

Report

Making the most of a *quiet January*

A guide to **building better
learning content**



Introduction

After the intensity of December, **January brings a rare moment of calm in hospitality** - quieter service, lighter rotas and a little breathing space.

But this isn't just downtime. It's a valuable opportunity to reset, reflect and prepare for what's next.

With the pressure of peak season lifted, **teams can review what worked, what didn't and where skills or processes could be strengthened.**

It's the ideal moment to refresh compliance, onboarding and leadership training so learning feels consistent and current across the business.

In this report, **Abbie Macpherson**, our **Head of Digital Design**, shares practical advice on how to make the most of January - from gathering team insight and refreshing learning content to simplifying systems and building a stronger learning culture for the year ahead.



Because when hospitality uses January well, it doesn't just reset - it gets ready to rise.



Turning *experience into insight*

January offers the distance to see things clearly. It's the perfect time to pause, listen and capture what teams have learned from the festive rush - through real stories, honest feedback and lived experience.



January's the time to stop and actually look back at what worked and what didn't. It's about asking, *is our learning still relevant?* rather than just, what do we need to train on next?

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To gather meaningful insight:

- ✓ **Dive into your Mapal dashboards to spot what's working** - which courses see higher completion rates, and whether certain formats or lengths perform better than others.
- ✓ **Run a short pulse survey** to ask teams not only what helped and what didn't, but how effective recent learning felt - what they enjoyed, what felt useful and what missed the mark.
- ✓ **Hold quick catch-ups or informal chats, and use suggestion boxes** on Mapal to uncover both friction points and success stories from the season.
- ✓ **Ask how well learning materials supported real-life situations** and whether they felt accessible during busy shifts.

Don't forget upcoming change. Check for new legislation or internal policy shifts so content doesn't become outdated by spring.

Reflection isn't about looking back; it's about designing forward. When teams feel heard, learning feels relevant - and growth follows naturally.



Updating *content that drives engagement*

With insights in hand, January is the perfect time to act. Service is quieter, focus returns and creativity can thrive again.

Refreshing content doesn't mean starting from scratch - it's about refining what already exists so it feels sharper, simpler and more relevant to daily work. This is the moment to streamline courses, modernise tone and make learning easier to digest.



In hospitality, learning has to be short, focused and practical - bite-size pieces that fit between shifts but still make an impact.

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To make updates that resonate:

- ✓ **Simplify and shorten.** Break long courses into small, focused lessons with one clear outcome. Predictable lengths build trust - if people know a module takes five or ten minutes, they're more likely to finish it.
- ✓ **Add energy.** Blend text with quick knowledge checks, visuals and video moments. Real examples from your venues or photo-based demos make learning feel tangible and real.
- ✓ **Design mobile-first.** If it doesn't work on mobile, it won't work at all - friction loses learners fast.
- ✓ **Review tone.** Keep it conversational, confident and aligned with your brand voice.

This is where Mapal Studio - our AI-powered feature within Culture Suite - makes an impact. It builds structured, on-brand lessons in minutes, letting you focus on the creative part: shaping tone, storytelling and user experience.

Where to start:

- ✦ **Refresh important but lower-engagement *courses first***
- ✦ **Rebuild them into shorter, visual modules *using Mapal Studio***
- ✦ **Test with a small group, *gather quick feedback and refine***

When learning is quick, visual and friction-free, it stops being a task - and becomes something people genuinely want to do.



Involving teams in *content creation*

Great learning isn't built in isolation - it comes from the floor, the kitchen and the front desk. The bartender who finds a faster workflow, the chef who makes onboarding effortless, the manager who keeps morale high under pressure - these are the real experts.



People connect with learning when they see themselves in it. If content reflects real voices and real situations, it feels authentic - and that's when it sticks.

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January is the ideal time to capture those voices and turn them into content that feels authentic and practical.

- ✓ **Collect examples of great service recovery**, teamwork or leadership moments.
- ✓ **Focus on what really happened** - the challenge, the action and the result.
- ✓ **Keep it simple:** authenticity matters more than polish or production value.

You can then use **Mapal Studio** to shape these stories into clear, branded micro-lessons that show best practice in context. They become powerful tools for peer learning - quick to create, easy to share and grounded in real experience.

