



Brandon Hall Group™

Author First, AI Second Rethinking How L&D Uses AI



2026

Executive Interview



About Easygenerator



Easygenerator is an award-winning, AI-powered e-learning authoring solution that simplifies and accelerates learning development for organizations worldwide. The platform empowers subject matter experts to create and share company-specific learning in the form of interactive e-learning content — supported by AI rather than replaced by it. Easygenerator serves more than 50,000 users across more than 2,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including enterprise clients such as Kellogg's, T-Mobile, Danone, Electrolux and Sodexo.

About Derek Bruce

Derek Bruce is the Chief Learning and Knowledge Officer at Easygenerator. A globally recognized HR thought leader and Chartered FCIPD professional, Derek brings deep expertise in learning, leadership and talent development built over a career spanning senior roles at Tesco, DSM-Firmenich, Signify and ABN AMRO, where he led global learning, leadership and performance strategies. An MBTI Type II and NLP Master Practitioner, Derek combines psychological insight with practical expertise to drive meaningful organizational impact. His move from enterprise learning leadership to a product-focused provider reflects a commitment to shaping how AI and human expertise can work together to transform workplace learning.



About David Wentworth

Today's conversation is moderated by **David Wentworth** is the Managing Director of Learning and Talent at Brandon Hall Group™. He brings nearly two decades of experience conducting research, interviews and data analysis in the learning and talent space. David originally joined Brandon Hall Group™ in 2012 as a Principal Analyst, establishing himself as one of the industry's foremost authorities on learning and development before departing to serve as VP and Talent Platform Evangelist at Schoox. Prior to Brandon Hall Group™, he served as a senior analyst at the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). In his current role, David works with technology providers and enterprise organizations to understand learning and talent challenges and what it takes to overcome them. He is a podcast host, a regular speaker at industry events and has authored numerous articles across HCM and learning publications.



Q David

With all of that focus right now, do you feel like companies are focusing a little too much on what they can create with AI versus what AI can help them achieve?

A Derek

I think you pretty much summed up how I'm thinking about it and yes, that's the answer. One of the tendencies we have right now is thinking more about the tool than the purpose, fixating on what AI can generate while forgetting to ask what we're actually trying to do. What are we trying to provide? What are we trying to make sure people do differently? There's a whole focus toward AI first and content second, toward almost pure automation. There needs to be a shift back toward asking what content we're trying to create and why and then figuring out how AI supports that, rather than letting AI drive because it can do impressive things and losing sight of the purpose entirely. That's a genuine concern I have, having worked in this field for many years.

Q David

If all we're trying to achieve is create a learning program, okay, but isn't there something that learning program is supposed to do and shouldn't everything be in service of that, and while AI has democratized the ability to create, what happens to learning?

A Derek

You make a really interesting point. The expertise that makes content valuable, knowing the organization, knowing the nuances, knowing the customers and the context, that's where you need balance. You need someone who actually knows things involved, rather than just running a prompt and letting AI produce something. The fact that everybody can do something doesn't mean everybody should be doing it. And if they are, there needs to be a level of sophistication around it, making sure the AI doesn't come first and expertise second, but the other way around.

Q David

Haven't we gone from tools that make it easier for a subject matter expert to create learning content to a space where people feel they don't even need the subject matter expert anymore, losing the human layer of the learning equation, the judgment about what's good, what works, what matters?

A Derek

Right. Even in that scenario, you still have this concept where someone types a prompt, lets AI generate some stuff, edits it afterward and assumes it's going to be great. But the expertise that makes content meaningful, knowing the business, knowing the context, knowing the people, that richness disappears. What you get is generic and overly polished, but disconnected from what makes content valuable. When it comes to the biggest challenges we face as a profession, it always comes back to what impact you're going to have on an organization. AI on its own cannot deliver that.

Q David

So how do we preserve the author's prominent role in this changing environment?

