Each new medium that comes along offers us some fresh possibilities for greater efficiencies, improved flexibility and/or enhanced scalability. But some are game changers - they make it possible to employ learning methods that previously would have been impractical to implement. Think of the reach of online social networks and the power of computer simulations.

To make it easier to select the most appropriate media, we can group them according to the **delivery channel** that they employ (face-to-face, offline - such as books or CDs, or online) as well as their **mode of communication** (occurring at a specific point in time or in the learner's own time). We'll be looking at these categories next.

# THE NEED



## 8. DELIVERY CHANNEL

Delivery channels allow us to realise the methods that we have chosen. They enable the learner to access content and interact with teachers and fellow learners:



**Face-to-face:** Before the invention of the printing press, the only practical setting in which learning could take place was face-to-face. Even now, with many other options available, more learning takes place face-to-face than by any other means, even though this dominance is gradually diminishing.



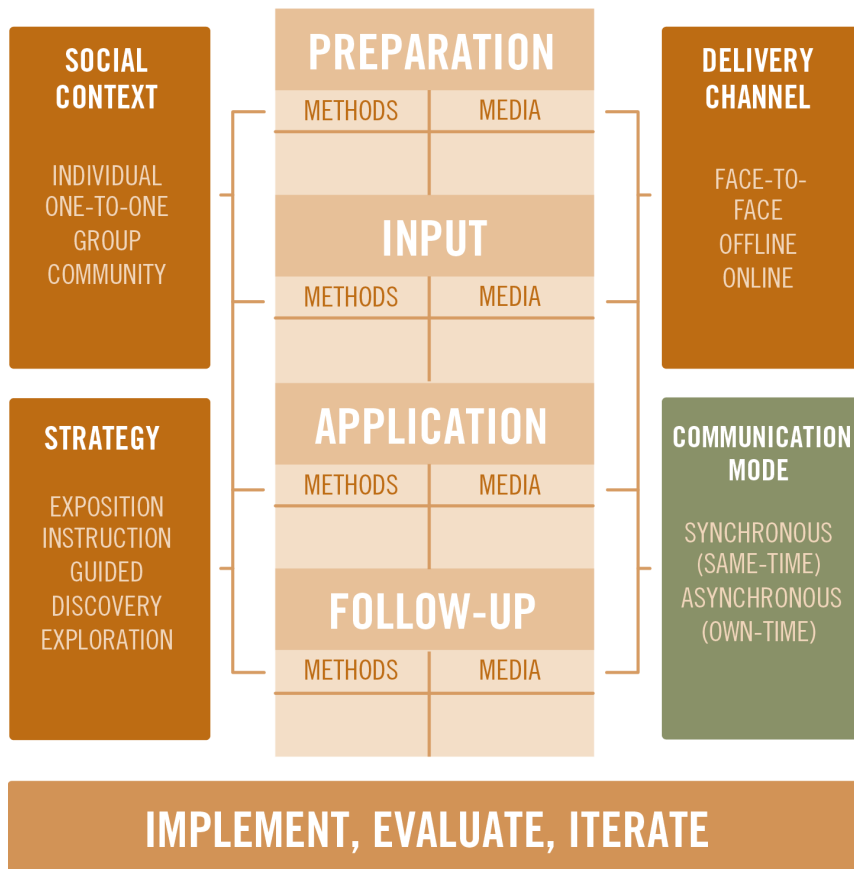
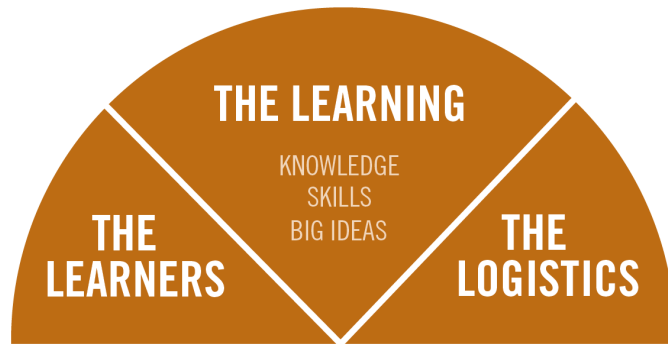
**Offline media:** This term encompasses all those technologies that allow people to consume and interact with content in their own time but which do not require them to be connected to a network. Some common examples are books, CDs and DVDs.



**Online media:** Some online media are essentially forms of content, from simple web pages, to elaborate 3D environments, simulations, e-learning modules and videos. Others provide the ability for Internet users to collaborate with each other, whether in their own time, as with social networks or forums, or in real-time, using tools such as Skype and web conferencing.

Through the delivery channels we use, we can make our intervention more scalable, flexible and efficient; however, this should never be at the expense of an effective solution. Mixing delivery channels is the third way in which you can blend.

# THE NEED



## 9. COMMUNICATION MODE

Each learning medium operates in one of two different modes. Synchronous (or 'same-time') communication requires that all parties be available at the same time. Asynchronous (or 'own-time') communication can be undertaken as and when it suits the participants.



