



# ‘Netflix For Learning’ Doesn’t Work – Here’s Why



## Executive summary

**Imagine it's the end of a long, stressful week at work.**

👉 Finally, you have some time to unwind and relax. You microwave your popcorn, pour a glass of wine, and settle in on the couch to watch...a tutorial on video editing?

**Seems unlikely, right?**

Yet, every week or so, we hear of another 'Netflix for Learning' initiative. These ideas usually promise the same basic idea: employees can browse a vast library of online training courses and watch whatever appeals to them. An algorithm then creates tailored training recommendations to help each employee build expertise and advance their careers. Employees can train themselves and have fun as they do it.

Any why not? People love Netflix. The interface is lovely, and it's intuitive to use. It's easy to lose hours watching recommended content that you may never have found on your own.

💪 **It's easy to see why the dream of a 'Netflix for Learning' is so persistent.** The world is changing quickly, and companies need to adapt their operations to keep up. This constant flux creates a heavy burden for learning teams, who need to make sure each employee receives the most relevant training at the right time. An engaging learning channel that gets employees 'addicted to learning' seems like a quick fix.

## There's just one problem: **it doesn't work.**

Quite a few vendors have successfully sold this appealing vision. Typically, they then spend the next two to three years failing to deliver on their agreement to engage employees in binge learning. What sounds great in theory is actually next to impossible to deliver.



We believe the idea of ‘Netflix for Learning’ is a false promise. That’s because most learning platforms can’t replicate the activation and retention strategies used by Netflix.

As Mario Barosevcic puts it in his [great article about corporate learning](#), in the learning space, “content is not king.” Instead, it’s a race to the bottom. **In this ebook, we’ll explain why. We’ll also show you how Collaborative Learning offers a better match for how people actually learn.**



Estimated reading time for this ebook: **10 minutes.**

About

# 360Learning

👉 **360Learning** empowers Learning and Development teams to drive culture and growth through Collaborative Learning. Our Learning Platform combines collaborative tools with the power of a Learning Management System, enabling high-growth companies to unlock learning based on collective expertise instead of top-down knowledge. 360Learning is the easiest way to onboard new employees, train customer-facing teams, and develop professional skills – all from one place.

**360Learning** powers the future of work at 1,200 organizations, including Toyota, AlphaSights, and Airbus. Founded in 2012, 360Learning has raised \$41 million with 180 team members across New York, Paris, and London.



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Want to see how we can help you make  
Collaborative Learning a reality?

Request a demo with 360Learning today. 💡

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## Chapter 1

# The 'Netflix for Learning' dream

We're in a weird spot right now. Home and workspaces **have merged**. Employees are at home all day, and they aren't just working; they're consuming all sorts of on-demand media.

👉 Consider Spotify. Without coworkers to worry about, employees at home are listening to Spotify as they work. In a **letter to shareholders**, Spotify shared that two of five Spotify users now listen to more music while working to manage their stress and anxiety with world events. Now, their usage on weekdays is identical to the weekends.

Or, as Spotify puts it in their letter: "Every day now looks like the weekend."



## The war for your employees’ attention

Now, work is competing with all sorts of platforms and services for your employees’ attention.

Employees are having their coffee, catching up on their notifications, glancing over an email from their boss, and scrolling through their Twitter feed—all at once. They’re responding to pings about a required training they need to do, the album of the week on Spotify, an agenda for their team meeting that starts in 20 minutes, and a WhatsApp message from their cousin. Even worse? This information overload is happening all day long.

When work and home merge like this, managers can no longer monitor their employees’ activities the way they can

in a physical office. Now, managers can only manage by setting expectations and assessing performance from a distance. **They might set the goals, but it’s up to the employees to decide how to achieve them.**

Similarly, learning teams will have to work harder than ever to earn a place in the employees’ consciousness. Simply telling people, “You have to take this course—it’s mandatory” isn’t going to cut it anymore (if it ever really did). Now, learners are the sole judge of what’s worthy of their time and attention. And learning materials are competing with a firehose of other options, including social media, the news, and entertainment options—like actual Netflix.



Learning teams are wildly unprepared to wage this battle in the war for employees’ attention.

After all, media companies have spent the last 10 years, and millions of dollars perfecting their **engagement strategy**. So, under pressure from their C-suite, learning teams are in a corner.

 Enter Netflix for Learning, a seemingly perfect solution. Except for one little thing: the way platforms like Netflix and Spotify actually engage consumers is a total mismatch for learning.



## Chapter 2

# How do Netflix and Spotify actually engage consumers?

Entertainment platforms frequently make headlines for **investing millions of dollars to make sure Taylor Swift or Brad Pitt appears on their homepage**. Or ESPN will happily pay **\$2.6 billion (yes billion) for exclusivity on NBA games**.

