

THE
FUTURE
OF
L&D

The State & Evolutions of Corporate
Learning & Development: 2019 Edition





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THE FUTURE OF L&D

The State & Evolutions of Corporate
Learning & Development: 2019 Edition



About this Report

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Foreword

We at WDHB have the chance of working with some of the world's most progressive corporate Learning & Development teams, and partnering with many forward-looking institutions active in education and executive development. This has put us in a privileged position to watch and participate in the evolutions of the L&D field.

Needless to say, we have a passion for L&D. In the last 30 years since we pioneered Learning Expeditions as a platform for experiential learning, we have been constantly driven to improve and innovate, with the help of our clients and partners. As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, we wanted to take a moment and reflect on the present and future of Learning & Development.


This report is based on in-depth research into the trends in this field as well as interviews of a wealth of practitioners and experts counting amongst the most knowledgeable and passionate L&D leaders in Europe. We would like to thank them all for the richness of their insights.

We hope you appreciate reading this report and invite you to stay tuned for our upcoming publications as we launch WDHB Lab, the industry research arm of WDHB. In the near future, we will keep exploring the evolutions of learning, enriching our analysis with research on L&D in emerging countries, focusing on the interactions between EdTech and Corporate L&D, discussing ways to measure L&D's impact, etc.

We look forward to more conversations on the fascinating world of learning. Please feel free to share your thoughts with us at lab@wdhb.com



Sunil Narang
President & Chief Executive Officer
WDHB



Introduction: Wait, what is L&D?

As we were getting started with the production of this report, we came to the realization that while most of us have an intuitive understanding of what Learning & Development stands for in the corporate world, we might not actually agree on what lies behind the phrase. So we paused and asked around us: what does L&D mean to you? The answers to this question, including those of L&D professionals themselves, made us realize how difficult it is to define the concept clearly. Most of us agree with former GE CEO Jack Welch when he states that *“an organization’s ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage”*. So why is it so difficult to define what L&D is made of?

First, let’s look at the words: what is L? What is D?

Let’s start with learning. In most people’s minds, L&D is synonymous of training, and the L&D function can still be referred to as the training entity within the organization. Many of the practitioners we interviewed reminded us of the importance of differentiating between these two terms: training is part of the L&D offering, but learning is the true purpose, the framework in which training initiatives (but also awareness-building programs, skill development workshops, etc.) are developed.

And now development. Beneath this multidimensional concept lies an abundance of hidden assumptions and associations. Are we talking about career development? Personal and professional growth? Or about organizational development?

Some of the experts we spoke with highlighted the ambiguities surrounding the concept of L&D, while also appreciating that the wealth of connotations might actually be an asset for a function that sits at the crossroad of many goals. According to Pascal Jouvin, Director of LVMH House, *“Often times, development is considered in a utilitarian perspective, through career development. However, what’s important for L&D, is that learning leads to personal and professional development. In reality, there is no frontier between learning and development. One is part of the other. We could stick to saying we are in the business of learning, but associating in with the word “development” makes it more “marketable”. It also allows us to highlight the fact that we are not strictly doing trainings, that this is not school anymore.”*

Now, let’s look at the worlds that compose L&D.

The field sits at the intersection of several universes with distinct objectives.

Within the field of L&D, there is no consensus on whether the function should primarily focus on employees’ individual development or serve organizational performance and alignment. Janin Schwartau, Head of Learning and Transformation for thyssenkrupp, sees her role as a Learning & Organizational Development professional: *“My focus is always to advance the organization, not primarily individuals. My role is to bring the business forward.”*

Daan Luitse, an Amsterdam-based People Performance Strategy Advisor and former head of L&D for Uber’s EMEA Community Operations, sums up the potential disconnect between these two facets of L&D: *“Employees want development (they want to know how to get promoted). Companies want performance but they don’t know how to track this in L&D yet. I try to connect the two aspects through the right metrics.”*

Introduction: Wait, what is L&D?

L&D also stands at the intersection between program design and content development on the one hand, and community empowerment on the other hand. Gilbert Dietrich, Executive Director of the People Team at Aperto, considers that “*L&D is everything from designing learning programs to enabling our communities*”. With this, L&D’s role in defining, driving and evolving the organizational culture is conspicuous, revealing the depth and ramifications of the function’s role within the organization.

“L&D consists of three dimensions: first, aligning people with the strategy of the company; then developing the people to fit this strategy; and finally developing people for themselves, to prepare them for tomorrow’s jobs and for their future professional steps”

Aurélien Guillard
Disneyland Paris

Beyond these important facets, our report has enabled us to unveil a few more, which are emerging as the L&D function gets reshaped in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) era.

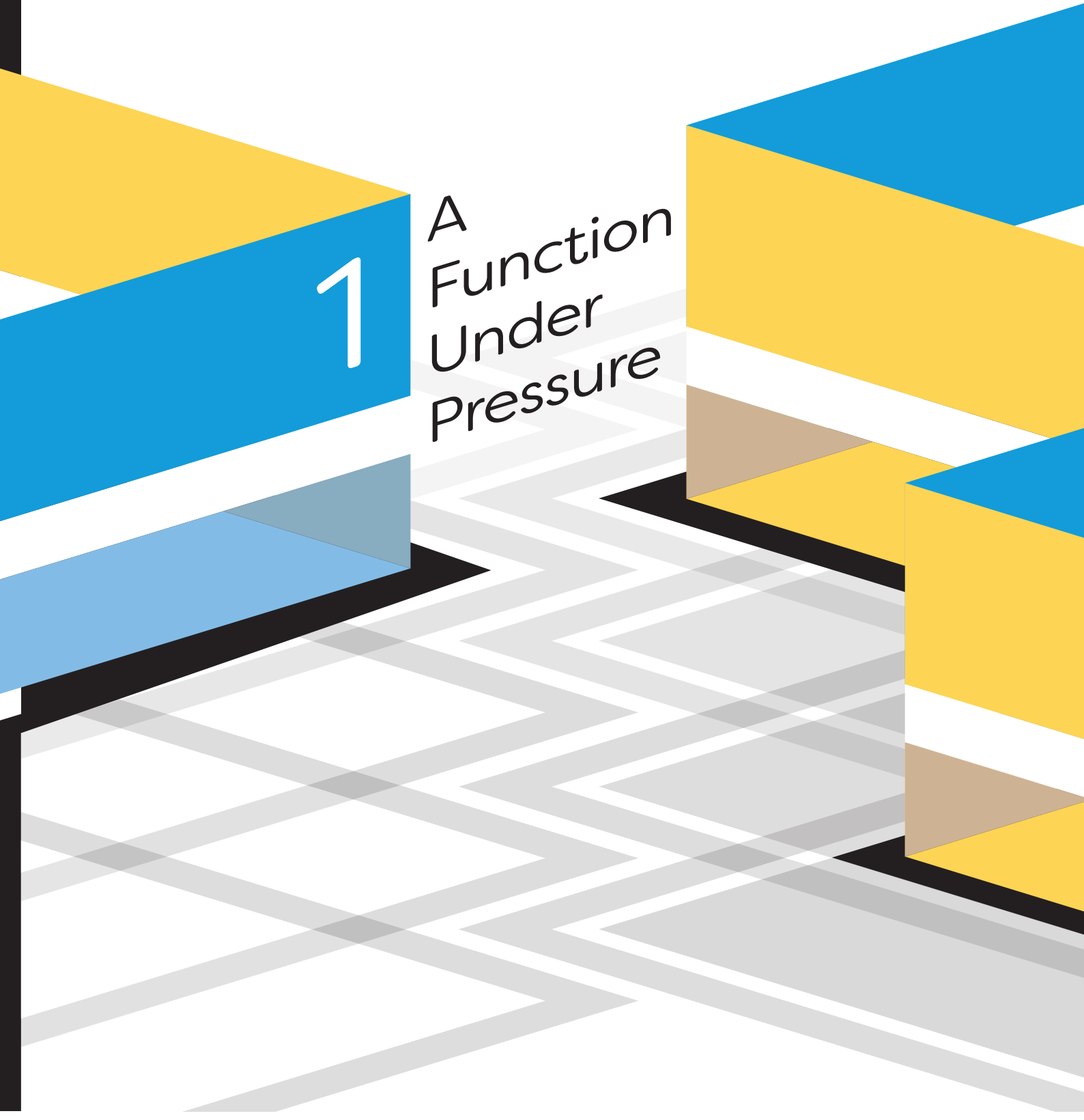
Building this report has allowed us to unveil how expectations towards L&D are changing based on the evolutions of the environment and of learners’ behaviors. We have also explored how corporate L&D is morphing to respond to the new normal, in terms of content, formats, but also strategy. This has enabled us to get a glimpse of what the L&D function is starting to look like, from the profiles that compose it to role it holds in the organization.





