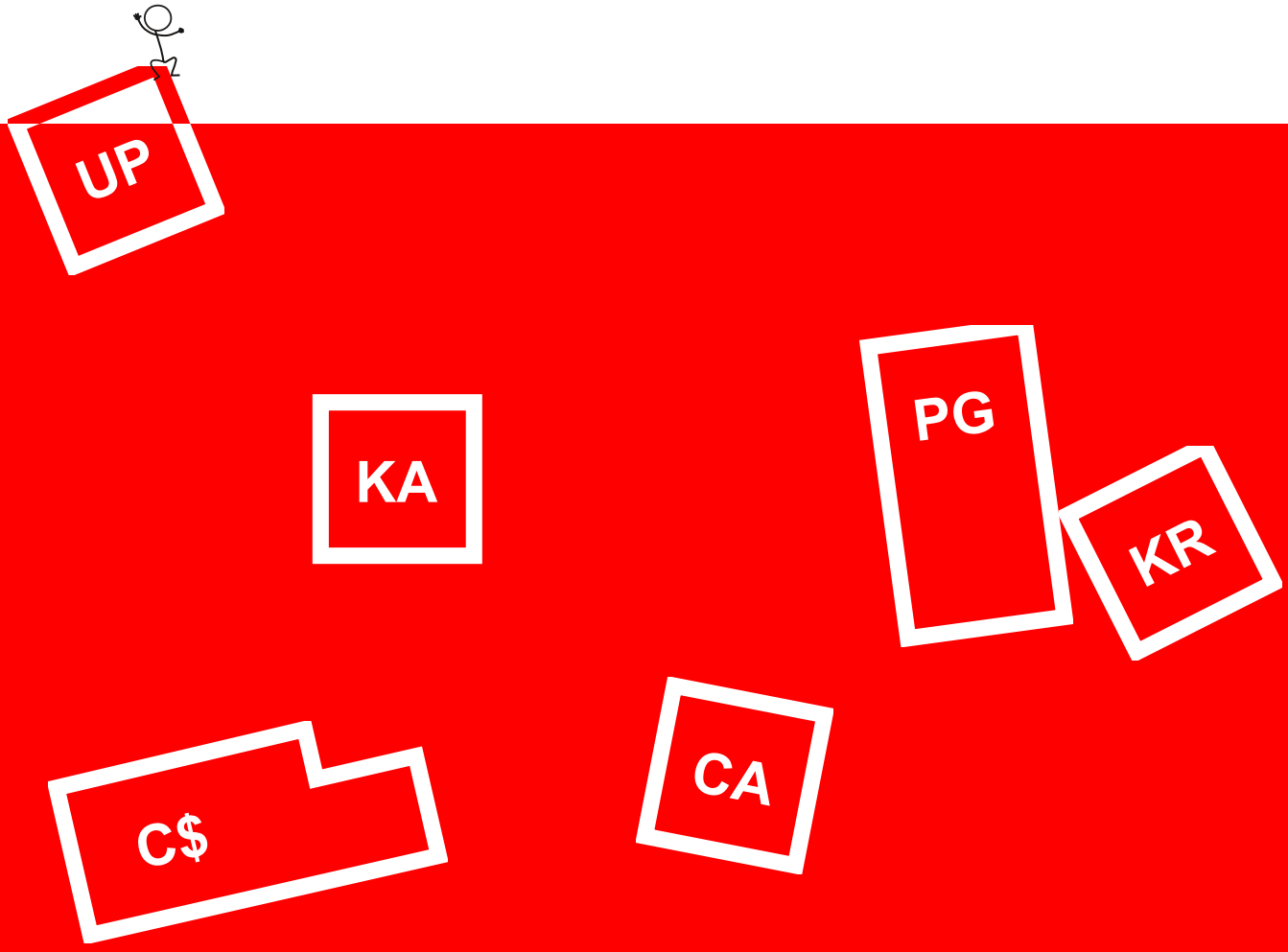
An introduction to the LMC a free visual decision-making tool for project teams creating learning material

LMC

The Learning Model Canvas Story



Robin Spinks

The Learning Model Canvas Story

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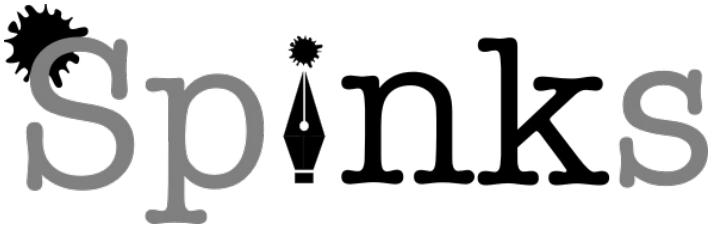
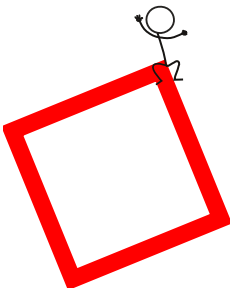




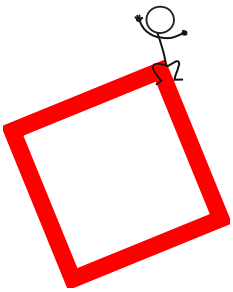
Foreword

The Learning Model Canvas is incredibly easy to use, yet powerful. If you are an experienced learning content provider you will instinctively know how the nine building-blocks of the canvas fit together. And, if you're new to running a learning content project then the LMC provides a neat, easy to follow model to organise your thoughts.

It's a **FREE** resource so the only investment you need to make is a little time, about an hour, to read this booklet. It may save you hours of work later-on in your project.

Have fun. Be kind. Be useful.

Robin Spinks



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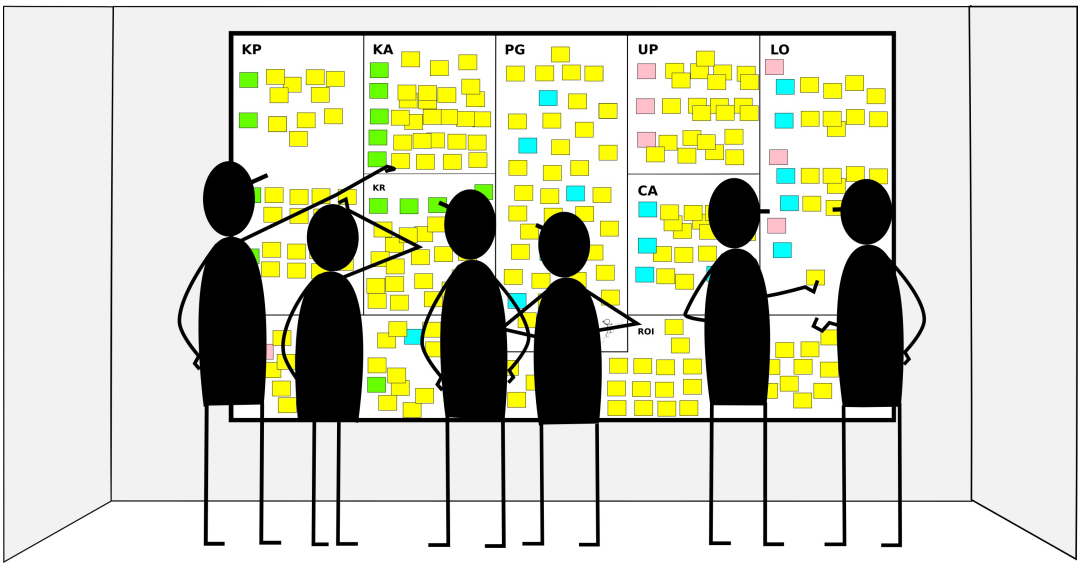
1 The Learning Model Canvas (LMC)

When you create any learning product - whether it's a two-minute explainer video or a complex multi-phase eLearning project - you need a plan.

For a two-minute screen recording showing how to use a function in a piece of software, the plan may be no more than a few notes jotted on the back of a napkin to remind you of the key points the video must cover. A two-minute animated explainer video - such as those created in tools like Vyond or Powtoon - the plan will be more detailed. And, when you need to create 500 eLearning sessions for a multinational company with a wide range of subject matter that will be accessed on several platforms in several languages? Well, let's just say, you'll need a bigger napkin.

Typically, the larger the project, the more elaborate the plan and greater the amount of communication, information and documentation required. It can become overwhelming.

The Learning Model Canvas (LMC) is a different way to create your plan.



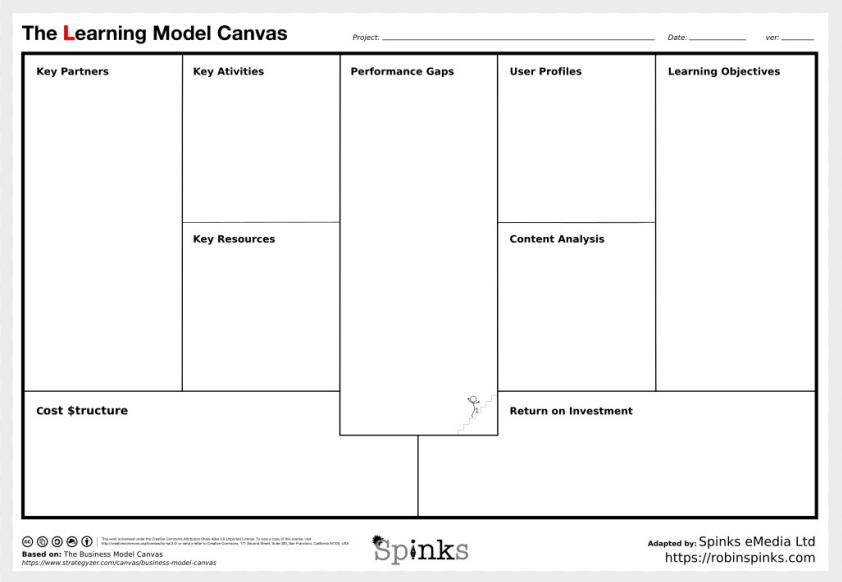
A project team using the Learning Model Canvas (LMC) to make decisions.

The LMC is a visual decision-making tool that can increase communication, clarify information and reduce the amount of documentation needed. The purpose of the LMC is to help you and your team create better, more effective learning products. To use the LMC you only need a bit of free wall space, sticky notes and some pens, and most importantly, your project team to do the thinking. Also, it's free.

What's more it will fit with any project management method (Agile or Waterfall) or instructional design methodology you currently use and, if you don't have either of them, can stand-in as a proxy for both. Whatever the size of your project, the LMC is a supplemental tool worth looking into. And did I mention? It's free.

2 What is the LMC?

The LMC is a canvas on which you add your knowledge, questions, ideas, actions and decisions. It is made up of nine building-blocks and looks like this:



*The LMC is adapted from the successful Business Model Canvas by **Strategyzer** - click here for more information.*

The LMC is two things:

1. Mentally - a conceptual framework.
2. Physically - an information display - see sidebar on next page.

The LMC is a conceptual framework

The nine building blocks are nine interrelated conversation areas a project team need to discuss when creating one or more learning products. It's a framework that explores on one canvas the three aspects of creating any type of learning - instructional, technical and managerial information. The framework allows team members with different points-of-view (e.g. a Subject Matter Expert (SME), an Instructional Designer (ID), a client Stakeholder or a project manager (PM)) to contribute to the shaping and understanding of the project. The more perspectives, the greater the understanding and the better the learning products created at the end of a project.