They do this because all-you-can-eat content services need headliner performers and flashy content to grow their business. Consumers start using these services because they specifically want to see these pillar pieces of content. ☺

Once they've signed up and made it a habit to use the service, they start browsing the platform for other entertainment options.



But to activate consumers, you need to give them a powerful reason to start engaging. ✨

And there are three main reasons why headliners like Brad Pitt, Taylor Swift, and LeBron James are such incredible engagement machines:

- 1 They've spent years building up a strong emotional bond with fans.** Their large fan bases are so emotionally attached to their voice, face, and name that they'll follow them across platforms. They associate Taylor Swift with dancing with friends and nursing private heartbreaks. No matter how good her next album is, her fans will adore it because they associate her voice with strong emotions and memories.
- 2 Their projects create organic, worldwide momentum.** The day after a new episode of *Game of Thrones* came out, everyone talked, tweeted, and reported on it. You had to watch if you wanted to be part of the cultural conversation. The urge to watch and listen was everywhere for a short moment, which was very efficient in creating engagement.
- 3 These people are magnetic.** Specific personalities just have a power that makes you want to hear their music, see them act, or watch them play basketball. No matter what they do, whether it's quality or not, you still enjoy it—and you always want more of it.

Actors like Will Smith, directors like Martin Scorsese, or producers like Jay-Z possess this power to engage and attract fans. **In the War for Attention, they are the ultimate weapon for a subscription-based B2C platform, like Netflix or Spotify.**

This step is called Activation in the famous **AARRR model** (acquisition, activation, retention, referral, revenue). Once a consumer has begun to engage with a platform, platforms like Netflix carefully move into retention mode. At some point, users start scrolling through to check out their other viewing options. Then, the power of recommendations comes into play.

👉 This recommendation strategy works differently across different platforms. Let's look at two of the most notable: Amazon and Netflix.

## Amazon vs. Netflix – two different recommendation engines

So once you've been hooked by Brad Pitt or Orange is the New Black, how does Netflix move you to the retention phase?

Picture this: it's a Tuesday evening, and you're looking to unwind. You flip on the TV and find a screen full of shows and movies that have been curated by Netflix just for you.

Netflix, like most entertainment services, bases its recommendations on your user history. The algorithm reverse-engineers your preferences based on what you've watched before. **This works because the single source of truth on what you enjoy watching is you.**

Your taste is unlikely to vary dramatically over the months or even years ahead.

Compare this with how other data algorithms, like Amazon, Facebook, and Google, work. Their algorithms have access to much larger datasets: they can leverage your email content, your calendar, your



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browser history, your Instagram interests, and your geolocation history to give you extremely targeted recommendations. This is why data has become internet gold.



So, why do these platforms need so much data? While predicting what movies you might like is relatively simple, it's a bit more complicated to predict what products you want to buy. Algorithms need more than just your past purchasing history to produce accurate recommendations.

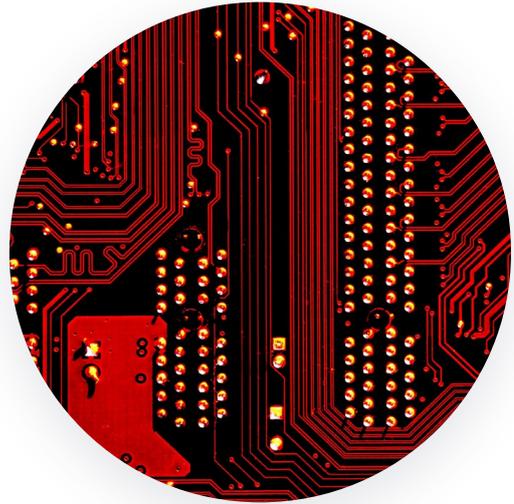
For example, if the algorithm can see that you're planning a trip to the Bahamas and frequently read about climate change, it can reasonably

recommend that you purchase a new organic sunscreen—even if you've never purchased sunscreen before. **Context matters, and that is what more data provides.**

Now, let's look at how this data-driven context works for learning – and why we can't just replicate the Netflix recommendation algorithm to create targeted learning experiences. 🙌

Chapter 3

# Why we can't replicate the Netflix recommendation algorithm for learning



One of Netflix for Learning's most significant selling points is its algorithmic ability to recommend your employees' learning content. But what data can we actually leverage for learning?



If we replicate the Netflix approach, we're basing recommendations on viewing history, job titles, and generic company data. Besides viewing history, none of these inputs are personalized. This leads to an algorithm that recommends the same content to everyone with a similar job title.