1

A
Function
Under
Pressure



1.1

Updating the Learner's World View

Before we fully immerse ourselves into the evolutions of the L&D function in companies, we should take a step back and observe how the rise of digital access has impacted individuals, both in their learning and in their working paths – and particularly how the influx of available online content has affected everything from attention spans to content consumption habits. This is important for setting the stage and contextualizing the Learning and Development efforts that organizations are now deploying.

Let's look into the daily life of your workers to understand: 1) what they can access, 2) how it shapes their behaviors and beliefs, and 3) how it affects their expectations around L&D when they actually get to work.

Content and communication have never been so accessible, so abundant,

“The learning practices must evolve and look more like our real daily lives. We need to find the information straight away, which sometimes means not doing the full e-learning course and still getting the information you were looking for. The same way you use YouTube if you need to change a bulb.”

Marine Perrache
Mazars



An era of unlimited, free, and seamless content...

and delivered in so many formats from so many sources. To give you a sense of the scale, in a single minute in June 2018, nearly 13 million texts were sent, more than 3.7 million Google searches were conducted, and more than 4.3 million videos were watched by YouTube users (*source: Domo*). These content platforms have become more and more concentrated and now stand as global authorities, welcoming an ever-growing number of users.

The novelty of our era is that anyone can en-

gage in content creation or interaction, turning “user-generated content” platforms into global communication echo chambers. The platform rising to the top for education – surprisingly – is YouTube. Historically used as an entertainment platform, the American video hub is now leading the free educational content race with an explosion of user-generated content. YouTube has become the world’s second largest search engine and third most visited site behind Google and Facebook, with more than 400 hours of video being uploaded by individuals and brands



Updating the Learner's World View

to the platform every minute. Users watch over 1 billion hours of YouTube videos a day, more than Netflix and Facebook video combined, with 70% of views coming from mobile devices and an average mobile viewing session lasting more than 40 minutes (*Source: YouTube*).

For all demographics, it's more than common to "youtube" (v.) a term or practical requests and expect a short, relevant video in return. As of 2015, 81 percent of global internet users had visited the online video portal in the last month and 66 percent of YouTube users access it at least once a day (*Source: GlobalWebIndex*). When focusing on education, the platform hosts very practical content and the search terms are telling: "Watch a tutorial" comes in 3rd after "Watching a clip" or a "Film trailer" on YouTube (*source: GlobalWebIndex*). It's no wonder then that the Do it Yourself channel "5mncrafts" has 52 million followers on YouTube and ranks as the 3rd most followed channel globally, generating nearly half a billion engagements with its users in 2018. YouTube users are now so accustomed to getting quick-and-efficient answers to all

of their questions through practical "how to" videos that the platform has taken note and just announced a USD50 million investment plan to leverage this opportunity for itself.

When we think about state-of-the-art ways to consume and experience content, platforms have made huge progress in user experience, from the way content is delivered to how it is recommended. For instance, American video streaming platform Netflix's algorithms are training with the requests of its now 148 million daily users (*source: Netflix*), enabling the platform to deliver personalized suggestions in no time.

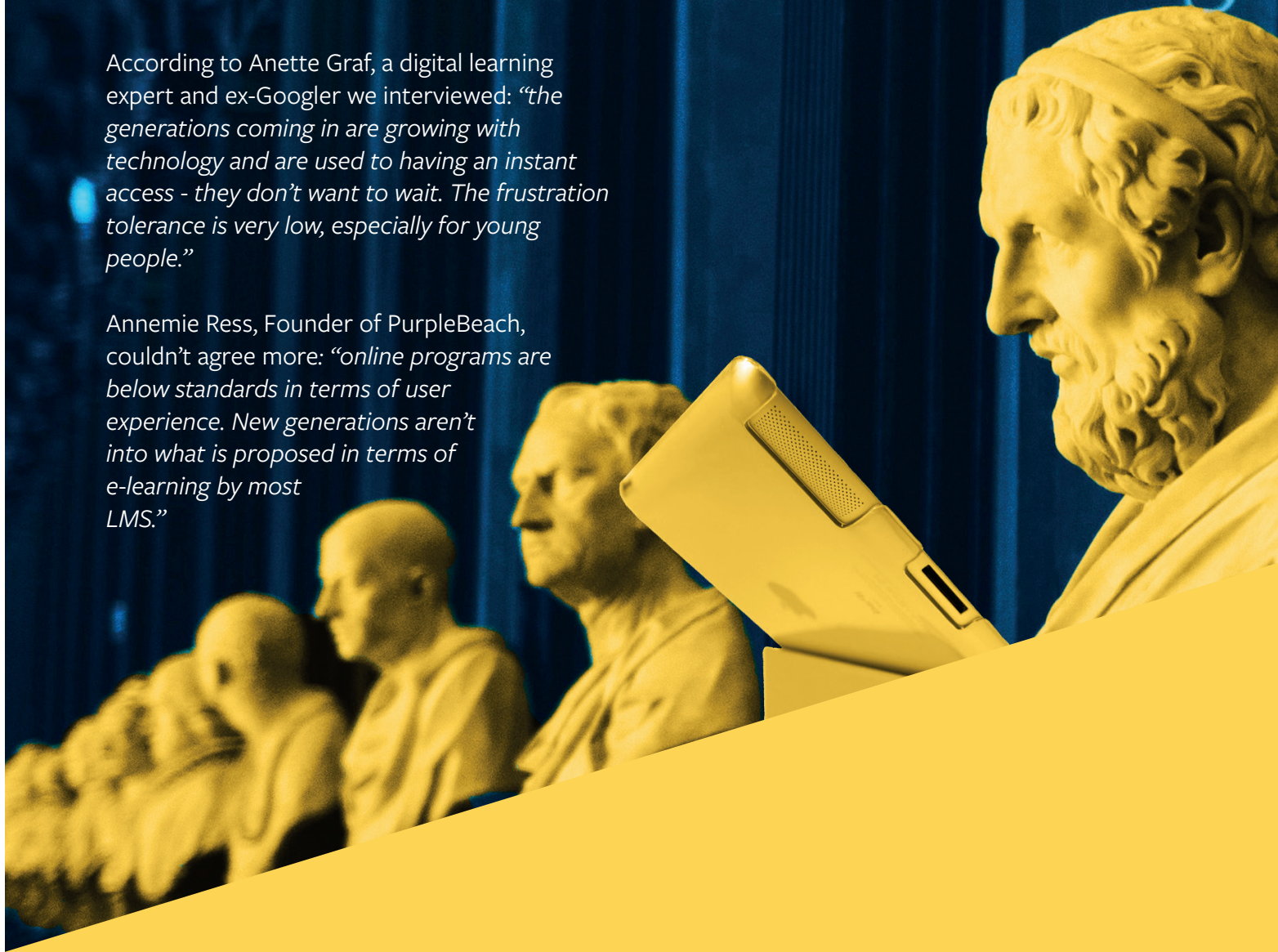
This has a massive impact on learners' expectations of the quality and relevancy of the content they're offered at work, especially given that as much as 73% of the adult population in the US use Netflix on a monthly basis (*StatistaSurvey: Netflix*).

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og

According to Anette Graf, a digital learning expert and ex-Gogler we interviewed: *“the generations coming in are growing with technology and are used to having an instant access - they don’t want to wait. The frustration tolerance is very low, especially for young people.”*

Annemie Ress, Founder of PurpleBeach, couldn’t agree more: *“online programs are below standards in terms of user experience. New generations aren’t into what is proposed in terms of e-learning by most LMS.”*



Updating the Learner's World View



Online content platforms, whether they have the firepower of Hollywood to produce content or the power to gather dozens of millions of users per day to upload and view their content, have caused workers to expect an outstanding level of speed, quantity, quality, and overall experience. Yet, this overabundance of content has also created a constant feeling of being overwhelmed, impacting the attitude and behaviors of users when faced with content coming from corporate L&D.

... Resulting in information overload ...

The constant onslaught of communication and information that makes up our digitalized lives gives us access to more information than ever... and also more than we ever wanted.

Always connected and stressed?

The iPhone is only 12 years old, yet the impact of smartphones on our personal and professional lives is visible every single day. A few years ago, a worker's day would simply end when exiting the office. Today, work seems to go home with you in your pocket, creating an expectation for instant responses and being available at all times. According to a study ran by OpenMarket, a company specialized in mobile infrastructure, 83% of millennials open text messages within 90 seconds of receiving them, creating a ripple effect of rapid and seemingly urgent communication.

In parallel, the number of touchpoints through which workers can be reached have multiplied by devices (phone, tablet, computer, smart watch, voice assistant, etc.) and formats (SMS, email, apps, modern intranet), creating an explosion of potential points of contact. As a

consequence, our brain is under constant duress and our health is at risk. "Screen time" is increasingly becoming a public health issue as digital connections are proving to have the same addictive symptoms on the brain as smoking, and have been shown to trigger anxiety and depression in some specific populations. Given this context, it's becoming more difficult to ask workers to spend even more time on screens as additional on-screen content can be perceived as just as burdensome as in-person trainings. As Camille Gillon, the HR director of Belfius, one of Belgium's largest banks and insurers, expressed, "*e-learning can feel like just a big of a commitment as onsite trainings.*" The alternative is a 'digest version' that can summarize key takeaways and be a smart shortcut.