The LMC as an information display

Paper:

I have created a paper version you can download for free on my website, as shown on the previous page. An A4 paper version is handy for meetings with clients about their learning project either for taking down ideas or structuring the questions to ask. If you're able to print-off an A1 poster-size version of the canvas, it could be used for one-off learning products or small team meetings.

Work on Wall:

If you intend to use the LMC with your learning project team, I recommend copying the layout of the canvas onto a wall to give you more space to add and discuss your sticky notes. I'm a big fan of WoW (Work on Walls) and I've created a twitter hashtag #WoWpeople for like-minded individuals.

Computer:

The LMC layout can be adapted for use on computers, such as a spreadsheet or a Kanban board (e.g. Trello) when you want to use it with remote workers. However, when feasible, try and meet in person.

It's not complicated and the nine blocks can be explained as you put the poster on the wall. It's intuitive enough that the team can be using it as soon as the canvas is up. And it's cheap to implement, it will only cost you the price of some paper, sticky notes, pens and highlighters.

So, let's look at the nine building-blocks chosen for the canvas, they are as follows:

Performance Gaps (PG)

PG is the central building-block on the canvas. It is the focal point from which your learning project begins. The reason companies create learning products is to close the gap between their staff's current level of performance and the required level of performance. The better you understand and clarify the performance gaps, the better the learning material you will create. A learning project first needs to understand the company's point-of-view - you plot this in the PG block. In other blocks on the canvas we will take the point-of-view of the leaner but in this block we explore why learning is required.

User Profile (UP)

Performance gaps happen to people doing real jobs and you need to identify who those people are by creating User Profiles. More than one profile may be required and each should contain a:

- *Demographic profile* - e.g. geographic area; environment where the eLearning will be undertaken; age; gender; education; language ability.
- *Learning profile* - e.g. capabilities - current knowledge of subject matter; computer skills; attitudes/behaviours; motivations.
- *Technical profile* - e.g. network/bandwidth; system requirements; accessibility requirements

The more comprehensive your User Profiles the greater the chance of targeting your learning products to the right group of people.

Content Analysis (CA)

Once you know who your learners will be (in the UP block) and identified their specific learning gaps (in the PG block) you can begin to think about the type of learning material you should create and start to plot it in the Content Analysis block.

In other words:

PG + UP = CA

This block is not *where* you create the learning material; the CA block is about *analysing* the subject matter content to understand how, why, where, when, who and what may be causing performance issues. In turn, this new understanding will help you to discover the learning activities needed in the learning product to close the performance issue.

Learning Objectives (LO)

When Content Analysis is complete you can begin to plot the Learning Objectives block for that subject matter. In other words:

PG + UP + CA = LO

Learning Objectives can be created for each of the learning activities discovered during content analysis of the subject matter. The content analysis and learning objectives can then be used as a starting point for creating your learning material, for example, using the CA and LO information to create the storyboard for an eLearning session.

Key Resources (KR)

Moving to the left-side of the board you have the Key Resources block. This is used to identify the main resources you will need to create the learning products. This is the *internal* resources you need and will be a mix of financial, human, intellectual, technological and physical assets that will be required at different times throughout the project. In terms of human assets, plot only those people who are directly working on the learning project. The KR block is the sibling of the Key Activities block and cousin of the Key Partners block.

Key Activities (KA)

Above the Key Resources block is Key Activities. Plot in the KA block the most

important activities your *internal* key resources must do, the order in which to do them, and when they must be done by to deliver the learning project. Think of the KR and KA blocks as plotting the who (KR) and the what (KP). The KR and KA blocks are cousins of the KP block.

Key Partners (KP)

The Key Partners block is used to identify the main *external* resources you will need to create the learning products and the *internal* stakeholders you may need to report to throughout the project. Typically, external partners will be suppliers of Learning Management Systems or learning content developers; internal partners are bosses or executives that need regular updates on the progress of the learning project. Some of these partners will become part of your project team (e.g. ID, PM, or build team). The KP block is the cousin of the KR and KA blocks.

Cost Structure (C$)

The bottom block on the left-hand side of the canvas is Cost Structure. Use the CS block to plot costs that will be incurred throughout the project. Information plotted in other blocks clarify the total financial investment needed to complete the project. Alternatively, knowing the costs upfront will inform the project team to refine their ideas in other blocks to match any financial constraints.

Return on Investment (ROI)

The bottom block on the right-hand side of the canvas is Return on Investment. This block is about measurement and evaluation. This falls into four main categories I call, the 4Ps:

- **Performance** - business gains.
- **Product** - learning gains.
- **Prototype** - quality assuring learning activities or learning products.
- **Project** - evaluating project progress and processes.

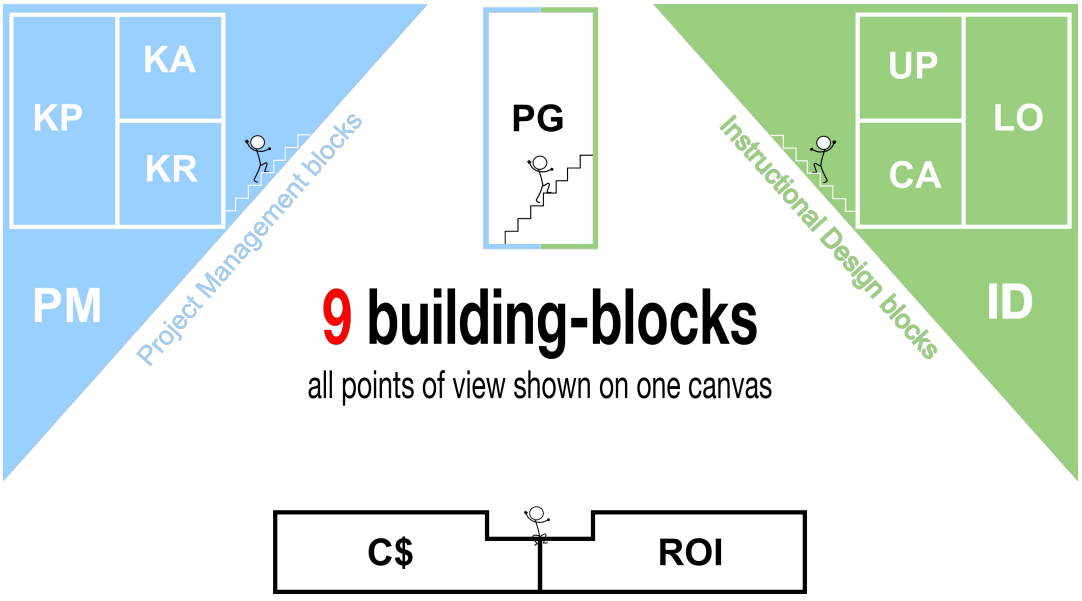
These descriptions are *brief* introductions to each block and each will be explored in much more detail in the LMC Series in the Spinks Ink blog (robinspinks.com/blog/lmc), and future LMC booklets like this one.

The information you plot in each block will vary depending on context, that is, when you use the LMC in your learning project - more about that in Chapter 4.

3 The Left/Right Split of the LMC

Did you notice there is a deliberate left/right split of the canvas? The left blocks deal with *managing* the project while the right blocks are about *designing* the learning products.

Both sides start with the PG block as the central point of focus.



The bottom two blocks of the canvas are about investment. The left-block plots the financial investment while the right-block's focus is on metrics, that is, measuring and evaluating the value of investment. Again, the left-right split leans towards a greater management flavour for the left-side C$ block and a design flavour for the right-side ROI block.

By presenting project, instructional design and investment blocks on one canvas you can gain deeper understanding of the project's scope. By using the canvas with the whole project team you will gain a variety of perspectives for each block that further deepens that understanding.

Left/Right Brain:

It's over simplistic to state that the left-side blocks require the so called left-brain *logical thinking* and the right-side blocks require right-brain *creative thinking*. Both sides of the canvas are a combination of logic and creative thinking. A project manager has to be creative in using their assets (financial, human, etc.) as much as an Instructional Designer has to be in creating informative, engaging, interactive and educational learning products to a specific price. An ID has to be logical in creating learning activities that will increase learner's performance as much as a project manager has to logically sequence who, what and when tasks need to be performed. End of sermon.

When Do I Use the LMC?

The LMC can be used at different phases or times of a project each time plotting a different aspect of the project. To explain this I first need to tell you a story.

The human brain is a pattern-making machine, that's why we can find the face of Elvis in burnt toast or see a giant mouse-cloud chasing a small elephant-cloud across the sky. We see patterns and we make stories.

When we create a learning product we build-in a structure, a narrative - a story. We create the story to help the learner work through the learning material and we create a narrative that joins one bit of learning to the next. The same is true when we run a project - we create a story.

Every story has a plot and a plot is defined as:

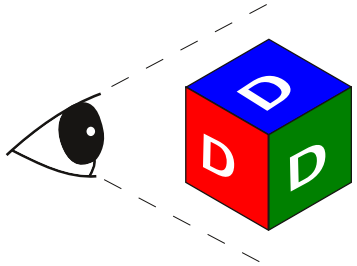
'an interrelated-sequence of events'

The nine building-blocks of the LMC are the 'interrelated-sequence of events', each sticky note added to a block is part of the plot.*

The five sub-plots

The choice of interrelated-sequence of events we plot on the canvas depends on *when* we use the LMC in our project, that is, which part of the story we are currently telling.

Typically *four* sub-plots tell a project's story - they have many names but in my project management model I call them *i*3D:



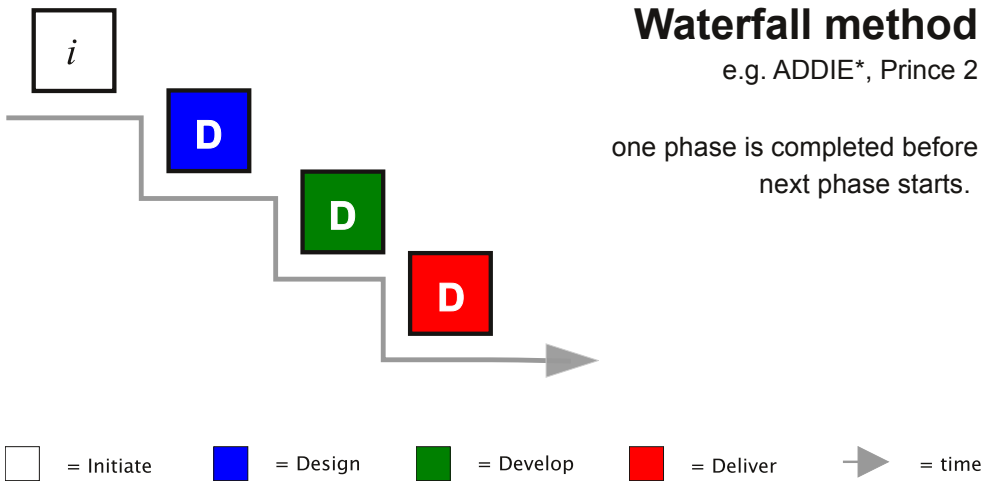
'I need to think about my project three dimensionally.' … i 3D.