To bring this approach to life:

- ✦ **Encourage each site to submit one short “best practice” story per quarter**
- ✦ **Use these stories in learning content or briefings to make lessons relatable**
- ✦ **Share examples across teams to celebrate great work and build collective knowledge.**

When learning comes from real people, it's trusted, memorable and rooted in the way hospitality truly works.



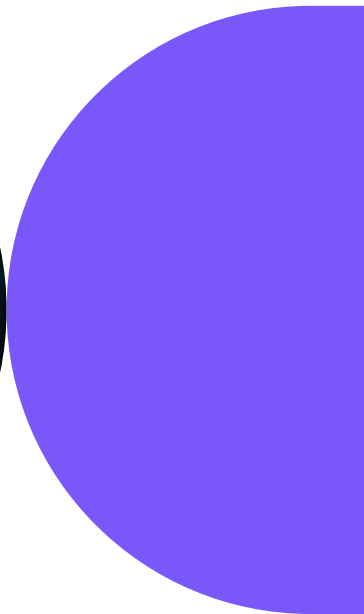
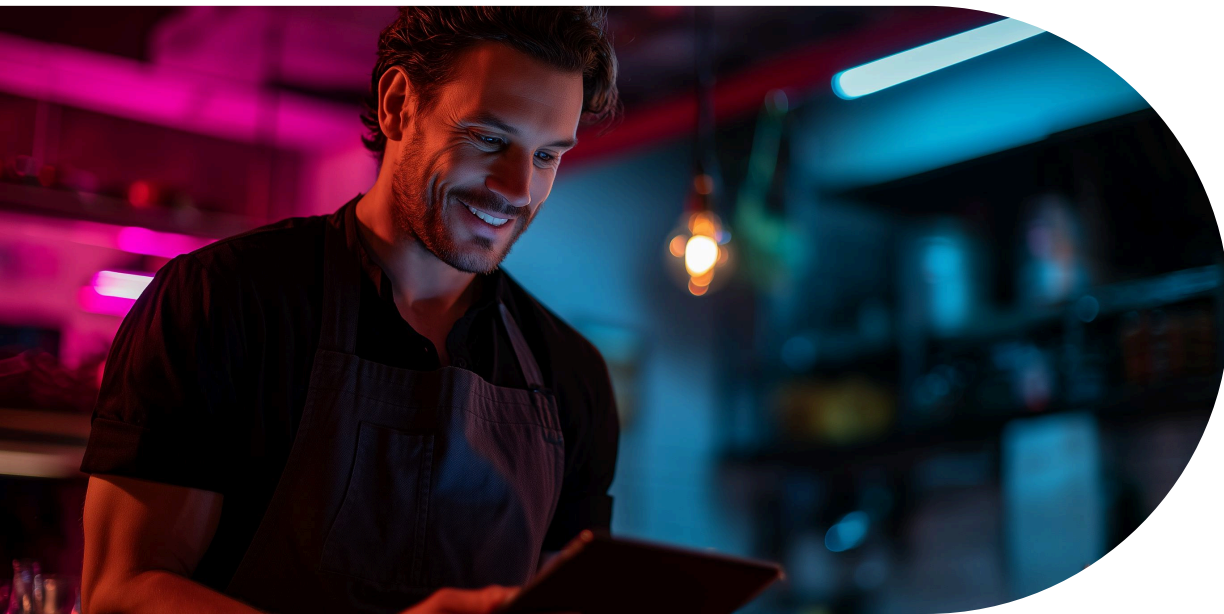
Getting learning operations *ready for the year ahead*

With content refreshed, it's time to make sure your systems run just as smoothly. A well-organised platform makes training faster to find, easier to complete and simpler to manage.



Good design is about clarity. The simpler and more intuitive your learning systems are, the more people will use them - and the more value you'll get.

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Start with a quick platform health check:



Navigation

Is the homepage clean and clear?



Structure

Are courses grouped logically by role, site or skill?



Automation

Schedule reminders for compliance and onboarding so nothing slips through.



Access

Ensure managers can view reporting and remove inactive users.

Abbie recommends physically mapping the learner journey:

“Sketch how someone finds, starts and completes a course. Seeing it laid out helps you spot where friction hides.”

Declutter wherever possible. Archive duplicates, merge similar modules and keep only what’s useful. Too much content can overwhelm learners; **simplicity builds confidence.**

When your platform feels clear and efficient, training stops being an obligation - it becomes part of everyday flow.