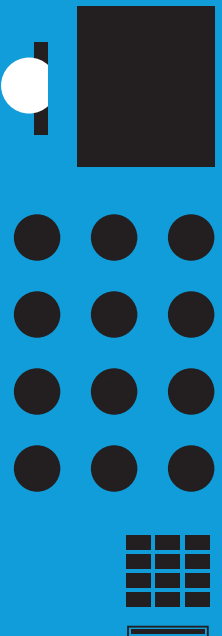
When combined, this avalanche of content and communication, powered by an increasing number of devices and platforms, naturally sends the worker into a default state of "content fatigue."

Updating the Learner's World View

Attention is a currency...

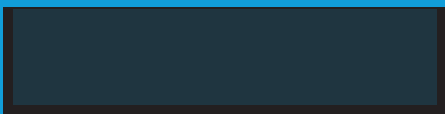
In an era of open workplaces and decreasing work space per worker, focus is becoming the #1 challenge of modern work. In a typical day, we are now interrupted or forced to switch tasks every three minutes and five seconds on average, according to the University of California, and it can take 23 minutes and 15 seconds just to get back to where they left off (called the "recovery time")." When so many triggers fight for your interest and time, attention becomes a precious currency that must be spent carefully.

In a world where so much content is already readily accessible with a superior user experience, attention span and engagement with content should be very thoughtfully solicited.





... and access becomes fundamental.



Device. As learners have developed a habit of searching or learning “on demand” whenever they need something, mobile devices have become increasingly important. As an example, among the 15.3 billion page views browsed on Wikipedia in February 2019, more than half were consumed on the mobile version of the website — and a tiny fraction on the app (*source: Wikimedia*). This switch in usage is key to how companies should be offering content. For example, Elodie Dussillo, L&D Expert at Canon, shared with us how crucial it has been to provide Canon’s employees with a new learning tool offering micro-content options, all accessible on mobile. Previously, the only existing tool offered content only on Desktop and in English. This mobile dimension is key as it appears to be the number one barrier to employees using their personal mobile device for work-related learning in 2018.



Format. Accessibility is also a question of format. As 90.2% of workers believe learning on the job is more critical than ever (vs 79% for a formal curriculum) (*source: statista*), content has to be integrated on the job and fit into unused time of the day in small bites. For Nellie Wartoft, the founder of Singapore-based learning & development startup Tigerhall, “those bite-sized content pieces with different formats help to fit-in and make learning seamless - especially at a time when the completion rate of MOOCs is only 3%.”



Mix. A few years ago, the promise of digital learning was seen as a revolution. Today, however, as people find themselves drowning in a sea of digital content, those e-learning opportunities must be delivered in smaller bite sizes and often combined with real-life interactions to actually stick. As Pedro Gonzalo, Head of the University of Société Générale remarked: “*Presential learning is still ideal in many cases, but blended learning helps us to still have a great impact with lower budgets and more digital formats. Offline learning anchors the experience and makes it transformative, while the online part sustains the momentum*”.

Updating the Learner's World View

New power dynamics between “those who know” and “those who learn”

The information tsunami we are currently experiencing is both triggered by the unprecedented amount of free, quick, personalized content and the multiplicity of ways and devices to consume it. Too much access means that L&D professionals need to provide learners with more easily-digestible content through the devices they already use, while they're already on the job.

The overflow of content and information also impacts the power dynamic between 'those who know' and 'those who learn,' partially reshuffling the cards for where L&D should focus its efforts and showcase its value.

The end of the Ivory Tower (as we knew it)

Education providers are also evolving, and an increasing number of players embrace digital courses to extend their reach and offer more flexible education experiences. Ever since Stanford's introductory course on artificial intelligence in 2011 by Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig, which attracted 160,000 students, millions have discovered the power of remote, interactive education. Coined “Massive Open Online Courses,” such courses started offering content from leading universities at an unseen



scale. Proving that anyone could learn anything with an internet connection and a screen, those courses theoretically gave power to any learner in the world and direct access to world-renowned universities, which were previously reserved to only those who could afford to attend. They also helped generations of learners rethink their own professional development and how they could achieve their learning objectives.

Those online formats have challenged the position of the university professor owning knowledge and delivering it to a limited number of students per year in a physical classroom. The digitalization of content and opening up of curriculums has redistributed the cards between ‘those who know’ and ‘those who learn.’ With more content available for free than ever before, students can suddenly learn without a professor, and professors find themselves with more

time to mentor and coach students in their learning development, fundamentally redefining professors’ roles. This “eye-level” relationship has marked a turning point and created more direct access to knowledge and skills. As Pedro Gonzalo of Société Générale stated, “*the relationship with universities as ‘Guardians of knowledges’ has changed and new applied-knowledge or experience-based learning players have emerged.*”

New Degrees and the Importance of Degrees of Connection

In parallel, some of those online professors have become quite well known across the world, finding a new avenue for ‘standing out’ in some cases. Over time, MOOCs have become mainstream, and in 2018 even crossed the 100 million learners milestone according to ClassCentral Report, a website listing digital learning opportunities. The number of available courses is now as



Updating the Learner's World View

high as 11,400 from 900 universities, and it is encouraging learners to pursue MOOC-based degrees with “lower fees, a more flexible schedule, and a more relaxed admissions process.” For instance, top European Business school HEC Paris launched an online-only master degree for 20,000 euros with the same recognition as its classical onsite degree, just with more flexibility.


Last but not least, some of the new digital learning platforms, such as Tigerhall, focus even more on practical learning and achievements as well as the networking dimension.

Launched in February 2019, this mobile application is helping high-potential individuals meet and learn directly from business leaders over exclusive get-togethers. Those selective networking events are paired with tailored digital content pieces such as articles or podcasts written by the business leader themselves. Launched in February 2019, this mobile application is helping high-potential individuals meet and learn directly from business leaders over exclusive get-togethers. Those selective networking events are paired with tailored digital content pieces such as articles or podcasts written by the business leaders themselves.*

** WDHB is an investor in Tigerhall*

As we observe this phenomenon, we can look a bit more critically at the original value proposition of corporate L&D. If Learning & Development's aim is to offer on-demand learnings, this is now being challenged by world-class content available on flexible terms or quick and “good-enough” fixes such as YouTube videos.

New online programs (and their new social recognition systems) are now proposing a compelling alternative to the more fixed, classical development programs supplied by companies.

A golden statue of a man in a suit, holding a briefcase and an umbrella, is the central focus. The statue is positioned in the foreground, appearing to float or be suspended in the air. The background features a clear blue sky and a classical building with ornate architectural details, including arched windows and a balcony. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

“We are the people bringing new knowledge from outside the company, helping the business implement it and bringing it to the people in the organization.”

Janin Schwartau
thyssenkrupp

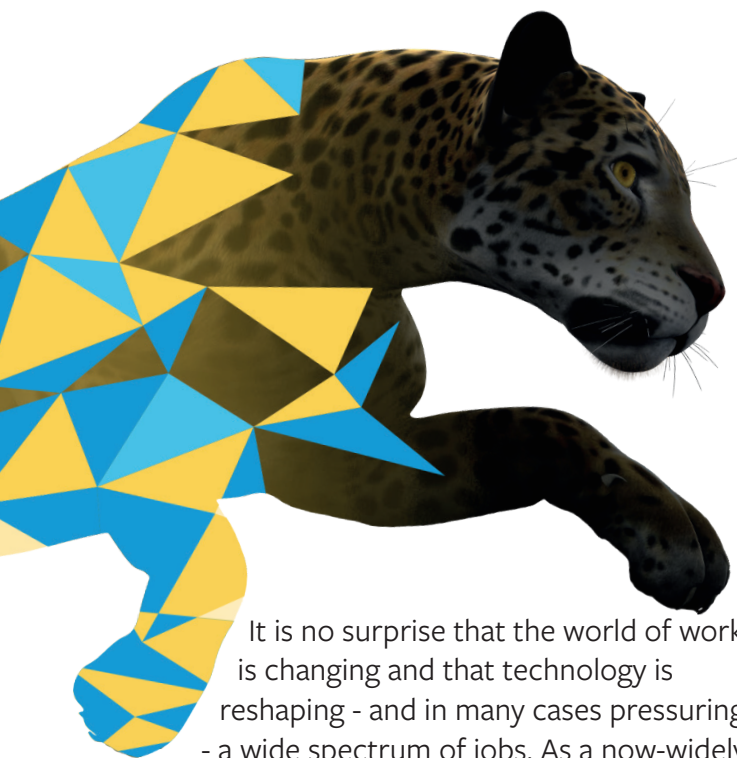
1.2

The Learner's Perception of Work

New digital tools and technologies, coupled with the massification of content, have triggered a need to renew skills and knowledge – and renew them fast. As our economies change at an accelerated rate, the workforce needs to be developed at an even faster pace. These adaptations impact companies, who must now be concerned with upskilling their entire workforces, but also employees, who are reevaluating their commitment towards their employers in new - and sometimes ambiguous - ways. This represents a novel challenge for Learning and Development leaders.