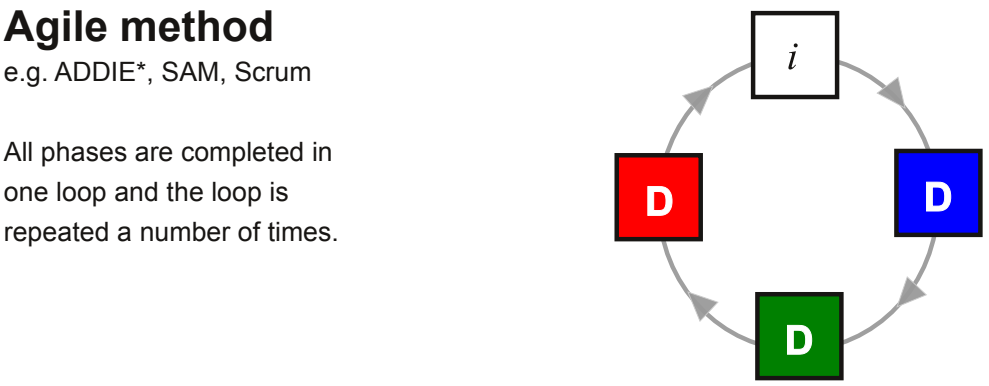
* That's why I say that we 'plot' the sticky on the canvas. (They also 'plot on the canvas' in the original BMC, so the originators must have been thinking along the same lines as me.)

The four sub-plots of *i*3D are as follows:

1. **Initiate** - *getting the project started*. Analysing the scope of the project.
2. **Design** - *getting it right*. Designing the learning content, setting standards and planning the project.
3. **Develop** - *getting it done*. Building and testing the learning products.
4. **Deliver** - *getting it out there*. Implementing the learning products and reporting on their effectiveness.

Every project methodology (e.g. ADDIE, SAM, Prince2, Scrum, etc.) contain these four sub-plots. They may use different names to describe the four but they will perform the same function. Also, different methodologies may include additional functions but they will all contain *at least* these four functions.





Waterfall and Agile methods perform the same steps but in different timeframes - see sidebar at the end of the chapter for more information.

I said there were *five* sub-plots and so far I've explained four, so what's missing?

YOU!

* ADDIE is an eLearning project method that can be run either as a Waterfall or Agile method. The acronym stands for Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate - although it uses alternate names, it does contain all four sub-plots of *i*3D along with an additional evaluation step.

What quintessentially* makes a project work is not the project methodology used but *you*. Without the project team - you - a project won't get very far. What do you need to know? What tasks do you do? When do you do the tasks? Who do you work with? And many other questions.

Your role is the fifth sub-plot and completes the LMC Story philosophy... more of that in the next chapter. The first four sub-plots are about organising, planning and scheduling the activities people do in the project, the fifth sub-plot is about you the *individual*.

How project methodologies manage time

When is in-part about the arrangement of time. The ticking of a clock shows the indefinite progress of time - we can't change that. What we can change is *when* certain task we want to perform are done - we plan, we schedule - we arrange the sequence of events.

Projects are also in-part about the arrangement of time. The interrelated-sequence of events we do at what time. The two schools of thought in project management are 'Waterfall' and 'Agile' and they have different views about the relationship between time and the sequence of events. In basic terms this means:

The Waterfall methods see time as linear, you complete one sequence of events before you start the next sequence of events. In my *i*3D example that means they would complete Initiate before they start Design and they would complete Design before they started Deliver, and when Deliver was complete the project is over.

The Agile methods repeat a sequence of events over time. In my ID3A* example that means they would do one loop of Initiate - Design - Develop - Deliver in a specified amount of time (e.g. 2-4 weeks), then they would repeat the loop again for a set number of times - in project-speak a 'loop' is often called a Sprint.

Having been a PM on many projects, I could argue the choice of one method over another for hours and hours but, luckily for you, I won't. Instead, I will say that the LMC can be used with any project management tool you use whether it falls under the Waterfall or Agile school of thought.

How you use the LMC may differ depending on which school you use:

Waterfall school - separate canvases for each step.
Agile school - one canvas for each loop.

There is no right or wrong way, so see what works for you.

Note: I will expand on project management and the LMC in future posts on the Spinks Ink blog.

* ID3A is the Agile version of i3D. It spells 'idea'. Get it? Never mind.

* It pleases me enormously that the literal translation of *Quintessence* is the 'fifth essence' or fifth element.

The LMC S-T-O-R-Y

We have identified five different sub-plots that each learning project has to plan to deliver the learning products. For each sub-plot you will need to answer a different set of questions for each of the nine blocks. Let's take the KR block as one example:

1. **Initiate** - Who are the Key Resources we need?
2. **Design** - When do we need the Key Resources?
3. **Develop** - What are Key Resources doing now?
4. **Deliver** - What progress has the Key Resource made?
5. **You** - As a Key Resource what information do I need to know?

Each sub-plot uses a different flavour of questions, like so:

1. **Initiate** = *Strategic questions*. You start with the Big Picture, the vision, the desired outcome of the project.
2. **Design** = *Tactical questions*. Making your vision a reality by planning (i.e. breaking the Big Picture into smaller chunks).
3. **Develop** = *Operational questions*. Following the plan and doing the work.
4. **Deliver** = *Reporting questions*. Implementing the products and measuring the effectiveness of the plan and the products.
5. **You** = *You-centred questions*. Identifying what knowledge, skills and behaviours you need throughout the project.

So, we have Strategy, Tactical, Operational, Reporting and You. The S-T-O-R-Y plotted on the LMC at different phases or times of the project.

Plot your project's

S - T - O - R - Y

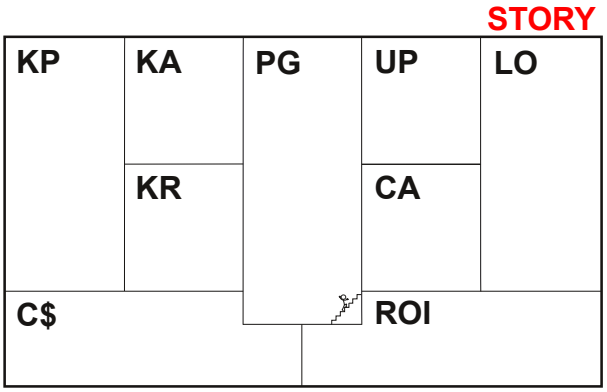
Strategical Tactical Operational Reporting You!

It's your choice whether you plot the STORY on one canvas, or have a separate canvas for each sub-plot, or even more than one canvas for each sub-plot.

The decision will be based on a variety of things:

- Complexity of the project.
- Project methodology used - see sidebar in Chapter 3.
- Number of people involved in the project.
- Number of learning products created.

A simple rule-of-thumb is that the greater the complexity or number then the greater the chance you will split the sub-plots onto separate canvases.

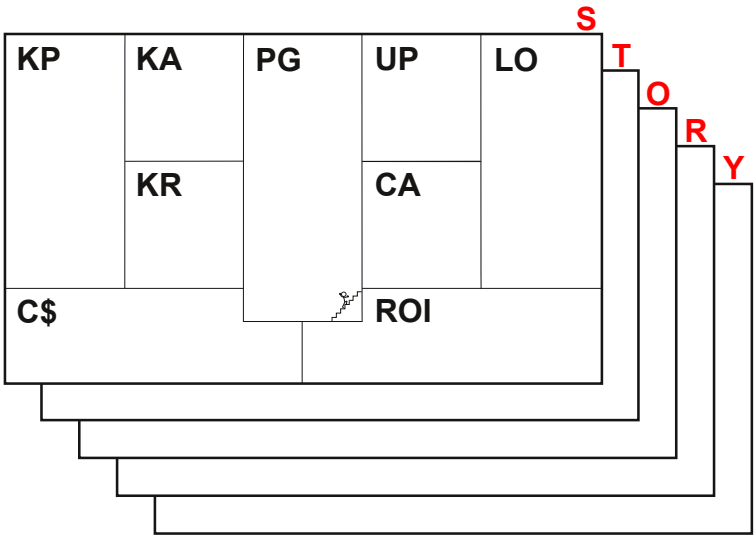


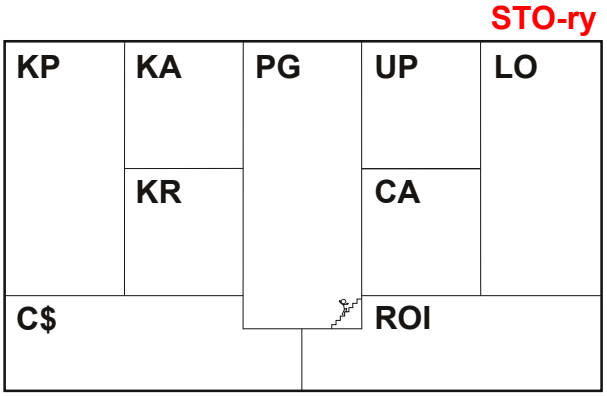
One canvas used to plot all five sub-plots.

Useful for small learning projects where one learning product is created by a small project team.

Plotting one canvas for each of the five sub-plots.

Useful for large learning projects creating multiple learning products.





One canvas to plot the Big Picture (Strategy), planning (Tactics), and doing the work (Operate).

Useful for running small to large sized learning projects.

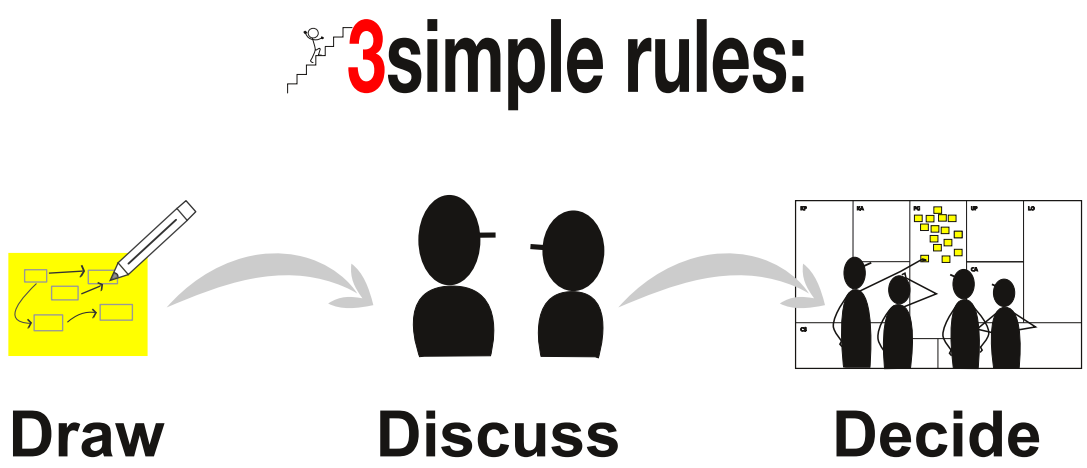
It is completely your choice how to use the LMC and how many canvases you use. For some projects it may be simpler to have one canvas that shows all sub-plots in one place; at other times a project may be so complex you need to plot on more than one canvas for different aspects of the project.

The combinations are endless and entirely your decision based on what you think will work best for the project management methodology and instructional design strategy you use for a specific learning project. Every project is similar but different and a different combination of canvases may be chosen from one project to the next.

Appendix A shows nine examples of canvas combinations. Future LMC posts in the Spinks Ink blog will explore these examples in more detail.

6 How Do I Use the LMC?

The concept is simple yet powerful. There are three rules:



First, draw the sticky note; second, discuss its contents with the project team; and third decide where it should be plotted on the canvas. Let's look at each of these rules in a little bit more detail.