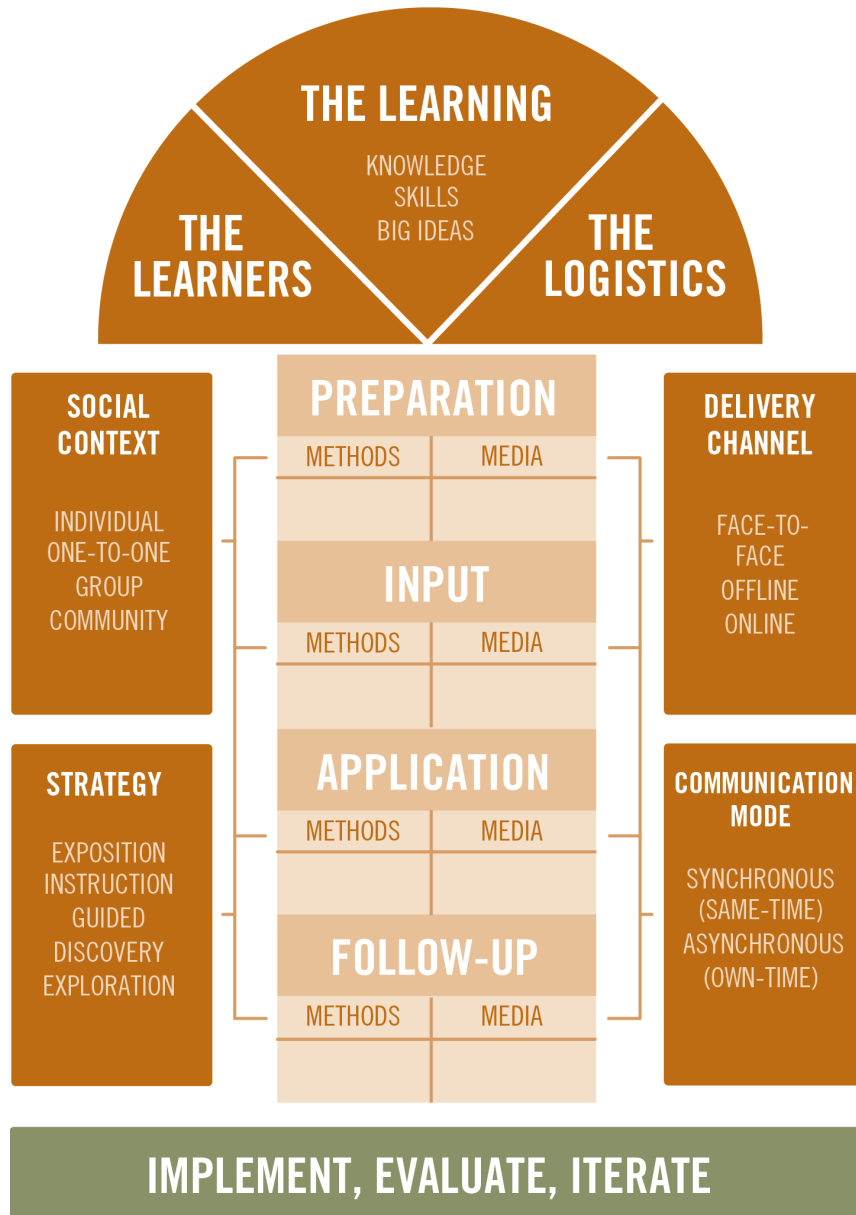
**Same-time:** All learning originally took place face-to-face, and this form of communication is essentially synchronous – all participants need to be available at the same time. Technology has expanded our capacity for same-time communication, first through the telephone and now using tools like Skype on the Internet. As a means for learning, synchronous events provide a more immediate and responsive experience but at the expense of flexibility for individual learners.



**Own-time:** This mode of communication was originally dominated by the printed book, and later by various types of tapes and discs. The modern era has seen a dazzling array of new possibilities for self-paced consumption of content (think of the Wikipedia, YouTube and millions of other web sites) and asynchronous person-to-person interaction, including text messaging on mobile devices, email, discussion forums, wikis, blogs and social networks.

As the most flexible option, asynchronous communication is likely to form the primary mode for many blended solutions. However, synchronous events add immediacy and structure to an intervention, so a balance will often be desirable. Mixing communication modes is the fourth way in which you can blend.

# THE NEED



## 10. IMPLEMENT, EVALUATE, ITERATE

### Implement

A design is only a best guess at what will work in practice. Experience will obviously help but you can reduce the risk considerably by testing your ideas out with a representative sample of typical learners – not just at the end, when you're exhausted, the budget has run out and your deadline has passed, but at the start and at each key decision point that follows.

### Evaluate

It is dangerous to think of a blended solution as a project which you can leave behind for another once it has been implemented. It will take some time to get a blend just right, so you will need to put the time in when it comes to evaluation. How effective has the solution been in meeting the need? How flexible and efficient is it proving in practice? How can it be refined to do an even better job?

### Iterate

Blends are well suited to continuous improvement. Elements that are not working can be replaced by something different. New elements can be added and redundant material removed.

Think of a blend like a product or a software application – something that is a perpetual work in progress. Each iteration takes you one step closer to that perfect match between problem and solution.

**>BL**

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