A Derek

It should always be author first, AI second. By author, I mean the content creator, the subject matter expert, the person with the expertise. They're the ones who need to initiate, understand and start designing what needs to be done. AI first creates content, but it's vanilla. It's uncontextual. It may not meet the needs. Author first means you always have the element of knowing the business, knowing the content, knowing the context and the people, and then using AI to help make sure it does the right things. Unless you download every single piece of data from an organization into an AI, the system is simply not going to know what an experienced practitioner knows. That's where the real value of augmentation comes in.

Q David

Now that AI is helping with content generation and scaling and we're creating enormous amounts of content on top of what we already have, how do we make sure people are actually getting what they need, when they need it?

A Derek

There's a belief we need to check ourselves on: if AI creates it, it must be useful. That isn't always the case. When a human author creates content, there's a capture of knowledge and expertise built in. AI, on its own, often skips the question of "why am I doing this?" and goes straight to "I can do this." A good instructional designer is always asking about outcomes. When AI is used alongside an SME or instructional designer, the result is much more structured toward the actual experience a learner will have. We have enough content. We don't need more of the wrong content. AI can be genuinely valuable for making existing content work better. But when it comes to creating something brand new, it has to be author first, AI second.

Q David

By keeping that human element in the creation process, do you think that ultimately makes personalization more effective, that there are more meaningful inputs going in, which connect to whatever makes the experience feel personalized in the end?

A Derek

Yes and it's important to be realistic about what the technology can actually do right now. AI can help with personalization, understanding roles, understanding purpose, understanding business context, but only if the person and the content are there to start with. And for me, genuine personalization is about understanding how learning is going to help someone do their role better. What skills are they going to apply differently? What behaviors are going to change? And ultimately, what's the impact on the organization's performance and objectives? Because that's what learning is trying to do, make people do something better, faster, or more effectively. It's not just about completion. It's about impact.

Q David

Isn't that the layer where people can outpace AI right now, the ability to ask what makes this good, what are we actually after, what is the ultimate outcome we're building toward?

A Derek

I think there's a concern in the broader L&D community that AI is going to replace roles. And while I understand that concern, the more useful shift is understanding that AI doesn't generate great learning automatically, but it can help us scale, monitor usage, evaluate impact and structure experiences for different cultures and locations. It's really strong at the heavy lifting. Humans bring the context, the expertise and the judgment. The sweet spot is something like a 60/40 dynamic: AI for efficiencies, humans for insights and genuine personalization.

If you ask almost any person to describe their best-ever learning experience, they'll tell you something like: I fell off a bicycle. I burned a soufflé. I was in a meeting and completely blew it. Those experiences are shaped by human judgment, failure and context. AI can't replicate that. But it can help

with learning paths, personalized feedback, role-specific experiences and, if designed well, learning in the flow of work. Telling someone, here's what you're about to do and here's what you should know before you start. That's where it can genuinely extend the reach and impact of great content.

Q David

If you look at what you do in your role, aren't the things you're looking forward to the things worth protecting and the things that are a drag on that work, isn't that where AI should take the load?

A Derek

Exactly. I've used AI within a ring-fenced portal to identify trends in learning needs and skills gaps using data. That's work that would have taken days of analysis. AI helped surface two or three of the biggest opportunities quickly, which then let me spend my time on the strategic work, what we actually need to do as an organization. That kind of use is genuinely powerful. And I think it's where the profession needs to go: not automating the production of learning, but augmenting how we use AI to support it.

The piece I'm most excited about, as it continues to evolve, is using AI as a kind of coach, helping people embed learning after the fact, providing personalized feedback based on what they've been through, available anywhere, anytime. That's when our measures of success start to mean something. It makes impact measurable in ways that completion rates never could.

Q David

AI is already demonstrating it can take in an enormous number of inputs and recognize patterns we'd never have time to find, but aren't we still in a place where people want people to pull the trigger?

A Derek

And there's still the human check to run. I've seen prompts produce output that was nowhere near accurate. That's part of the balance: using AI to get us toward something useful, while the human layer is there to make sure it actually is useful. The automation is impressive. The generation is real. But the expertise, knowing what good looks like, is still essential.



Here are some ways to listen to the interview on Brandon Hall Group's Excellence at Work Podcast:





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