Draw

Each sticky note added to a block is a single specific: idea, clarification, piece of information, data, action, thought or question. It could be a drawing or textual description. I know from experience, (having been in many project meetings) that most of the discussions about a project are done around a table with text documents. However, when explaining the content the speaker will use hand gestures and doodles to explain the meaning *behind* the text; they express by drawing not by writing more text in front of you.

Remember, the LMC is a visual medium, so use it that way. Draw the idea, thought, process, etc. and then describe it. No skill in drawing is required, if you can draw lines, squares, triangles, blobs, that's good enough, as Ben Shneiderman puts it, 'the purpose of visualisation is insight, not pictures.' Your inability to draw can have an equalising effect amongst the team, instil a shared sense of 'fun' and of 'doing it differently', all of which help you to concentrate longer and to focus on the content.

It's also more interactive and engaging. The physical act of standing at a canvas rather than sitting at a table the whole time helps with the creative process, as well as,

keeping you alert and attentive - see footnote in Chapter 12. As the meeting progresses you will naturally swap your position to focus on other blocks, take a step back to look at the 'Big Picture', move closer to focus on a specific set of sketches. You will move position within the group - not so easy when you're all sat around a table - one minute beside a stakeholder, the next by the SME, the next by the ID or PM.

I say 'draw' or 'sketches' but your canvas may be abundantly filled with text notes, that's not a problem. Keep the text 'on-point', short and descriptive and, if possible, replace with a sketch when needed.

"The purpose of visualisation is insight, not pictures."
- Ben Shneiderman

Another upside of working on a canvas is that you don't have to work in such a linear fashion. If an idea comes to mind that is 'off-topic', draw/write the sticky and park it beside the canvas or at the bottom of the block for later processing.

Discuss

Everyone on a project team is an expert on something that the person beside them is not. For example, the ID may know how to create engaging learning content but have no expertise in the Subject Matter Expert's (SME) field, and vice-versa. The key to creating a useful canvas is discussing each sticky note and gathering different perspectives on its meaning. The content of one sticky may be viewed as: an essential part of the learning content by the SME; a design challenge for the ID; and an additional cost or scheduling task for the project manager. One sticky therefore may lead to other sticky notes getting added to the canvas to show different perspectives by different experts.

Each sticky note should be discussed. The person who created the sticky may describe what the content means, and others will raise questions or ask for further clarification - the note opens-up conversations so decisions can be made. The original sticky may be kept, sorted, refined, moved, or removed based on the discussions.

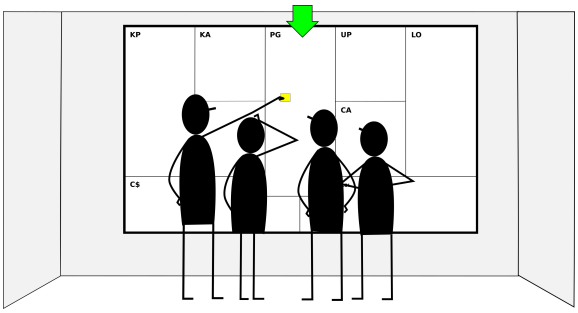
Decide

After a sticky has been discussed the third rule is to make a decision about the next action required to *fulfil* the sticky's content. For example, a sticky in the CA block showing a sketch of a process could result in: a decision to base a whole learning product around that process (plotted on PG block); a decision to hire an animator to draw the process (plotted on KR block); a decision for additional budget for the animation (plotted on C$ block). Notice how one sticky can inform the content of other blocks.

Each new decision based on a sticky's content will be plotted on the canvas in the appropriate block that may, in turn, generate new stickies.

Like I said, three simple rules but powerful, especially in generating the contents from one block to another. Remember, the LMC is a visual decision-making tool. You don't have to make all the decisions upfront but they are visible on the canvas when you're ready to deal with them.

A good place to start is the central PG block.

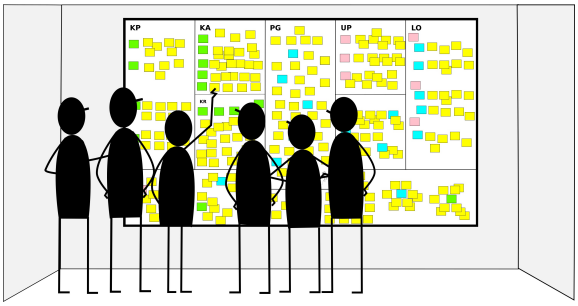


Step 1: Start in the middle and work outwards - left for PM stuff and right for ID stuff.

Start working as a group and break into smaller teams for more detailed discussions and feedback to others. Move around the canvas and speak to other project team members.

Step 2: Organise the stickies in each block. Highlight or use different coloured sticky notes to create clusters of related information.

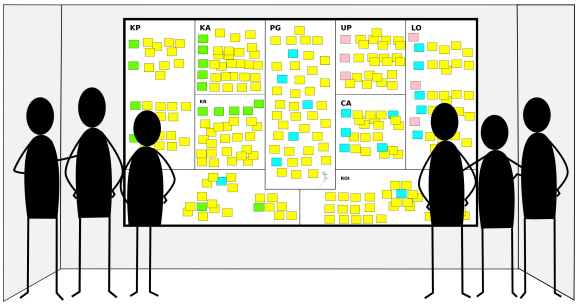
On the right image, the ID/SME have grouped the objectives (yellow notes) by learning activity (blue notes) and by user profile (pink notes).



Step 3: At end of meeting, get the client to 'walk and talk' through the blocks with the whole team to make sure everyone understands what has been decided and agreed.

Step 4: When you have finished working on the canvas, take clear photos of all block contents.

Take a team selfie with the canvas, be proud of the work you have achieved.



Is the LMC a brainstorming session?

No.

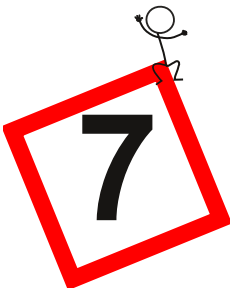
The LMC is a visual thinking tool - as is a brainstorming session. The difference is that in a brainstorming session the outcome is to generate as many *ideas* as possible, however out-of-the-box, and then to focus on just a few. The outcome of each LMC session is to *have made decisions*.

Decisions in learning projects are made by different experts sharing *information* and *knowledge*, not on the generation of novel ideas.*

The canvas helps to open-up conversations between experts and to visually present a Big Picture that can lead to decisions. The nine building-blocks of the canvas can help to focus decisions on different parts of the learning project. The S-T-O-R-Y philosophy helps to further divide those decisions into sub-plots... Have we thought about Strategy? Have we worked out our Tactics? And so on.

Like the block descriptions above, this is only a *brief* introduction into how to apply the three rules and will be explored in much more detail in future posts about the LMC in the Spinks Ink blog.

* By the way, I really like brainstorming, I'm trying to point out that an LMC session is more about fact-gathering and decision-making than a typical brainstorm session. Just saying.



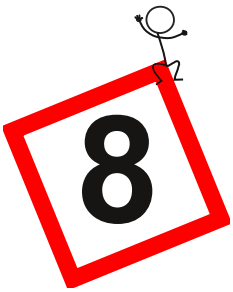
Use Case Examples

Now you've seen the nine building-blocks of the LMC and read about the S-T-O-R-Y sub-plot philosophy, and how to run an LMC session, it's about time you saw some examples.

Over the next few pages I will provide five Use Case examples. These will give you a flavour of how the canvas can be used. Each case uses a different combination of S-T-O-R-Y sub-plots for different types of projects.

Remember, these are a *flavour* of how to use the LMC and may not be to your taste. However, I suggest you read them - it won't take long - and they may spark some ideas of your own.

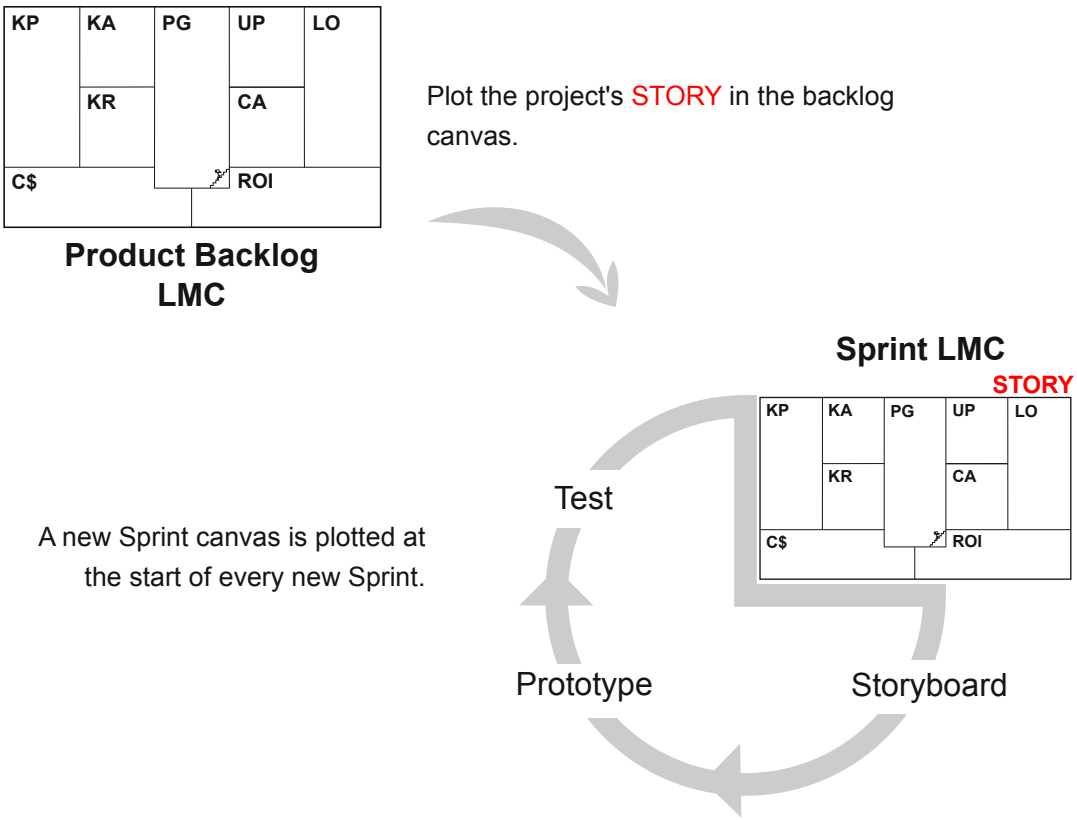
The scenarios are all fictitious but realistic, and my interpretation of how to use the LMC within the scenario may not be the same way you would choose. The good thing is, we would both be right.



Use Case 1: ER Triage Simulator

Scenario:
A learning content supplier has been tasked by a client to create an ER Triage training program. The aim of the learning product(s) is to: teach emergency staff how to assess patients' severity of injury or illness within a specified time limit of arrival at the ER; prioritise patients; transfer patient to appropriate place for treatment.

The supplier and client have agreed that the product should be a simulated environment with a high-level of gamification to engage and test the learner. The supplier uses an Agile project approach. Here is how the LMC can work in this scenario.



Product Backlog canvas

At the start of the project, the project team plot a Product Backlog canvas. This will be a combination of S-T-O-R-Y sub-plots.