Race against the machine - or with it?



It is no surprise that the world of work is changing and that technology is reshaping - and in many cases pressuring - a wide spectrum of jobs. As a now-widely disseminated 2013 Oxford study showed, 47% of jobs are subject to computerization. What does this mean? Computerization, or automation, has two sides: on the one hand, new tools can free up time for workers to focus on tasks that require more brainpower, and on

the other hand, automation can cause a role to either drastically evolve or be dissolved when too many of those automated tasks represent a consistent part of a job.

A good example is the Marketing Role: while 20 years ago marketing roles were mostly about offline campaigns and billboards, today they are predominantly data-driven jobs, supplemented by a suite of automated tools to help make better decisions. While the ultimate objective of marketing hasn't changed, how marketers achieve their goals has gotten a serious facelift. The speed of these changes puts increasing pressure on businesses and L&D leaders - who must choose the best possible tools - to keep pace with the accelerated tempo.

As digital learning expert Anette Graf told us in an interview, *"pace is a challenge. You always try to catch up with tech. There's also a dilemma of which tech to chase. A good example is a Learning Management System. Do you try to implement a new one or improve [the one you have]? or do you even need one? Do you focus on a stable system or on the experience?"*

The Learner's Perception of Work

Other L&D leaders echo these observations. Both for tools and content, the rapid rise of new and enhanced options put both L&D practitioners and learners under a constant pressure. As Dominique Pépin, L&D director at Saint Gobain witnessed, *“as the rhythm is clearly accelerating with technology, how can companies keep up? We have to fully embrace a permanent learning mindset and this changes the way we can support our team members. They need to find ways to solve a problem - but in those cases are we talking about trainings or about online support?”*

This question is exemplified in a story that Gilbert Dietrich, now HR director for Aperto, shared with us as he witnessed the takeoff of support forums while working at Google. In the early days of Google Maps, it was still possible to serve customers “1 to 1” by email. Yet over time, as the product was used by hundreds of millions of people, this was not possible anymore. As a way to solve this, Google empowered its users (in addition to its support staff) to answer other users in the world through forums.

The model switched from “1 to 1” to “1 to many,” as an answer to a user’s question could be reused by another user and even updated by a third one.

This decentralization of knowledge is quite powerful: just as users can be harnessed to help other users in a support forum, so too can workers be used to help their fellow workers in an organization.

An amplified employee experience...

Workers also now having a wider variety of employment options - from freelance to remote to traditional and everything in between – and this variety can present both opportunities for companies and talent, and also a big source of confusion.

Employee commitment - how long?

New generations are perceived as less eager to commit to companies for years – they are said to switch employers more often than their elders. This shorter commitment can be epitomised with the “jobhopper” trend, especially seen in industries like tech or media. Facilitated by direct digital recruitment processes, and powered by a desire for better career moves and higher salaries, the term refers to a frequent job switcher (1-2x a year), and is associated with millennials, who are stereotyped as wanting everything

“on demand.” While this phenomenon doesn’t tell the whole story – as, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, employee tenure is actually quite stable, and job hopping is more a young worker trend than a millennial one - the widespread perception still remains, and raises the question for companies about how much they should invest in these allegedly fast-moving workers, if at all.

Break up with benefits?

On the flip side, employees who hop jobs may continue to contribute to their former employer indirectly or informally, even after their work contract has ended. For instance, in an effort to retain talent close to the core of the company activity, many companies are increasingly investing in corporate alumni networks, and even use the allure of these

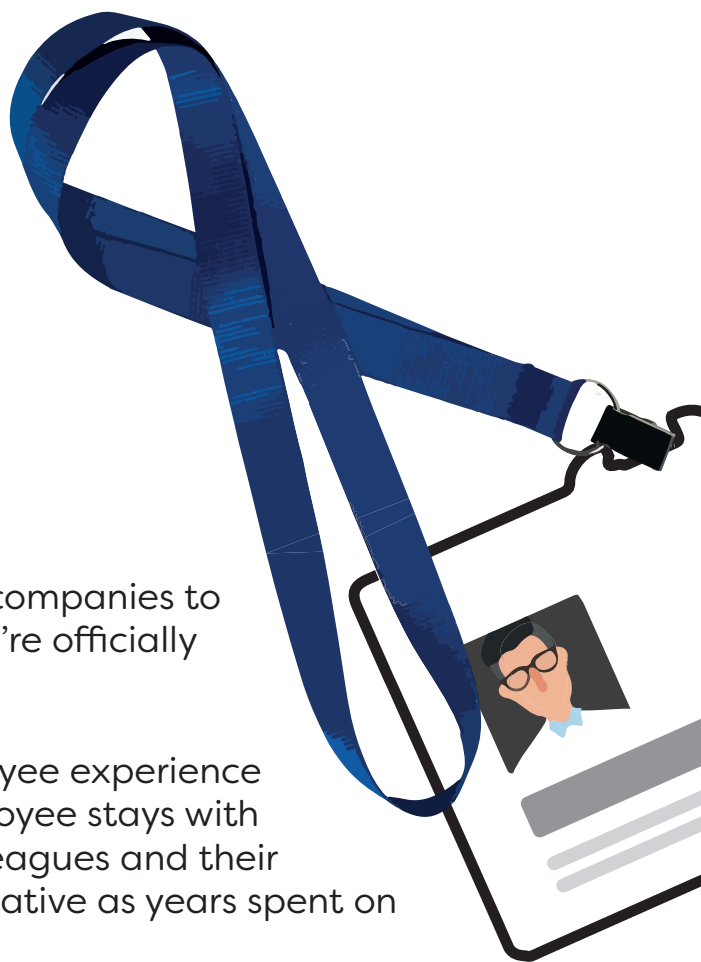


The Learner's Perception of Work

alumni networks as a recruiting tool for new hires. Valued as brand ambassadors and supporting recruitment and sales, former employees today are praised as the “2nd circle” beyond the company’s core. Especially in project-based industries like consulting, it is becoming more commonplace to bring back previously trained talent on new projects, regardless of their employee status. At international consulting firm McKinsey, it’s quite possible to be onboarded on projects as an independent contributor well after the employee has moved on, and the network is promoted as a “lasting benefit.”

In summary, while it’s becoming harder for companies to retain talent, keeping them close after they’re officially “gone” is becoming more routine.

For L&D leaders, this means that the employee experience is still vital, regardless of how long the employee stays with the company: shared experiences with colleagues and their collective onboarding are often just as formative as years spent on university campuses.



... or rather a close independent contributor?

Freelancers - who and why?

New ways of working and contributing to projects have emerged and are reshaping how companies are building and engaging their workforces. For example, some online platforms connect companies to independent workers

anywhere in the world who are willing to jump in for one hour on a project, while others let them find the right talent on a more regular but remote basis. From the single task contributor to the lifetime employee in one company, more options are on the table, and freelancers can be extremely different from each other.

According to the report "Freelancing in America: 2017" by freelancer platform Upwork and US-based Freelancers Union, the number of freelance workers is increasing three times faster than the rest of the workforce

- contributing \$1.4 trillion annually to the economy. Looking specifically at learning, 55% of independent workers are reskilling and preparing for the future and automation's possible takeover of their work.

According to McKinsey, there are about 4 categories of independent workers which can be clustered by two factors: freedom to choose freelancing ("Preferred Choice" vs "Out of Necessity") and nature of the income ("Primary Income" vs "Supplemental Income"). If the largest category standing today is the "Casual Earners" (40%), the second largest is the "Free Agents" (30%), together translating to 70% of independent workers choosing to be independent. Among the "free agents" there is an interesting sub-trend: the top talents who decide not to be full-time employees. Specifically, in the US in 2018, according to the Labor Office, 12% of those freelancers were making more than \$100,000 per year, and nowadays, they account for more than 21% of this category. This means that more and more highly qualified workers decide to jump out of the employee wagon, and/or that more individual workers can thrive financially in such position.