This kind of cookie-cutter recommendation machine doesn't suit anyone. Instead, we need a better way to leverage data and provide the right learning recommendations.

## What data should we leverage to target learning recommendations?

At 360Learning, we're convinced that each person's optimal learning path can be deduced with an algorithm that will work more like Amazon, Google, or Facebook algorithms than the Netflix one.

**The optimal learning path comes from context.** History is one input, but it isn't the main one. So what do we consider as contextual data points? We think learning recommendations should be based on factors such as:

- Business priorities discussed in team meetings
- Challenges highlighted in quarterly reviews
- **Peer feedback**
- The skill sets of your team (including any areas for improvement)
- An individual worker's proximity to new tools or machines

Taken together, all of these useful inputs determine what courses will maximize an employee's value for both themselves and the company. They offer a way to shape the learning experience to fit what people are really interested in, and how they're really learning.



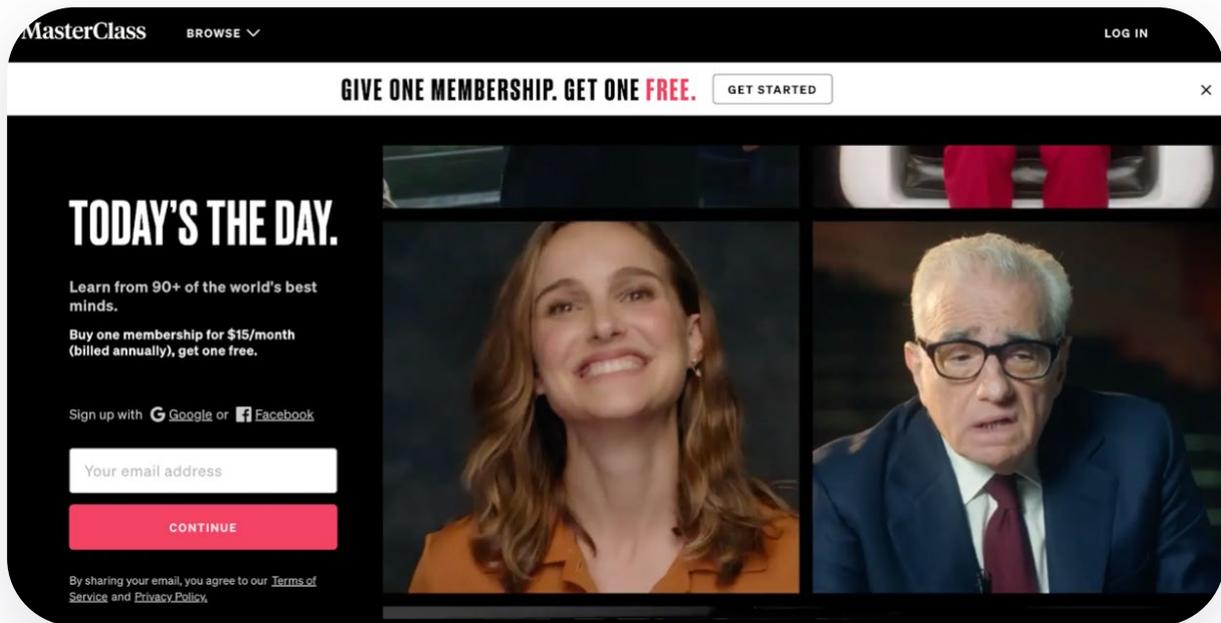


## Conclusion

# How people are actually learning – and how we can support them

By now, we can all see how Netflix's methods for activating consumers can't be replicated by a learning platform that doesn't have the budget for big Hollywood star power. Unlike Netflix, the 'Netflix for Learning' model can't actually build the momentum it needs to propel employees to treat their platform as a social media channel or media site.

Now, a handful of exceptions come to mind. [Masterclass](#) does bring in huge names like Natalie Portman and Serena Williams to headline their content. But [they also have deep pockets](#). And [Josh Bersin Academy](#) achieves great success because Josh Bersin is the Brad Pitt of HR. In any case, these examples are few and far between. Few companies have the budget, resources, or fame to achieve this in reality.



And neither Masterclass nor Josh Bersin's Academy can replicate Netflix's data-heavy retention strategy either. They simply don't have access to the data necessary to max out value for learners. Instead, they recommend the same courses over and over.

**The good news?**  
**There's another way to drive learner engagement.**

**Collaborative Learning** creates astonishing levels of engagement, comparable to Instagram or Quora. Our learning platform generates hundreds of data points that can be used to personalize learning recommendations to deliver the right course to the right person at the right moment. 360Learning users engage in 11 learning activities per day on average, with 91% course completion.