The project team* start with some Strategic thinking and plot it on the board first, for example: they *Draw - Discuss - Decide* a features list and add it to the Performance Gaps block; define different emergency staff User Profiles; consider what gamification activities to use in Content Analysis; assign roles and activities in Key Resources and Key Activities; discuss cost limitations of different gamification ideas in Cost Structure; agree testing strategy for prototypes in Return on Investment; and so on.

Next the team applies some Tactical thinking. How many iterations (Sprints) will there be in the project? How long does a Sprint last? Which features are in the first Sprint? Sticky notes will be re-organised on the canvas to show new priorities and the first sprint features transferred to the Sprint canvas.

As well as strategical and tactical thinking there will also be discussions about: how the work is done (Operational); how to report progress (Reporting); and what cross-transfer of skills or skill development (You) is required - upskilling is often a feature of Agile project methods.

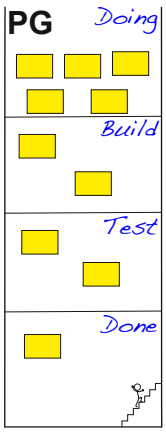
As the project progresses new features and ideas are added to the Product Backlog canvas continually. New questions, thoughts, ideas arise naturally during Sprints that can help to refine processes or as potential new features for the learning product, and the Product Backlog canvas is a great place to store them.

Sprint canvas

At the start of each Sprint: new features are added to the PG block; people and tasks to KA, KR and KP blocks; prototype testing questions and results to ROI block; and so on. At the end of each Sprint the board is cleared and ready for the new tasks to be set from the Product Backlog canvas.

The project team *love* the LMC (hey, it's my scenario) and decide to use it for all reporting as well as thinking, and therefore decide to use the canvas as a Kanban board. They split the relevant blocks (typically, the ID blocks i.e. PG, UP, CA, LO) into four sections (swim lanes): Doing, Build, Test and Done. All sticky notes start in doing and progress to test, build, and finally to done.

A **Kanban board** is used in Agile projects to visually display progress of workflow for specific work items. To avoid bottlenecks in workflow, you can limit the number of items in each section, thus, an item can't move to the next section until a space is released. By the end of the sprint all items should be in Done.



In this example, the Performance Gaps block has been split into four swim lanes. In this scenario, the UP, CA and LO blocks can be divided into relevant sections, or a sticky note can travel from one block to another to progress through the workflow.

* When I say 'project team' this will be a mix of client and supplier people e.g. a PM, ID, SME, stakeholder(s), build team, etc.

During the Sprint the new features from the PG block are designed by the ID and SME working as a paired-team. The ID and SME will: analyse a feature and put their findings in the CA block to create the learning activities; next they will plot the learning objectives in the LO block; and then they will storyboard the feature. To keep the visual, Work on Walls way of working, the ID and SME create the storyboard using sticky notes on a wall to plot the featur's storyline. The new storyboarded feature moves to the build team who create the prototype, and finally the prototype is tested in-house and, if possible, with an end-user, changes are made to the prototype and logged in ROI block.

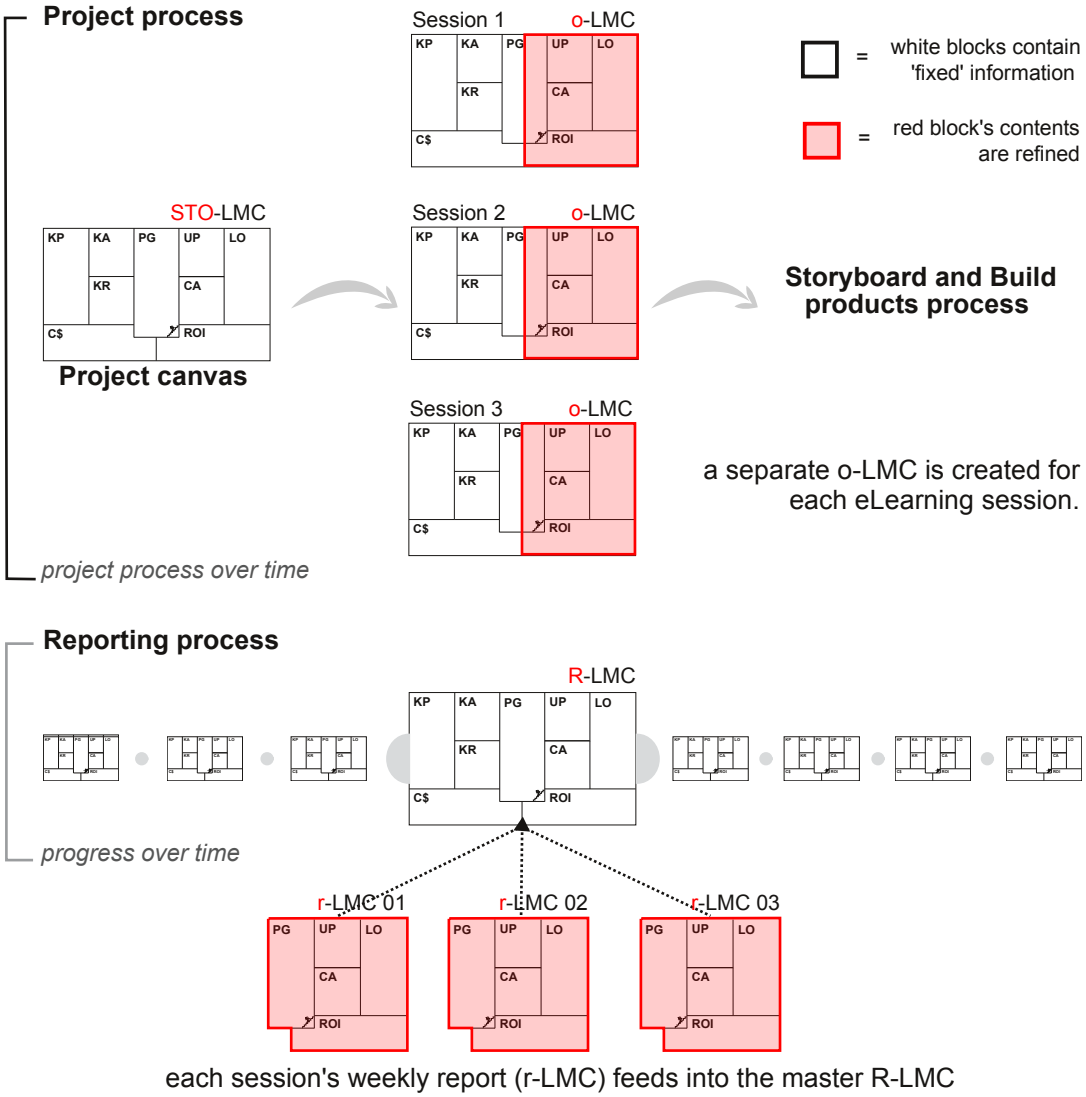
As work progresses in the Sprint new stickies will be added to the Sprint canvas to clarify original notes or to plot unanswered queries.

Typically in Agile projects there is a stand-up meeting at the start of each day. This can be done in front of the Sprint canvas and, if needed, any important new stickies plotted on the canvas from yesterday can be discussed.

Use Case 2: Create eLearning Sessions

Scenario:
A sole learning content supplier has been contracted to work with a client to create three eLearning sessions. The supplier will act as PM and ID on the project and will work with three separate SMEs, an external partner will build the eLearning sessions. The supplier reports to a client stakeholder on a weekly basis. Neither the stakeholder or SMEs have any prior experience in creating eLearning.

The sole supplier *loves* the LMC (coincidence, huh?) and decides to use it to manage the project as follows:



Kick-off Meeting

Attending the kick-off meeting are the client stakeholder and one of the SMEs. The supplier uses the the LMC at the meeting to clarify the scope of the project (Strategy), timescales (Tactical) and to explain the process (Operate) for building an eLearning session. The supplier will often take the lead at the start of the meeting with open questions, such as, 'What do you think the performance gaps are?' or 'Who will be the typical learner for this product?'. Soon enough the client will take the lead and ask their own questions, 'How will you work with the SME?' or 'How long does it take to create a session?'

During kick-off meetings the client has lots of questions about the project and so does the supplier. However much you try to work in a logical, methodical way to give and receive information the meetings can bounce from one topic to another really quickly - the LMC is a perfect tool for this type of meeting. As you *Draw - Discuss - Decide*, any random thought or query can be parked in the appropriate block for later discussion. Conclusions can be quickly summarised at the end of the meeting and the project team throughout the meeting can actually see the Big Picture in front of them.

Have the client walk and talk through the nine blocks at end of meeting to check understanding.

My tip for the end of the meeting is to get the client to 'walk through' the canvas and summarise the decisions made during the meeting. This helps you (the supplier) to check their level of understanding, and gives you an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings.

Report

At the end of the meeting the supplier should take photos of the canvas and write-up a report summarising all of the decisions, tasks, outstanding questions, etc. and send to the attendees, along with copies of the photos. The nine blocks make good headings for reports.

o-LMC canvases

The scenario requires three eLearning products by the end of the project. The supplier creates a separate Operational canvas (o-LMC) for each subject. In these versions of the canvas, certain blocks have 'static' content that was plotted in the Project canvas (STO-LMC). Typically, the 'static' blocks are on the left-side of the canvas, the project management blocks (KA, KR, KP) and investment blocks at the bottom of the canvas (C$, ROI). Prior to working on the subject matter content with the SME these 'static' blocks will have been agreed with the client stakeholder, such as, the type of eLearning session to be built (e.g. voice over, scenario-based, no video, etc.) or the number of hours SMEs can work on their eLearning session.

Often SMEs don't have a clear understanding of the scope of the project, and only their part. The supplier can quickly explain what has been agreed in the various blocks building-up the picture as they go along*.

With their ID-hat on the supplier can explain to the SME the process of building an eLearning session (i.e. PG, UP, CA, LO, storyboard, build, QA, upload) and together with the SME can start to *Draw - Discuss - Decide* the performance objectives (PG) for the leaner (UP). They will explore: the learning activities needed (CA); what the learner will be able to do by the end of the session (LO); the knowledge checks needed in the session to test learner's understanding (ROI). Armed with this knowledge the storyboard can be created, QA'd and built. Each step of the process may take many hours, days or weeks to complete.

The ID may only get one opportunity to meet face-to-face with the SME and the rest is done via phone and email. Use the canvas for the face-meetings and you will have built-up a 'language' you can use to discuss the subject matter in future discussions.

By using three separate o-LMCs the ID can easily move from one eLearning session to another. There is no need to reinvent the wheel for the PM stuff so the 'static' blocks can remain on the Kick-off Meeting canvas.

Using mind map software

I use mind mapping software for internet calls with SMEs, and set up a branch structure that matches the nine blocks of the canvas.

The SMEs have really liked this method of working as it allows them to jump back and forth between topics. Branches can be minimised so you can concentrate on one topic when you need to.

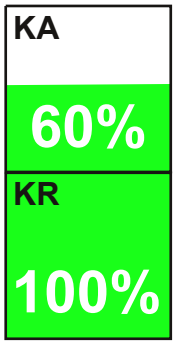
There are free mind mapping tools available on the internet, e.g. Xmind and Freemind are the two I use most often.