VISITOR

From an L&D perspective, those independent workers are responsible for themselves. Learning is usually happening on the job through a number of new projects, and development can be facilitated through community-building and support from platforms or communication systems within freelancer collectives. Hiring for some functions has become so hard that some companies might start investing in freelancer education, as Gilbert Dietrich (Aperto) speculates: *“Today, we expect freelancers to be ready for work but that will possibly change.”*

So why does this matter? In summary, we have on the one hand an increasing number of highly skilled talent who don’t necessarily want to commit as employees but would rather engage as freelancers, and on the other hand, those freelancers have a number of options to design their own career and development paths. The

battle for talent in a shrinking pool has become an all-out war, yet new ways for companies and talent to collaborate offer promising opportunities. This nevertheless requires a new HR skillset to manage a growing “liquid talent” workforce. In terms of Learning & Development, onboarding can be key for “external talent,” yet they are often taken care of by procurement and not HR functions. Having more talent on demand could actually be a great way to stimulate a company’s full time employees.

A key question that emerges then is:

For high potentials, what is the value proposition of the employee experience versus a freelance one?

Content is more ubiquitous than ever, and at an increasingly cheaper cost. The first consequence is an observable power shift between ‘those who know’ and ‘those who learn,’ making it a more balanced conversation, and more collaborative, among learners. The second consequence is the risk of “content fatigue” and the demand for higher standards from learners who already feel overwhelmed and consumed. Lastly, the question of access is king, and digital learning should be mobile-based and on-demand to take advantage of how and where most learners are already consuming their content.

L&D offers need to be more on-the-job than ever, and should be updated on a far more regular basis by L&D teams to keep up with the changing nature of work.

Speaking about the changing nature of work, liquid workforce and more blurred boundaries between work and personal life are putting more pressure on L&D to cater to diverse audiences within and at the edges of the organization. **As employment becomes a more fluid concept, traditional metrics of impact, including employee retention, are slowly shifting towards engagement evaluation.**

While the evolutions of learners’ attitudes and behaviors have put increased pressure on L&D to remain relevant and up-to-date, organizations are far from dispensing with the function. On the contrary, it appears all the more crucial to develop a high-performance L&D team to help cope with the VUCA context. Dominique Pépin sums it up by saying: *“Business acceleration means that people need to update their skills more and more often. The L&D machine can’t be disconnected from this, and so it becomes even more central”.*

In the next section, we will unveil some of the ways in which L&D practitioners can turn emerging challenges into opportunities to improve learning efficiency, bridge individual and organizational development, and support lifelong employability.



Embracing New Opportunities

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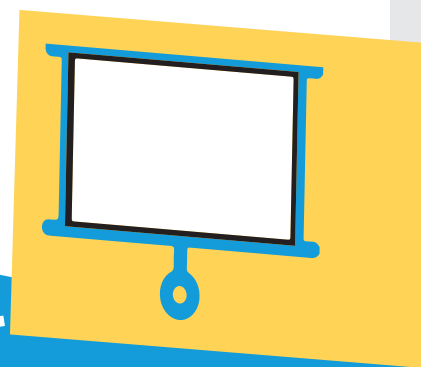


2.1

A. Rethinking Performance & Experience

“Employees’ expectations in terms of development & learning are higher, but attention span is shorter, **people want training on the go**. With this level of freedom and trust, L&D needs to answer to these higher expectations in each employees’ context: it’s much more about building a system rather than building a simple program”.

Annemie Ress
PurpleBeach

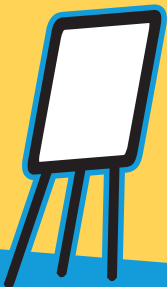


The face of the corporate L&D function is changing to meet the challenges presented in the previous section - in particular, to adapt to the shifts in learners' behavior, as they have adopted a time-savers attitude and are attracted to the easy and fast consumption of learning nuggets. However, this ease of consumption does not mean that learners are any less demanding when it comes to learnings' quality; it is up to the L&D function to guarantee this quality while offering less time-consuming learning formats.

L&D Efficiency: how to best translate contents into learnings

The L&D function takes on a new responsibility: building an ecosystem in which employees will access learning content, and in which a strategic curation of these learning contents and their delivery formats must guarantee a high level of quality, while not consuming too much time. The challenge lies in differentiating between contents that should be made non time-consuming, and learning content that requires the employees to take more time.

Camille Gillon and Bénédicte Marchal (Belfius) have made it clear: *"We either take time to train and in that case, we prefer offline training, or we want to save time and in that case digital learning is efficient. A two hours video is as consuming as a two hours class: digital is for bite-size content."*



Rethinking Performance & Experience

L&D practitioners need to separate learnings into two categories: learning nuggets, which can be acquired on-the-go, and other forms of learning based on more strategic objectives or that require a deeper maturation rather than mere absorption by the employee.

In the case of learning nuggets, the L&D function can choose to digitize its approach, particularly in the formats that deliver these learnings, such as the chatbots used in many companies for these purposes (Amazon, Deutsch Telekom, etc.). However, this digitalization should not be considered a perfect option in all cases, and face-to-face learning may remain a more appropriate method depending on the learning objectives.

“Automatization through digitalization is limited in L&D, it can support but not replace presential learning. Blended Learning is the way to go.”

Deniz Başoğlu
Awin Global

Blended learning is therefore more than just a combination of the two: it is the approach consisting in differentiating learning objectives and choosing the most relevant method to efficiently deliver on the respective objectives.

A good example is the training of medical staff. Here trainers have multiple objectives: theoretical medical knowledge, learning the right moves, dealing with stressful situations and crisis management, etc. Offline learning (classes, shadowing, etc.) is efficient to achieve most of these objectives, but in some cases, situations need to be simulated, and so digitalization can greatly enhance the learning process, for instance through Virtual Reality technology.

In France, researchers and developers have put together VR trainings aimed at teaching medical staff how to announce bad news to patients, or deal with crisis situations. This helps bridge the gap between a tutorial way of teaching and learning-by-doing in hospitals' training programs (Sources: <http://www2.lpl-aix.fr/~acorformed/>; <https://simforhealth.fr/en/>).

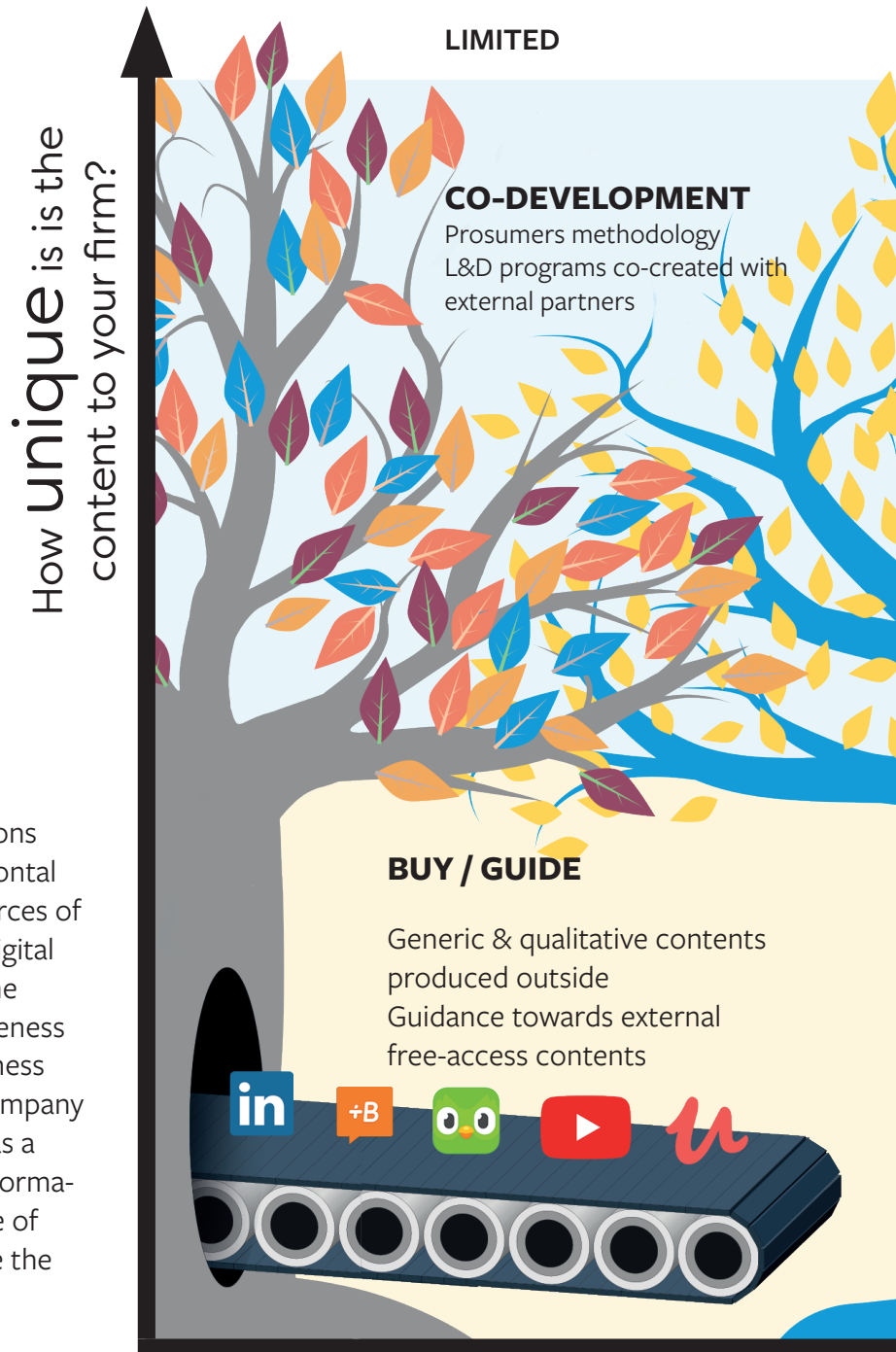
These examples highlight the different possibilities that the L&D function has in creating its learning content. It can of course create content in-house or initiate a co-creation with external partners, as is the case between the Angers University Hospital and a 3D experience provider (Immersion) for the creation of its VR training module for medical teams. But learning content is very often already accessible externally. In this case, how should L&D choose between creating its own content or acquiring it elsewhere?