Embedding learning *into daily life*

Once your systems are set, it's time to bring learning back into the rhythm of service. The most effective training doesn't happen in isolation - it happens in moments that matter.



Engagement grows when learning feels woven into the day, not added on top. Make progress feel natural, not forced.

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Ways to build learning into the everyday:

- ✓ **Launch a monthly learning theme** - one focus everyone can connect to.
- ✓ **Add five-minute learning moments** to pre-service huddles or weekly briefings.
- ✓ **Link short modules to menu updates**, new promotions or guest feedback.
- ✓ **Recognise completions and small wins** in team meetings or dashboards.

Managers play a vital role in keeping learning alive. A simple “What do you want to learn next?” can shift the mindset from compliance to growth.

When learning is visible, social and celebrated, it becomes part of how teams operate - building consistency, confidence and pride.

Building momentum *beyond January*

January sets the tone, but consistency turns change into progress. The best learning teams don't treat development as a one-off project - they build it into the rhythm of the year.



The teams who get this right have a rhythm - reflect, refresh, relaunch. They don't let learning stagnate.

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Keep the momentum going:

- ✓ **Quarterly reviews:** Check completion rates, relevance and on-the-job impact.
- ✓ **Regular updates:** Use Mapal Studio to fine-tune visuals or tone - small tweaks keep content fresh.
- ✓ **Align with operations:** Match learning to menu launches and seasonal peaks.
- ✓ **Tailor by role:** Keep shared foundations, but personalise examples for kitchen, bar or FOH.
- ✓ **Capture feedback:** Record insights from new or temporary staff to improve future onboarding.

Think of learning as seasonal: reflection in winter, renewal in spring, growth in summer and refinement in autumn. **Continuous improvement keeps content alive and aligned with business goals.**

Final thoughts

January may be hospitality's quietest month, but it's also one of its most valuable. It's the space to reflect, reset and turn insight into action.



January gives you the space to think clearly and act intentionally. The best teams use that pause to create real momentum for the year ahead.”

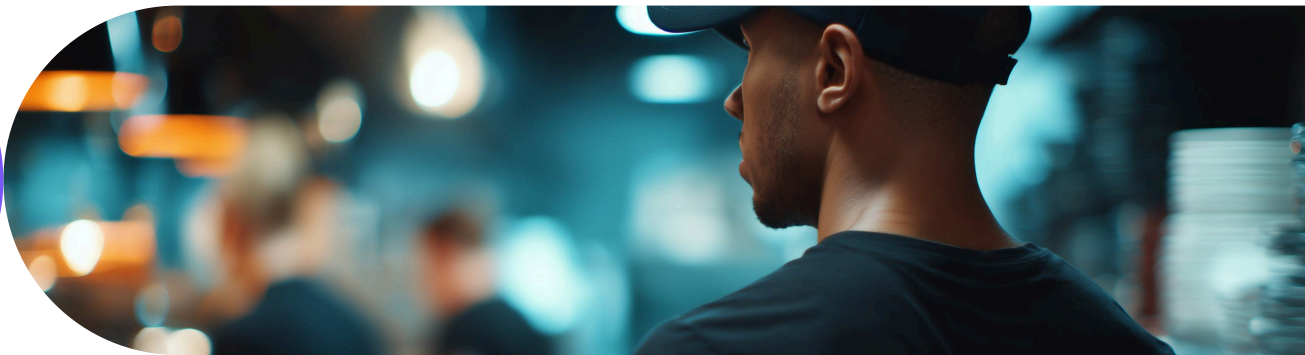
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Takeaways

- ✓ **Keep learning concise**, relevant and mobile-first.
- ✓ **Listen to team feedback** and act on it quickly.
- ✓ **Refresh and simplify regularly** - small changes matter most.
- ✓ **Use Mapal Studio** to turn good ideas into great learning, fast.

When hospitality uses January well, it doesn't just recover - **it rises stronger for the year ahead.**





See how *Culture Suite* and *Mapal Studio* can transform the way your teams learn, share knowledge and grow.

Book a demo with our team to explore how we can help you:

- ✦ Create engaging, mobile-first learning content in minutes
- ✦ Refresh existing courses with AI-powered design tools
- ✦ Build a stronger, more consistent learning culture across every site

Book a demo 

