

# Impact's Experiential Learning Methodology

For nearly 40 years **Impact** have been designing and delivering global experiential learning programmes for some of the biggest, most successful and most demanding companies. We are proud to be regarded as the best experiential learning company in the world. We apply our expertise to help people in organisations learn, adapt and grow as leaders, managers, high performers, team leaders, change agents and more.

## Experiential learning for the 21st century

**Impact have successfully redefined experiential learning so that it is effective in helping organisations to solve their most pressing and difficult people development problems.**

Our approach to experiential learning is a long way from the traditional view of this type of learning as simply learning from doing. One of the common misconceptions of experiential learning is that doing is learning. Lots of people do things in organisations and in society without much thought, never mind any learning. Most of the time our experience of doing things is automatic. We get stuck in a rut and, unless we are mindful, we can continue to do things in the same way we have always done them. We mostly experience what we expect to experience. This is fine in some cases; but it isn't fine in 21st century organisational contexts, in which we need to be constantly improving, adapting, growing and learning. We redefined experiential learning because organisations need a methodology for connecting learning and experience.

## Impact's unique experiential learning methodology

Experiential learning is a single term covering a huge variety of practices and ideas. We are committed to experiential learning because of our fundamental belief in the value of personal and collective *experience* – not as an alternative to knowledge, theory or skill, but as the medium through which these things make sense and can be tested, validated and above all, mobilised into *action*. The world needs a learning methodology that is rooted in *action*, that actually *uses* what it is we know and that successfully applies it to make a difference.

We developed our own methodology because of our understanding that real organisational change only happens when we do work differently in some important way. We are committed to putting learning into practice. All organisations exist to do work and all organisations are just groups of human beings working to serve other groups of human beings.

When we say that we need people in organisations to be more effective and to be better leaders, managers, problem solvers, innovators and more, what we are saying is that we need them to do work differently or that we need them to adapt and do different work.

All learning is change. Learning is about letting go so that we can embrace the new; it is about moving from being a knower to a learner; it is about curiosity. But mainly, learning is about being human, embracing our human qualities of empathy, reflection, courage and creativity in service to our desire to grow, to be better than we were last year and to become the best versions of ourselves.

In turn, this helps our organisations to be the best versions of themselves, it helps us all to be colleagues worth working with and it helps us here at Impact to achieve our purpose of filling the world with organisations worth working for.



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“Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use”

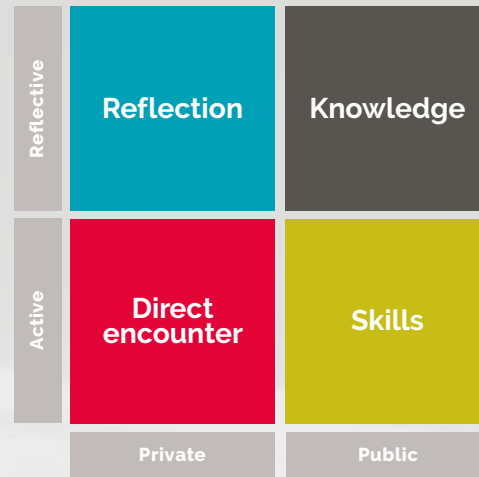
Wittgenstein



# Impact's Experiential Learning Methodology

We are committed to putting learning into practice  
– **because that's what our clients need.**

Here's a diagrammatic representation of  
our methodology:



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Our methodology allows us to integrate all four domains of this model into a single holistic methodology. The four domains are:

**Knowledge:** this conceptual domain is about learning from books, videos and established expertise, which is codified, cumulative and fixed.

**Skills:** this practical domain is about competence; here learning might be practised but it is driven by expert tuition and direct guidance rather than being driven by the learner.

**Direct encounter:** this is where the learner actively engages with the challenges driving the learning need and begins to integrate knowledge and skill acquisition with the process of actually trying to deliver a result. Here the learning is driven by the learner and integrated with the final domain.

**Reflection:** this is the domain in which we process material from the other domains. This is vital to internalise and integrate learning into new behaviours, mindsets and actions.

Traditional educational approaches to learning design typically focus on the right-hand side of the grid, taking a 'tell/test' approach to applying what experts have told or taught us. But for **complex learning needs** that drive behaviour change, the right-hand side isn't enough on its own. The route to building expertise requires an active engagement with the situation driving the learning need. **Active engagement** means more than just doing it; it means directly encountering the learning objective and actively and expertly reflecting on the performance of putting knowledge and expert tuition into practice. In this way all domains of our model are activated, tested and interrogated against each other. **Our approach isn't cyclical** because we don't think that works in real learning situations. Instead we seek to use our methodology to design learning solutions that constantly move between the four domains, depending on the needs and immediate context.

Our expertise is in both designing and delivering integrated experiential learning using this methodology. Our learning journeys are not linear, and they can and will shift in the moment, depending on the learning need. **Our solutions are custom designed and custom delivered.**

We developed our experiential learning methodology to help us support the development of what we call **hard-to-teach** expertise. This is the expertise that seems to be in short supply in every organisation, but which is crucial to achieving **vital-to-reach** goals.

For example, the quality and effectiveness of leadership is regarded as central to executing organisational strategy and delivering organisational agility, but leadership is impossible to teach by reading a book (knowledge) or listening to a lecture from a leadership expert (skills). What is needed is deliberate practice that is **rooted in the real work context** of the learner (direct encounter) and powerful reflection on and review of performance in order to improve (reflection) – all delivered in a holistic, integrated way.

Here at Impact we have spent almost four decades building our methodology, expertise and experience. Our solutions continue to win awards for their effectiveness in delivering to the learning needs of our clients.

We have built a huge array of **experiential methods and associated tools** that we use to customise our solutions to fit the specific learning needs. Some of these are very simple, others might be hugely complex simulations or involve many stakeholders, including customers and suppliers within the design. All our solutions embody a **spirit of adventure** that flows through the learning experience; they are rarely comfortable and always challenging but ultimately hugely rewarding for participants and their organisation.

We continue to redesign experiential learning for the 21st century. We believe that our experiential learning approach is something every organisation needs to help them **build the expertise that they need** to survive and thrive in a hyper competitive world and to support them in their journey to become an organisation worth working for.



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**Contact us** to find out more