“A strategic role of the L&D function is to choose between making or buying content. Depending on the final goal the L&D function has to either create or co-create content, and then showcase it, or buy it outside and curate this external content, giving guidance to learners”.

Daniel Vonier
SAP

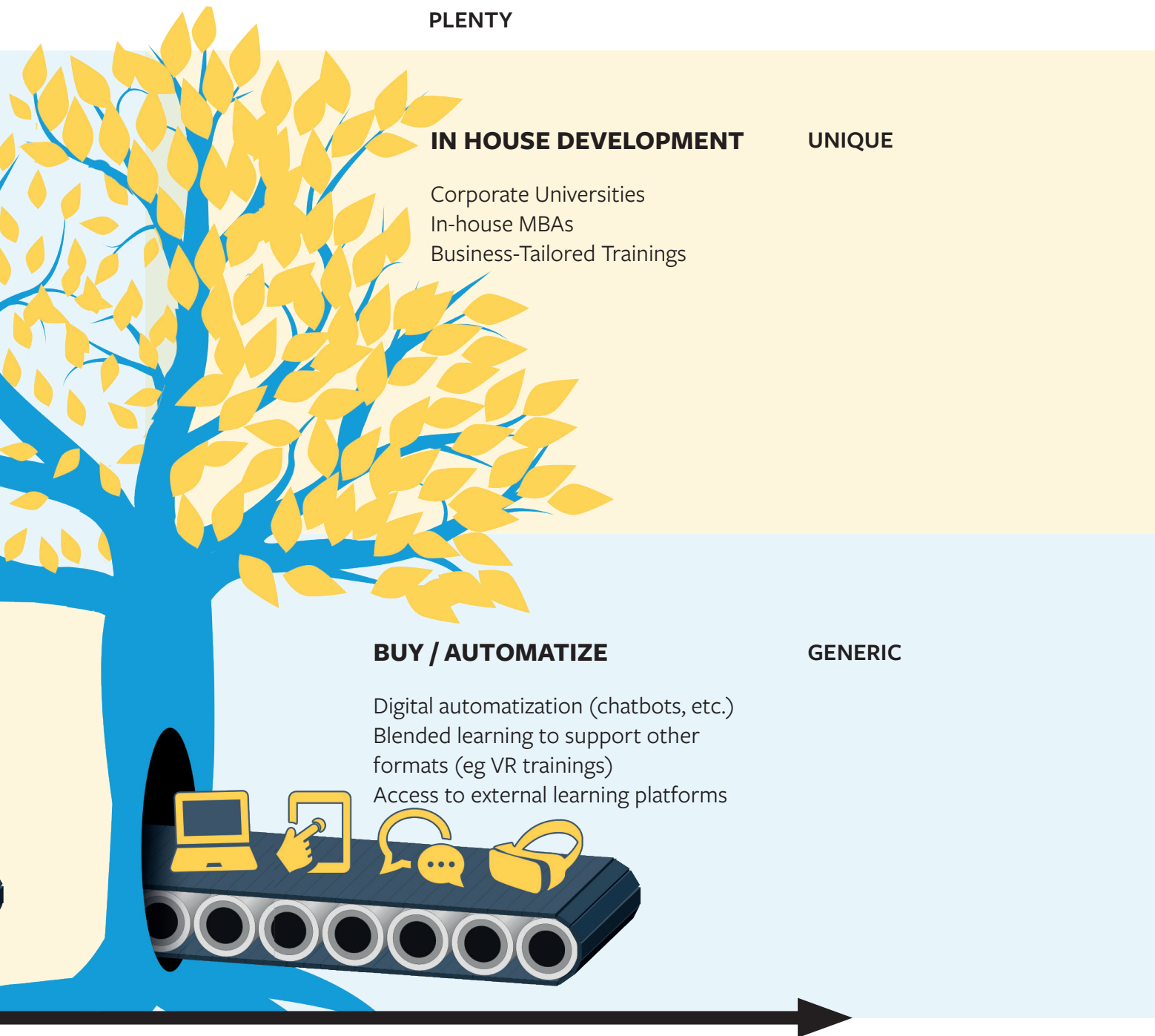


Rethinking Performance & Experience



Make it or Buy it?

We propose a matrix to help make decisions regarding this strategic choice. The horizontal axis takes into account the internal resources of the L&D function (teams, skills, budget, digital platforms and pre-existing ecosystem); the vertical axis represents the desired uniqueness of the final learning content. This uniqueness depends upon criteria specific to each company and the intended purpose. For example, as a result of a profound organizational transformation, a change in the values and/or culture of the organization may occur, in which case the content for learning must be unique.



How many **resources** can you dedicate in house?

Rethinking Performance & Experience

If the learning content you want is generic and doesn't need to be tailored for your organization, and your resources to produce the content yourself are limited, then the more strategic option is to buy this content externally, or guide people towards available content on consumer platforms. An example would be language training: several experts already exist outside and propose well-made learning platforms or even smartphone apps (Duolingo, Babel, etc.).

On the other hand, if you have plenty of resources to allocate to this generic content, you can think of how to automate it or support it by developing (in house) digital or blended learning solutions (such as learning nuggets and bite-size content digitalized, or VR-supported trainings).

When resources are abundant (budget, competences, skills and teams) and content needs to be tailored to your own unique context (uniqueness), then developing content in house may be your best bet.

Not all organizations have the internal resources (budget, competencies, team or time, etc.) to produce unique content that meets their very specific needs. In this case, co-creation with an external partner makes it possible to fill this gap.

Another way to consider co-creation at this stage is to integrate the final users into the design process, and therefore consider them as "prosumers," with the same logic as in product design.

Gilbert Dietrich (Aperto, ex-Google) gave us an example: *“At Google, we realized that 15% of the users of one of our apps were reporting negative feedback. It turned out there was a correlation between being left-handed and having a bad user experience. Our entire team was right handed!”* Following these principles, Google applied the prosumer methodology to their training needs (and also brought in more diversity to their L&D teams).

The question of “Make or Buy” learning content is becoming one of strategic aspects of the L&D function. Depending on resources and the specificity or uniqueness of the learning content needed, L&D practitioners can either choose to: buy and/or guide employees towards external content; automate or scale bite-size content; or co-create or create learning contents. **What really matters is the reason behind the decision to go for one of these options - and this makes all the difference in terms of the impact of L&D function.**



Prosumers in L&D: a dual purpose

The prosumer approach, born out of product design, is increasingly applied to L&D content design and training delivery formats, namely because it has two major consequences: 1) it enables L&D to design from the real needs of the business; and 2) it can be an actual part of the training!

Integrating end-users (employees) in learning design enables L&D practitioners to observe them, put them in the position of training peers, and develop them. At Swiss Life, programs are developed in ways that integrate in-house experts as trainers: Stefanie Weber, Swiss Life's Head of Group Talent, described the financial module of the company's talent development programs: *"Our financial module is done completely in-house, because our financial perspective is specific. We start with digital nuggets for those who are not in the finance function (those are relatively generic), then we run webinar with the aim to build the bridge from generic finance to Swiss Life-specific finance. Then the third step a 2.5-day seminar with our in-house finance people as trainers."*

Putting such approach in place complexifies the learning delivery formats as they become multi-modular and mix different training methodologies. It also allows the L&D function to pursue, on top of the programs' well-known objectives, implicit goals. Pascal Jouvin, the head of LVMH House, gives us a good example of how this dual-purpose principle can be used: *"We have a seminar called "Perspective" in which a leader of the company gives a business case for high potential talents. The group of hi-po's exchange, work and provide the leader with their answer. After which, they get back to their groups and they debrief with a HR facilitator, who has been trained on observing group dynamics.*

A small exercise like this one serves many purposes: for the leader presenting the business case, there are learnings on how to engage with people outside of his/her industry. For the talents, there is a huge exposure to new topics and people. As for the HR facilitator, they are trained in group dynamics and they get to put their learnings in situation."