Reporting canvas

With the PM-hat back on, the supplier can create a Reporting canvas (R-LMC) that they can use in the weekly meeting with the client stakeholder. What form the R-LMC takes is up to you but one method is a simple RAG status for each block.
As with SMEs, stakeholders are very busy people and they are unlikely to read long

A **RAG status** is a simple traffic light method of showing progress. Red indicates problems (issues); Amber, everything is okay (risks); Green, all is going well (on track).

This gives a quick visual clue on how well each block is doing.



An alternative method is to mark each sticky in the blocks with a coloured dot indicating its RAG status.

When a block contains Red it means there is an issue that needs to be dealt with... now.

* SMEs are busy people and they often don't have time to read project documents before they meet the ID, so a quick ten-minute introduction by the ID via the canvas will get them up to speed.

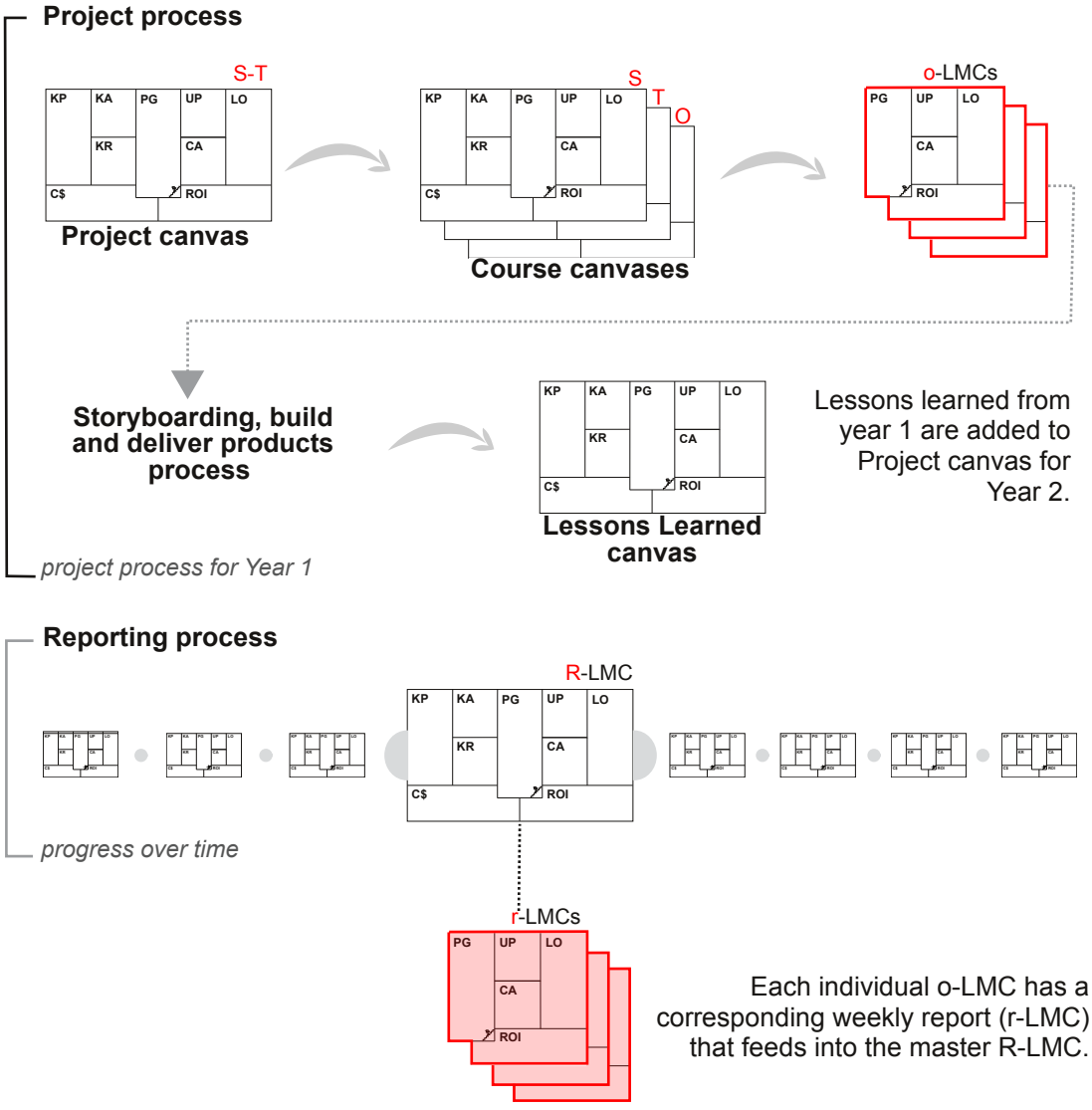
reports but a one-page visual dashboard showing project progress is normally appreciated. You can back this up with additional documentation if needed, such as Risk/Issue logs. For large learning projects you may create an R-LMC to agree the strategy and schedule for reporting on each of the nine blocks - see next Use Case example.

When the final learning products are created by an external build team (who should already be listed in your Key Partners block), the build team may assign their own PM to liaise with you and they may use a different project method (e.g. ADDIE). Rather than duplicate work, simply use their method and in your R-LMC add build progress to the KP block.

10 Use Case 3: Large Blended-learning Project

Scenario:
A learning content supplier has been employed by a global organisation (the client) to run a three-year learning project. The overall aim of the project is twofold: in Year 1, create new learning content for a global management course; Years 2-3, to create a curriculum and learning content for each of the organisation's six departments.

The supplier will provide a PM, several IDs as well as the build team. The supplier will have to liaise with senior stakeholders in all departments and a recruitment program process set up for SMEs. Learning products will be implemented in phases throughout the project and the supplier will use a Waterfall method, like i3D.



Both the supplier and client *love* the LMC (it could happen, right?) and decide to match the S-T-O-R-Y sub-plots to their project method and use it in meetings whenever and wherever possible. As it is a global project it may not be possible to always meet in person as the project progresses, however, the STORY philosophy of the LMC can be applied to electronic versions, such as, mind maps (Freemind or Xmind) or project software (Trello or Slack).

Here are the main ways the supplier puts the LMC STORY into practice.

Master canvases

The Project canvas:

The first weeks of the project will be discovery, plotted on a master Project canvas, to set the general Strategy (policy and processes) and Tactics (plans and timeframes) for the duration of the project. The supplier will meet with client stakeholders to *Draw - Discuss - Decide* the original proposal's specification to ensure there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done and the way to work. The nine blocks of the canvas allow you to focus those discussions on specific areas of the project and to gather multiple points of view about each area.

Strategic thinking on the Project canvas could start with:

PG - *What performance outcomes do you expect from the management course? And the six department curricula?* This is the business perspective of the project.

ROI - *What does 'success' mean to you?* This is the learner, HR, managers', and project team perspectives.

UP - *How many learners are there? Where can we find out more about them?* Check this is consistent with the specification.

CA - *What types of learning products are we creating?* Check against the specification and explain to the client the different media types agreed.

LO - *What process is used to create Learning Objectives and who creates them?* This may seem obvious to learning professionals but can be a mystery to clients. You can clarify how many objectives can be covered in different types of learning products.

KR - *Who/What Key Resources does our project require?* Match this against the specification and don't limit the conversation to human resources, but intellectual, technical, and physical assets as well. At this point find out who your contact points are and what processes may be needed.

KA - *What activities will we need to perform to close Performance Gaps? To create the learning activities? To achieve the UP, CA, LO and ROI blocks?* At this point

the questions are to discover if there are certain procedures you need to follow (or create).

KP - *Who are our Key Partners?* Discover if there are other people you will need to work with, such as, client stakeholders, LMS suppliers, global HR departments, etc.

CS - *What is the agreed Cost Structure?* The focus of these conversations and decisions are to make sure you work within the scope of the budget constraints. You don't have to reveal specific prices, instead you can discuss what you have paid for, for example, '3 IDs will work full-time on the creation of the management course for 9 months'.

Note: at this point you are *gathering* information, deciding on *strategy*, not necessarily doing the work, for example, you may have identified the number of learners per department but not created the User Profile - that will be done prior to work on that department's curriculum.

Tactical thinking on the Project canvas will revolve around:

Prioritising the work - Reorder the sticky notes per block to show the sequence of activities in each and discuss the relationship between the blocks.

Agreeing length of phases - Add swim lanes in each block to create phases, this will give you a visual feel whether the size of the phases are correct. Agree the time for each phase.

The Reporting canvas:

The project team use the master Reporting canvas to make decisions about what type of measurement, evaluation, feedback and progress needs to be reported (and to whom) for each of the nine blocks. For example: LO - Who quality assures Learning Objectives?; CA - What knowledge checks are included in a learning product?; PG - Who signs-off learning products?; and so on.

In later LMCs this project will drill-down and further refine the information, also known in project-speak as 'progressive elaboration'.

Global Management Course canvases

The aim of the first year is to create a Global Management Course, the first phase of the learning project. This phase begins with the project team creating three canvases: a Strategical-, Tactical-, and Operational- canvas (S-LMC, T-LMC, O-LMC).

Each canvas may take weeks to complete, for example, creating a course curriculum structure requires detailed knowledge of performance gaps before one can assess the number of learning products to create. It may be possible to fit all the thinking and questions on one canvas but for this size of this project, three canvases is more likely.

The S-LMC is used to make decisions about the Global Management Course's: curriculum; number of learning products; personnel required (e.g. SME, QA) and how to recruit them; types of learning product to create (e.g. explainer videos, eLearning, mLearning); learning product duration (e.g. approximate length of each eLearning, mLearning, video session); cost allocated to this phase; and so on.

The T-LMC is used to decide on the order and priority of work for this phase and is created like the master T-LMC described above.

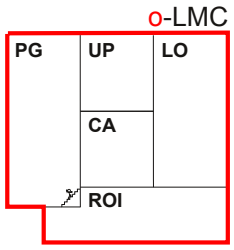
The O-LMC is a master canvas showing all of the *individual* o-LMCs (i.e. work-packages) that are required for this phase of the project. Most of these individual o-LMCs will be allocated to creating the learning products, one per ID/SME creating a specific learning product. Other o-LMCs will be required for example to: design the curriculum; create the User Profiles, QA and build products; and so on.

Individual o-LMCs:

The individual learning product o-LMCs are a further refinement (elaboration) of the content. Some of the blocks will contain 'static' information, for example: who the ID/SME are (KR) and what working process and activities they do (KA); who else in the organisation they must work with (KP); the topic of the learning product (PG); the type of learner who will use the learning product (UP); type of learning product they must create (CA); type of assessment required in the product and how to report progress on creation (ROI).

The ID/SME team then refine the ID-blocks of the canvas. They discuss the performance gaps (PG) of learners (UP) and analyse the subject matter (CA) to create the learning activities and decide on the learning objectives (LO). Then they storyboard, build, test and quality assure the product to the specification defined in the o-LMC - see *Create eLearning sessions* Use Case for more information on o-LMCs.

Before the ID and SME start work all nine blocks will contain some 'static' information.



The blocks shown on the left are refined by the ID and SME as they work together to define their specific learning product.

The o-LMC is both a way of gaining information about what has to be created, (i.e. 'static' content), as well as a visual space to *Draw - Discuss - Decide* ways to analyse subject matter, discuss learning activities to create the learning content.

The ID can use the information on the o-LMC to feedback information to the project manager about progress, this would be the session's reporting LMC (r-LMC). The PM can add the findings to the Master Reporting canvas and if stakeholders want specific information about the progress of a specific o-LMC they can drill-down to it's latest progress report.