**How does it work?** Check out our article on **Why Collaborative Learning is the Next Phase of LMS eLearning**. Or, you can **get in touch with one of our learning experts** to see how we make Collaborative Learning a reality.



**360Learning users engage in 11 learning activities per day on average, with 91% course completion.**

# Over 1,200 companies love us already! ❤️

360Learning is already helping over 1,200 clients to transform their organizational culture through Collaborative Learning.



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360Learning is much more than a Learning Platform. Every single company needs a platform like this.

Josh Bersin

But don't just take our word for it: take a look at organizational learning guru Josh Bersin's exploration of [why Collaborative Learning makes such a big difference](#)—and how companies of all shapes and sizes can put it to work.

- See how our Collaborative Learning platform can help your business keep up with the trends, opportunities, and challenges identified in Gartner's [2021 transformation report](#).
- Take a look at how we stack up against other organizational learning solutions at Gartner's [peer insights page](#).
- For a deeper look at 360Learning in practice, read about how we helped [AI consulting firm Appen save \\$240k in annual training costs](#) with our Collaborative Learning platform.

## What's next?



'Netflix for Learning' might sound like a promising dream, but it's just that: a dream. 🌟

The Netflix model for attracting, engaging, and retaining consumers doesn't apply to learners. And if we do try to apply this model, we risk creating recommendation algorithms that suggest the same learning content to everyone with a similar job title. Nobody wants that.

👉 **Fortunately, there's a better way to drive learning engagement.** With Collaborative Learning, you can deliver great learning experiences to every one of your teams—all personalized based on hundreds of data points. This way, you can be confident you're delivering the right course to the right person at the right moment.

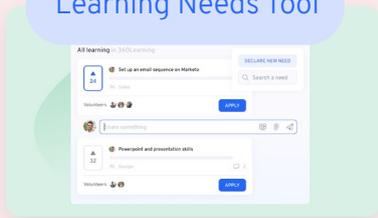
### Collaborative Learning achieves this by:

- Making it easy for people to declare their learning needs
- Empowering enablement teams to make and ship courses quickly in response
- Shaping learner recommendations based on user data relating to skills, interests, role, feedback from other learners, and more
- Freeing up subject-matter experts to contribute their skills, share their knowledge, and iterate learning content over time
- Enabling L&D teams to build tailored programs by curating courses from 3rd party platforms
- Using a continuous feedback loop to keep learning content current and accurate
- Fostering a sense of connection and belonging through making every step of the learning process as interactive as possible

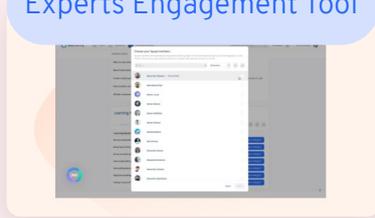
Interested in finding out how Collaborative Learning could help you deliver tailored learning recommendations?

Request a free demo today! 💡

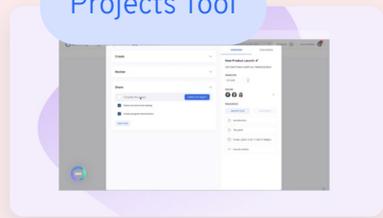
### Learning Needs Tool



### Experts Engagement Tool



### Projects Tool



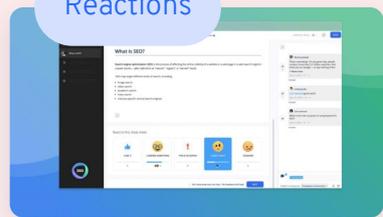
### Discussion Forum



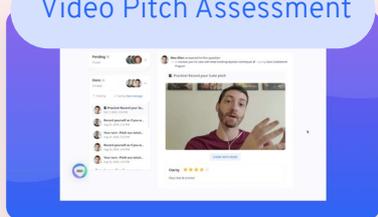
### Authoring Tool



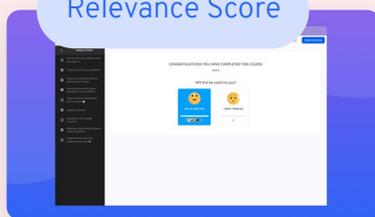
### Reactions



### Video Pitch Assessment



### Relevance Score



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CLO Connect: A series of in-depth interviews with L&D experts

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Embracing the Learning Organization Model

Ebook

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Do You Need an LMS, an LXP, a Talent Suite, or a Learning Platform?

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## Contact us

(US) +1 917-936-4632  
[contact@360learning.com](mailto:contact@360learning.com)  
[www.360learning.com](http://www.360learning.com)