The prosumers' philosophy helps L&D practitioners, when designing or curating learning content, to do two things at once. First, as stated by Aurélien Guillard, HR Project Manager for L&D at Disneyland Paris, *"To be good L&D practitioners, you need to know how to accurately connect the business needs and the learning formats."* In other words: be more employee-centric and therefore close to the business needs, with a more accurate fine-tuning of the learning content and delivery. Secondly, prosumers involved in the design and delivery of multi-modular and more complex training formats helps L&D be much more efficient while also doubling down on their own learning.

Rethinking Performance & Experience

Learning & Experience: one & indivisible

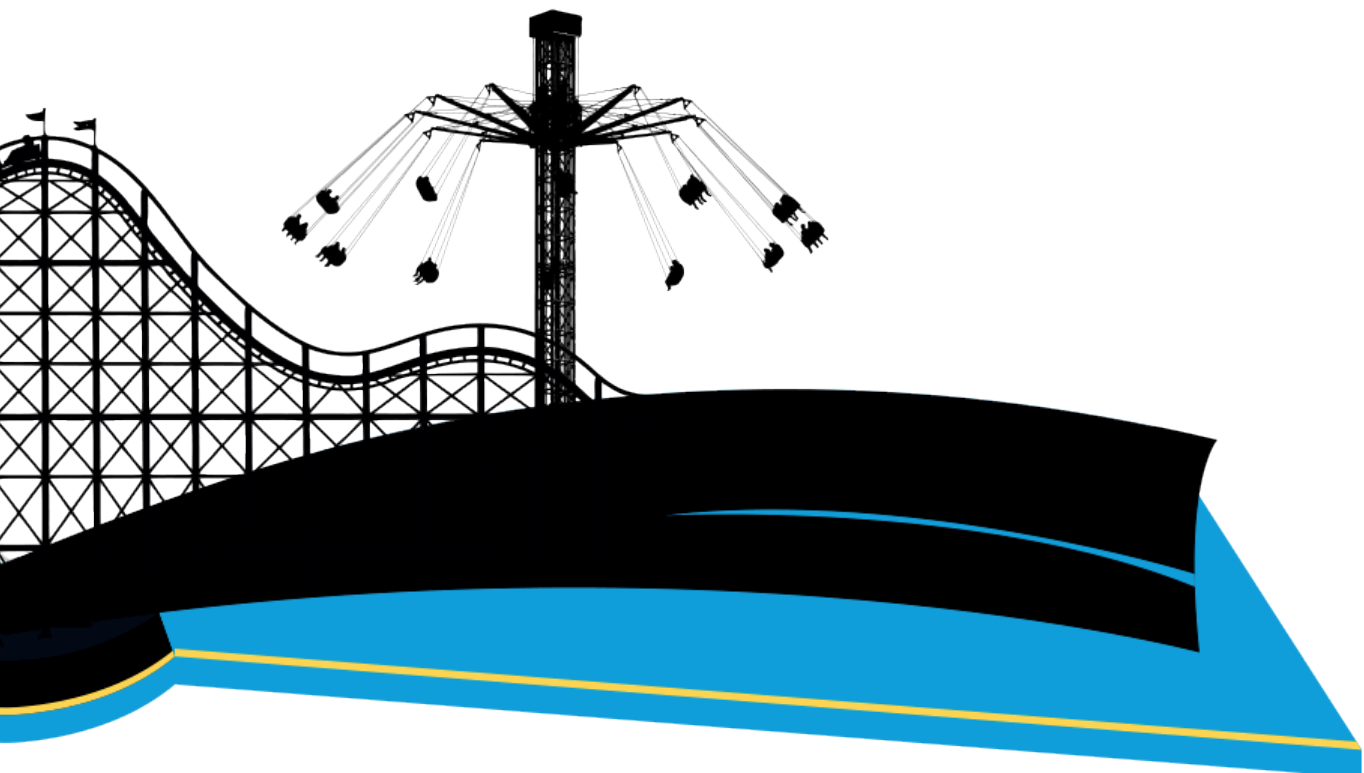
Nowadays, it is commonly admitted that learning is not only rational – it is above all experiential. Pascal Jouvin (LVMH) confirmed this very clearly: *“Learning is really about experience, about motivating people to learn by offering a great learning experience. Learning is head, heart and guts, and we need to focus more on the heart and the guts to attract participants, engage them and anchor the learnings. Because of this, the L&D function tends to integrate more and more entertainment elements.”*

This focus on experiential is increasingly integrated as a core L&D requirement. In particular, because it becomes an important lever to anchor learning outcomes, create learning communities internally, thanks to storytelling elements and to a stronger focus on the user experience.



Indeed, L&D practitioners must pay great attention to this criterion when designing learning formats, but also when curating content, in line with the philosophy of UX developers. For example, a basic UX principle such as “make it short and sexy” becomes an important paradigm to consider in L&D! Later in this report, we will observe the more precise impact this has on L&D practitioners in terms of professions and skills.

This experiential dimension, which must be optimized as much as possible, requires the L&D practitioner to initiate and support a Learning Mindset within their user community.



2.2

Engagement at the core

As we discovered in the first part of our report, knowledge and learning are becoming commodities as a lot of content is now accessible online in various formats. Development is nevertheless becoming even more important as the business context is changing fast. In such a fast-paced environment, it represents a new kind of currency and remains a sign of recognition by the company.

To high potential talents especially, development programs are more important than ever to express appreciation and show a visible commitment.

“People are feeling honored to be invited to our programs, and it should remain this way. L&D also has a motivational dimension and this shouldn’t be forgotten. The emotional aspects are also key in the process even if the formats of trainings evolve.”

Pascal Jouvin
LVMH



Development is the new currency...

In Berlin, Gilbert Dietrich shared with us an example he experienced at Aperto: *“The high potential program was built last year. During the first class, we realized there was a bit of a cultural unfit and we had to rebuild the program in a very short time. It was a great success in the end but we adapted the program and its selection process. From sixty people, we decided to only focus on twelve per class, yet the nomination process changed. We now choose self-nomination with a sponsor (vs being nominated by your manager). I believe this drives motivation and a sense of responsibility for yourself.”*

Another dimension of this individual development is to show talents that they can also have ownership of certain topics and gain visibility in the organization beyond their strict role.

In some of the companies we spoke with, employees are encouraged to become experts and earn badges on specific topics; in others, they are encouraged and empowered to develop intrapreneurial projects that emerge following the learning programs they have participated in. For Marine Perrache from Mazars, this is an important component of those programs: *“If we want our team members to stay, we should let them [have] time to work on the special projects they came up with during a Hackathon, for example.”*

Mixed together, the empowerment of team members and their recognition through special L&D programs are two key factors that are deeply connected with engagement and motivation. If they feel the company doesn't invest in them enough, talents are more likely to leave.

“L&D is more important than recruiting. If people don't learn, they will leave”.

Gilbert Dietrich
Aperto

But L&D can also leverage another dimension to seal a lasting relationship between the employee and the company: its ability to create a collective common experience.

... and the organizational glue...

Rituals and Experiences – a core of learning communities. Beyond the individual growth provided by L&D programs, the collective dimension of belonging is also crucial and leads to strong professional bonds. Whether it is with peers from your “cohort,” “class,” “group” (or any other social group denomination), or with the leading figures of the organization who take part in it, the shared experience of learning together after having been selected plays a vital role in the value of the program.

Stefanie Weber from Swiss Life expands upon this idea when talking about the process involved in one of the talent programs she's leading: *“the nomination is a multi-step process from nomination by the boss to approval by the ExB. Once the program is over, the graduation is an internal event during which alumni and the Execs are invited. This whole process from selection, to intense learning experience, to officially joining the alumni is a series of rituals that deeply bond learners beyond the company's daily life”.*

They can also bond beyond the typical organizational structure.

At Belfius, development programs are seen as a great occasion to meet team members they would never have met otherwise. The “Bridge Builder program” comprises two days of residential learning experience with twenty young- and senior collaborators from a wide range of backgrounds. *“We take them away from their daily concern and open them to the outside world. The networking effect is much appreciated. There’s even a regular Alumni event organized by some of the former bridge builders.”* (Bénédicte Marchal)

As employees are seemingly becoming less committed to their employers, L&D programs can positively drive how much of a connection an employee builds with the company. The quality of the professional relationship created will define not only the depth of an employee’s experience with the company during their time there, but also after they leave.

... which defines a new lifelong employability deal.

Companies don't have the monopoly of corporate knowledge. While content access is no longer a key differentiator between organizations, companies can still set themselves apart by building environments with a concentration of skilled individuals who can learn from each other on the job. In doing so, this enables organizations to set employees up to develop valuable soft skills and improve their employability throughout their career. **Lifelong learning and employability must become the core of the work relationship.**

As a consequence of our fast-paced economy, those new skills and knowledge must also be collected and shared by workers themselves. Practical knowledge and industry updates become central to employees who are no longer receiving the training but are still actively transmitting those updated skills and knowledge.