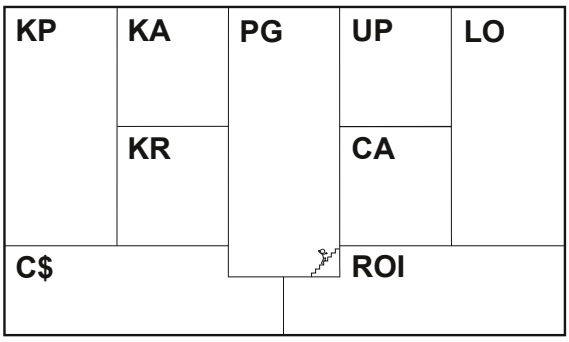
Lessons Learned Exercise canvas

At the end of the first phase a Lessons Learned Exercise can be performed by the project team using the nine blocks of the LMC to identify potential changes needed in future phases of the project. Prior to the meeting, the team members can thinker* their suggestions onto a print-out of the LMC Poster.

Lessons Learned canvas
For each of the nine building-blocks ask the following three questions:

What went well here?
What didn't go so well?
What changes do we need to make?

Plot the answers on the canvas.



Year 2 and 3 canvases

In years 2 and 3 the same type of canvases will be used as the first year. In year 3 it may not be necessary to create a new master S-LMC as the processes will most likely be the same as those used in year 2. You may need to create a new master T-LMC and O-LMC as schedules and work streams could be different. You will need to create new individual o-LMCs as they will be new work packages.

By now I hope you can see a pattern of how to use the LMC. My description for this Use Case may be completely different to how you would tackle this project using the LMC, and that's a good thing. Adapt the LMC to *your* project's requirements, *your* project management method and *your* instructional design strategy. If you understand how the nine blocks fit together and the philosophy behind S-T-O-R-Y, you can combine canvases as you like.

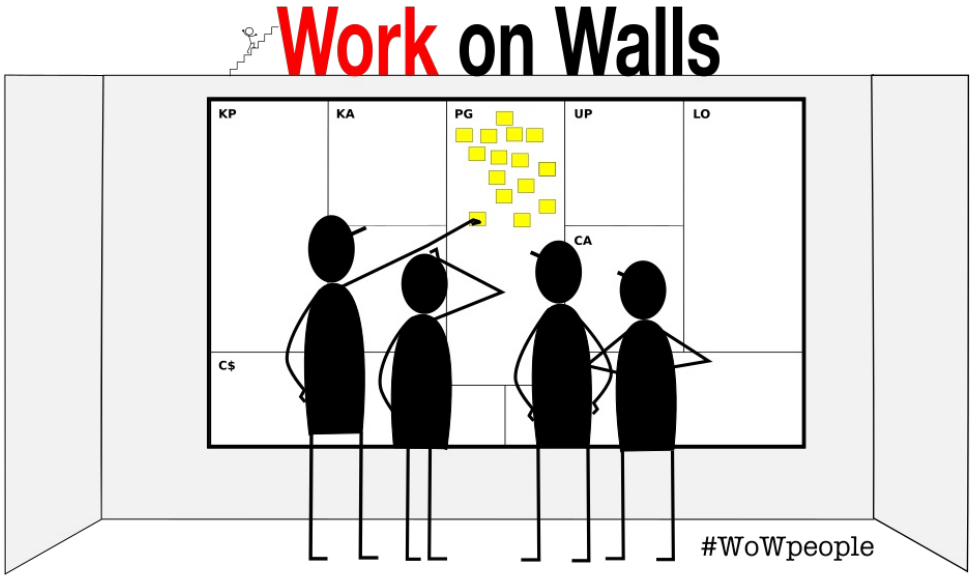
The purpose of the LMC is about creating a visual, interactive, engaging and, dare I say it, 'fun', environment in which the whole project team can add their expertise and point of view to create the most effective learning products they can.

* This isn't a typo. More about this word in Chapter 12 but I'm sure you can guess what it means.

11 Use Case 4: Learning Technical Specification

Scenario:
A company is introducing a new software system globally. The L&D department conducted a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and have identified that training will be needed.

In this scenario, the L&D department is the supplier and their company is the client. The supplier *loves* the LMC (I know!) and decide to use it to create a technical specification to determine exactly what training they need to create.*



* This is the nearest example to how the original Business Model Canvas is used.

An ID from the L&D department conducts a team meeting with various stakeholders (managers, end users, etc.) from the company to discuss what the training may look like and whether it can be created in-house or sent out as an Invitation to Tender.

Here are some opening questions the ID and the team can *Draw - Discuss - Decide* for each of the nine blocks of the LMC:

PG - *What is the business impact if the users of the new software get it wrong?*

UP - *Who are the users of the new system? Are they same users as the old software or will there be new users too?*

CA - *How much does the software differ from the existing software? What are the knowledge gaps? What training comes with the new software?*

LO - *Do learners use the software the same way or differently?*

ROI - *What does success look for the company? For the learner? How do we measure the learners' understanding?*

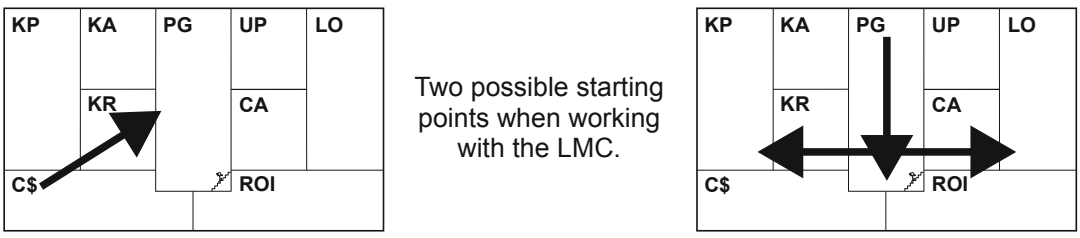
KR - *Who do we need to create the learning? When are they available? Do we need to employ an external learning company?*

KA - *What are the main activities the key resources will perform?*

KP - *When is the new software rolled-out? Is there a phased implementation globally?*

C$ - *What budget do we have to create learning products? When do we need the learning products?*

As well as providing a nine block structure for the type of questions to *Draw - Discuss - Decide*, the LMC is also a way to visualise the Big Picture for stakeholders unfamiliar with creating learning content.



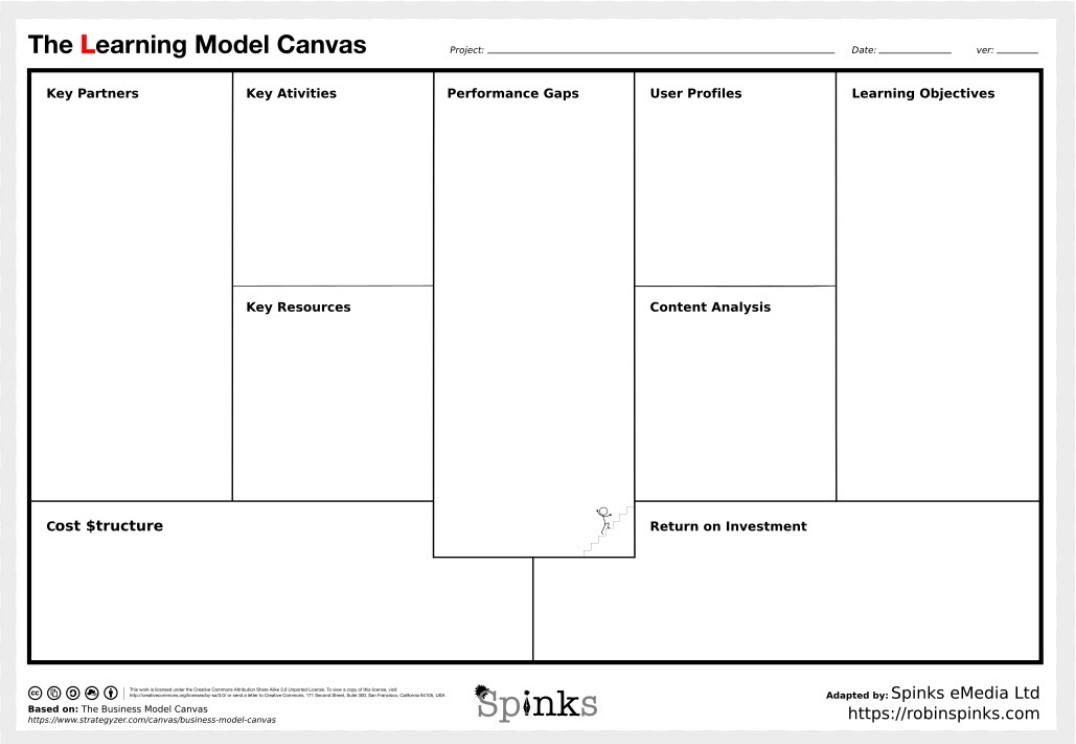
The order in which you ask the questions and what questions to ask are entirely yours to choose. I have shown one that starts with the business perspective and moves down the ID-blocks. However, it may make more sense if you know there is going to be a problem with budget to start at the C$ block first, find out how much money is available, and then determine what can be done within the budget constraints.

The LMC can be used in a similar fashion to this scenario when creating RFP (Requests for Proposal) or ITT (Invitation to Tender) documents that will be sent out to prospective learning content suppliers. The canvas can also be used to review the returned proposals to either match one proposal against another or to check if all specifications have been met in the proposal.

12 Use Case 5: A Personal Development Tool

Scenario:
Ergo wants to advance their career within the company and looks at ways to learn and develop new skills.

Ergo *loves* the LMC (five *loves* in five scenarios - who could have predicted?) after working on a learning project for their company that used the canvas - they loved it too. Ergo starts thinkering*.



The LMC Poster is **FREE** to download and to use.
There is a similar poster with the block names abbreviated.
(*see my website for more details*)

* Creating sketches is a constructive way to fill-in any canvas because the physical act of doodling (or simply moving about or clicking your pen, tapping your foot, etc.) engages the brain and can create new ideas - psychologists call this 'embodied cognition'. 'Thinkering' is a friendlier (and quite frankly less pompous) way of saying 'embodied cognition'. One point if you know the novelist who first coined it and a bonus point if you know in which novel - answers at foot of next page.

Here are some opening questions Ergo could be thinkering* about as they fill-in the LMC Poster version of the canvas:

PG - *What are the gaps in my knowledge, skills and behaviours that I will need to close so I can advance my career in the company?*

UP - *What person within the company could I model myself on? How do I like to learn (e.g. reading, videos, physical, listening, project-based, etc.)?*

CA - *For each gap, what are the specific activities I need to learn?*

LO - *What am I able to do now that I've learned these skills?*

ROI - *How will I measure if I'm improving my skills? How do I keep myself motivated? How far towards my goals am I now?*

KR - *What training does my company provide to improve my skills? What learning (e.g. books, videos, courses, etc.) is available outside of the company?*

KA - *What order should I learn these new skills? Do some skills need to be learned first?*

KP - *Who could act as my mentor, coach, study partner?*

C$ - *How much time and money am I willing to set aside to learn these new skills?*

Remember, these are opening questions and each one will lead to many more questions you need to ask yourself in each block.

Although this Use Case is a personal way of using the LMC, it is simply an adaptation of the You-centred LMC (Y-LMC) that can be used in learning projects to identify the roles and responsibilities of project team members. You could call this personal development tool, MY-LMC.

It's easy to see how the LMC can be used as a lifelong learning tool for self-improvement, not only at work but in your personal life too.

'Thinkering' was coined by Michael Ondaatje in his 1992 novel *The English Patient*. He wondered about the genesis of concepts in the mind while tinkering with your hands and decided, 'the word should be thinkering.'

Who Uses the LMC?

The LMC is simple enough to be used by in-house organisations who are new to creating learning products and need a framework to guide them; it's also powerful enough that it can be used by professional learning providers (i.e. suppliers) to use with their clients alongside their own project management and instructional design methods. The LMC allows the supplier to discuss instructional design concepts and management processes to the client in a visual, collaborative, interactive and intuitive way.

The LMC is flexible enough for you to discuss a variety of related topics ('interrelated sequence of events') on one or more canvas and at the same time it sets some boundaries (the nine blocks) in which to have those logical and creative discussions. Setting boundaries is an important aspect for creativity, facing a blank page without any structure is hard, as the poet Robert Frost puts it, 'Writing free verse is like playing tennis with the nets down'.

Benefits of Using the LMC

As well as the benefits we've already described above, here are four side-benefits I have mentioned only in passing.

Benefit 1 - Inform decision on Treatment of learning activities

A treatment - aka: an instructional strategy - is how the ID will present a learning activity in the end learning product, such as a scenario, a simulation, or a guided-learning. Here is a simple formula that can be used to decide the treatment:

CA + LO = Treatment

Once you have analysed the content and created your learning objectives, you know what has to be taught, the ID then decides how it should be presented i.e. the treatment. The treatment is created on paper first before it is built, for example, if the learning product is an eLearning session the ID will create a storyboard based on the content analysis and learning objectives. When the storyboard is approved by the ID and signed-off by the stakeholders, the build team will use the storyboard as an instruction set to create the eLearning.

Benefit 2 - A starting outline for documentation and reporting

Once you have completed the LMC you may need to document its contents, and the canvas blocks make good headings for your document. The content under each heading will be the content of the sticky notes in that block and the decisions you have made. When it comes to reporting on project progress you can structure the document around the nine blocks, for example, progress made on learning objectives, when key resources are required, etc. Alternatively, the canvas can be converted into a reporting dashboard, as suggested in Use Case 2.

The LMC can be a living document that is used daily by the project team to refer to decisions made, or it can be a stepping-stone towards documentation.

Benefit 3 - Help identify learning paths

For projects that create multiple learning products delivered via a Learning Management System (LMS) you will be able to use information contained in the canvas to create the order a learner should take the learning products in the the LMS - what is commonly called 'learning paths'. By the time you have created your final products you will have well-defined objectives in the Learning Objectives block of the canvas and these will be connected to specific learners in the User Profile block. In other words:

UP + LO = Learning Paths

I'll explore this in more detail in future LMC posts in my blog.

Benefit 4 - Help identify competencies

Similar to benefit 3 above, combining the information contained in the Performance Gaps and User Profile blocks allows you to identify the competencies a learner requires to perform their role. In other words:

PG + UP = Competency

Again, this will be explored in future LMC posts in my blog.

Over to You!

I hope by now you have grasped the potential of the Learning Model Canvas and the S-T-O-R-Y philosophy, and here are some actions you can take right now:

Download the canvas

The LMC poster can be downloaded from robinspinks.com/lmc.

It's **FREE** to use so why not try it out? There are two versions of the poster, one with the block names abbreviated, the other with the full names of each block.

Alternatively, find a free wall and copy the format of the nine building-blocks on the wall and arm yourself with some sticky notes, pens and highlighters.

Take the LMC for a test drive

There's no better way to see if it works than testing it for yourself. If you're in the middle of a learning project or just finished one, check if the information you gathered fits in the blocks. If you're starting a new learning project, try plotting the questions you need to answer on the canvas instead of your normal routine. Consider how easy it would be to use the canvas with the project team to *Draw - Discuss - Decide* the way forward for your project.

Think where in your process the LMC could fit

Imagine where the LMC can be used in your current learning project processes. Will it help you to write a learning specification document? Make a project kick-off meeting more engaging, increase collaboration, and drive out new information? Help to define the project strategy or identify who should do what and by when? Can the LMC help you to produce even more informative reports on project progress? Could you use the LMC to help create user guides for SMEs or other project team members? How about using the LMC to identify your own learning needs to improve your skills?

As it's a free resource, I advise all specialist learning providers to download the canvas and explore how you can use it with your clients. Test if it fits with the current

questions you ask clients at various points in the project. Ask yourself, 'Does it provide an extra way to communicate and involve the client in the project?" Also, check which areas of your project management and instructional design methods it relates to and how it can be included as a supplemental tool.

Read other posts in the LMC Series

If you're stuck about what questions to ask at different parts of a project's S-T-O-R-Y read other LMC Series posts at robinspinks.com/blog/lmc as they become available.

Get in Touch!

If you like the LMC, please post a comment on my Spinks Ink blog and tell somebody else about it, spread the message, spread the LMC story.

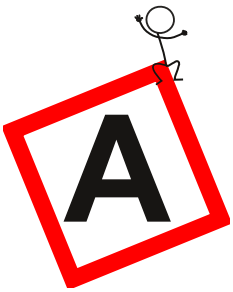
Even better, if you are using the LMC then contact me via email. I'd love to know how you're using it and how it is working for you. I may even ask if I can do a case-study about your project, so get in touch at robin@robinspinks.com.

If you want help on running a project with the LMC, email me to arrange an initial free 30-minute consultation.

And finally, don't forget to add the hashtags `#LMCstory` and `#WoWpeople` in your tweets whenever you use the LMC and I'll retweet it.

Have fun. Be kind. Be useful.

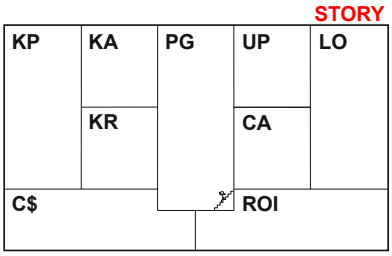
RS



Appendix A: Canvas Combinations

The number of canvases you create often depends on the size of your project. For a small project, one canvas could fit all of the sticky notes and decisions your project team makes. For larger projects you may need to split your Strategic thinking from the Tactical thinking into two canvases and each ID/SME pair may create their own Operation canvas (o-LMC). For a consultant attending a client-meeting to discuss a potential eLearning project, the LMC Poster could be a handy way of note-taking. The choices are endless.

In the list starting on the next page I suggest some combinations of canvases and the type of project where you may choose to use them.

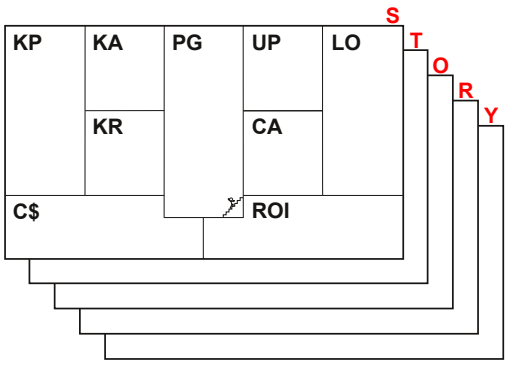


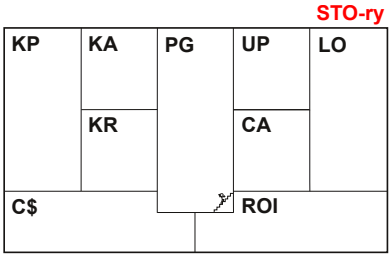
STORY

One canvas used to plot all five sub-plots.

S-T-O-R-Y

Plotting one canvas for each of the five sub-plots.





STO-ry

One canvas used to plot Strategical, Tactical, and Operational informaition and decisions.

It is completely your choice how to use the LMC but here are some brief examples:

S-tory

Using the canvas to plot just the Strategy of the project.

Useful for: creating a specification for a project's Request for Proposal (RFP) or Invitation to Tender (ITT); reviewing returned RFPs or ITTs; outlining the scope of a large multi-phase learning project.

STO-ry

A typical use of the LMC because it logically progresses from Big Picture (Strategy) to planning (Tactics) to doing the work (Operate) all on one canvas.

Useful for: creating a single eLearning product; running kick-off meetings for larger projects; running a small learning project.

S-T-O-ry

This is likely to be another often-used option. This option avoids duplication of effort, if the project team plot three canvases in the S-T-O order - this allows the S-LMC to inform the T-LMC which, in turn, informs the O-LMC.

Useful for: managing a learning project that needs to create multiple learning products; a large project with a large project team.

S-T…T-O…O-ry

In this option you have one overall Strategy for a project but multiple Tactical and Operational plans and processes.

Useful for: complex multi-phase blended-learning projects that may take several years to complete with a variety of suppliers, IDs and SMEs working in tandem or at specific phases of the project.

st-O…O-ry

Using the LMC to plan the work needed to create each learning product, one O-LMC per product.

Useful for: projects that produces a variety of learning products (e.g. eLearning session + mLearning + explainer videos, etc.); a framework for ID/SME working together to create a learning product.

sto-R-y

Reporting on progress and delivery of a project.

Useful for: creating an implementation process for the learning products in the delivery phase of a project; planning and measuring effectiveness of prototypes; a weekly dashboard/infographic showing progress in the nine building blocks for stakeholder updates (in this example, the R-LMC is used as a reporting tool throughout the project and not limited to the delivery phase of a project).

stor-Y

Using the canvas to asses individuals or people with similar job roles.

Useful for: identifying roles and responsibilities of key resources and what support assets they need; deciding on content for user guides; a method of identifying individual action plans for each role. Note: Beyond a learning project, the Y-LMC can be used as a personal development plan to plot what knowledge, skills or behaviours you need to improve your work or life… I know! But true!

STORY

Plotting all five sub-plots on one canvas.

Useful for: small learning projects where one learning product is created by a small project team; showing the actions for a Sprint in an Agile learning project; storing a backlog in an Agile learning project.

S-T-O-R-Y

Plotting at least one canvas for each of the five sub-plots.

Useful for: companies creating learning products with little or no experience in instructional design, (the canvas will help to identify the questions you should ask at different times in the project); as a project management tool if you do not currently use one; useful for small to large learning projects and you want to maintain a consistent framework throughout the project.

The combinations are endless and entirely your decision based on what you think will work best for the project management methodology and instructional design strategy you use for a specific learning project. Every project is similar but different and a different combination of canvases may be chosen from one project to the next.

Instructional Design means being logical in Instruction and creative in Design.

- Robin Spinks

About the author

Robin Spinks and Lemmy

Robin is a senior digital learning consultant and project manager who has worked with local and global organisations to make learning useful. From 1992 Robin's career has crossed both technical and creative fields while working variously as a trainer, technical author, creative writer, eLearning developer, project manager and consultant. In 2007, Robin founded Spinks eMedia an independent learning consultancy company and now he spends much of his time as a consultant and project manager on large global eLearning projects. To pay-forward, Robin provides free mentoring to young entrepreneurs offering strategy, productivity and team collaboration advice - check his website robinspinks.com for more information.

For a full work-history go to Robin's LinkedIn page or follow him on Twitter.