As Stefanie Weber noted, *“Expectations towards learning and development are changing. We are not just providing seminars, or content, but moving towards being advisors: we advise people on what they could do with the little time they can devote to L&D. We help them spend it more effectively.”*

Let's recap

One could ask: **with the abundance of content and information within and outside the organization, is L&D still needed?**

We believe that now more than ever, L&D professionals have an opportunity to set new standards in learning performance and create sustained impact. How so?

Firstly, by focusing on efficiency. Prioritizing between the contents that can remain generic and those that require more in-depth involvement of the organization, choosing whether to make or buy, and finding the right channels for each type of content.

Secondly, by increasing user involvement in the design and delivery of L&D and developing strategies to achieve many learning objectives at once.

And thirdly, by focusing on experience as a key dimension of learning.

The learning experience increasingly needs to be anchored within the organization's rituals and to bridge individual and organizational development. Moreover, it has to be thought of in the perspective of a "lifelong employability deal" between the organization and its members, beyond the time they spend as employees.

In the next section, we will observe how the new expectations towards L&D are contributing to the gradual shifting of teams and to a redefinition of the roles and purpose of the function.





3

The Evolving Setup & Role of L&D

3.1

Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

We cannot research the Future of L&D without taking time to investigate the roles of the professionals working in this field. As the L&D function evolves, how do their roles also change? Are they well equipped and competent to tackle these new responsibilities?

To answer these questions, we interviewed L&D experts and practitioners. But taking it a step further, we also conducted an in-depth online study analyzing L&D job-offers as well as LinkedIn profiles to better understand what companies are looking for in new hires, and what experienced practitioners feel the L&D role represents to them.”. Through this research, we wanted to decipher the new L&D roles and build a vision of what sort of L&D team would be best suited to thrive in these new horizons.



What Companies are looking for in L&D Practitioners

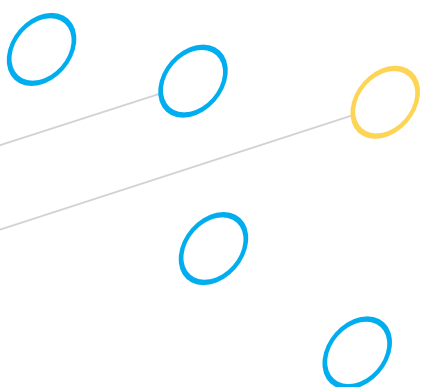
To unveil the ideal profile that companies wish to integrate into their L&D function, we used two different approaches: asking the question directly to leaders and practitioners of the L&D function in their company, and taking the pulse of the L&D job market.

When asking L&D leaders what kind of profile they would ideally recruit for their team, several characteristics came up. *“What is most important for me is the knowledge of the organization and its ecosystem”*, said Dominique Pépin (Saint Gobain). It shows how important it is for any L&D practitioner to know the ins and outs of their organization. Janin Schwartau

(thyssenkrupp) adds: *“In my team, the only HR expert is leading our HR Campus. Members of the team come from business and consulting, and share a strong interest in learning. I believe this could be one of our key success factors, giving us a very good acceptance in the business.”*

On the other hand, their digital ability also appears to be a strong requirement: to easily navigate in their own organizations, L&D professionals should *“possess digital skills and knowledge of digital learning processes”* (Dominique Pépin)

The small study conducted on the L&D job market helped us dig deeper. Through an analysis of 70 job offers for L&D profiles on LinkedIn, Monster, Météojob and Welcome to the Jungle, mostly based in Europe (98%), we’ve synthesized the verbatim used by professional recruiters to describe the ideal profile of the L&D candidates they are looking to hire. Afterwards, the verbatim data went through a coding analysis, allowing us to extract useful insights. The following histogram represents the verbatim categories and their respective importance compared to the overall occurrences we’ve identified.



Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

The interviews with L&D experts showed us that digital savviness is a coveted characteristic among recruits, but this emphasis on digital is much less visible when looking at job offers. Only 17% of these offers mention digital requirements for candidates for L&D positions, which leads us to the conclusion that there might exist some discrepancies between L&D team leaders and recruiters. Although digital competency seems to be sought-after by L&D teams, it does not seem to be sufficiently emphasized, even during the earliest step of the recruitment process.

Companies have expressed that mindset (or personality traits) and soft skills (the expression of such traits in a professional setting) seem more important than hard skills to be a suitable candidate for L&D responsibilities.

Among the top 10 most used descriptors in job ads, half come from the mindset and soft skills analysis categories, such as proactivity and creativity. Altogether they also account for 50% of the descriptors used in job ads to describe what companies expect in their ideal L&D profile, suggesting that mindset might matter more than specific hard skills & expertise.

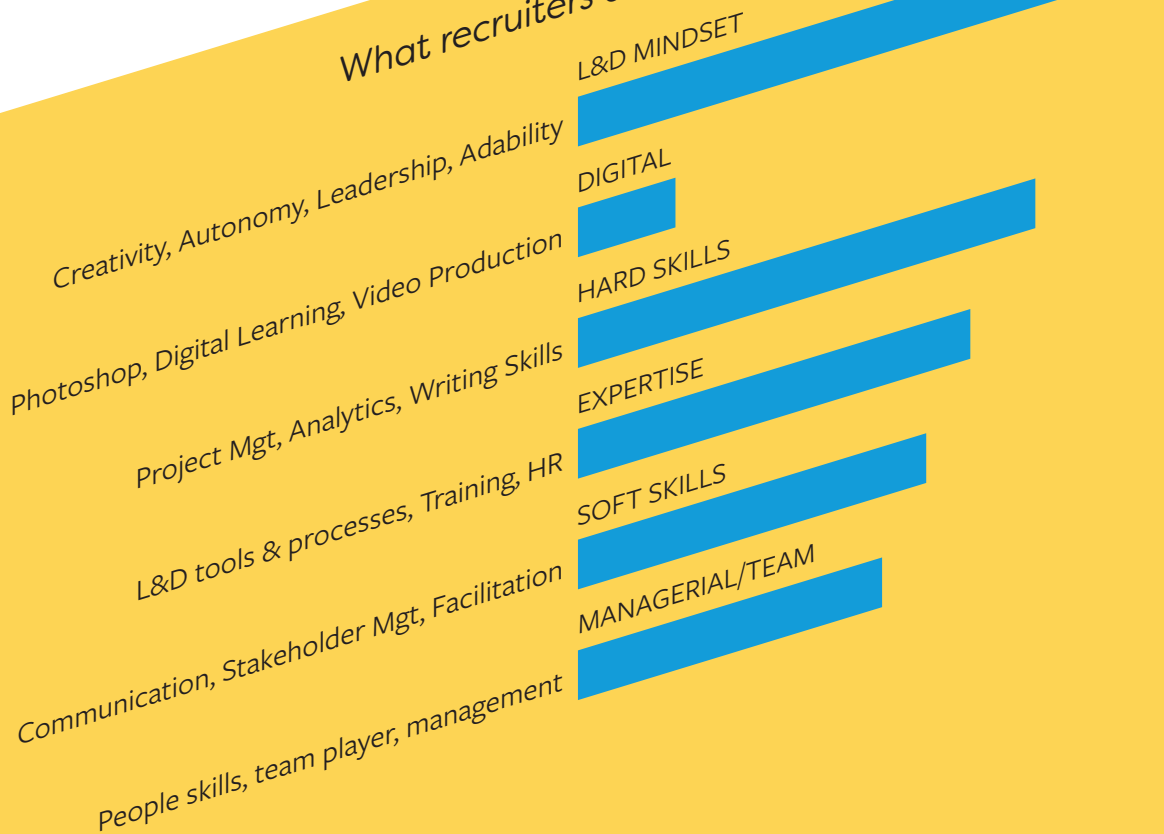
Top 10 most used words in L&D job offers

- Project Management** (45 occurrences) in Hard skills
- People Skills** (32 occurrences) in Managerial/Team
- L&D tools & Processes + Training** (28 occurrences) in Soft Skills
- Proactive** (18 occurrences) in Expertise
- Analytics** (15 occurrences) in Mindset
- Creativeness** (14 occurrences) in Hard Skills
- Intercultural Mindset** (13 occurrences) in Mindset
- HR Processes** (12 occurrences) in Expertise

However, this does not prevent companies from expecting their L&D practitioners to be able to measure their contribution and impact. Indeed, within hard skills, the most cited are “Project Management” and “Analytics,” which reflect the need to for L&D people to be both capable of leading projects from A to Z by detailing the steps, and to use data-based analysis to report on their progress.

Interestingly, during our discussions, several of the interviewees admitted to challenging the very idea of recruiting people with an HR background for their L&D teams.

What recruiters are looking for...



Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

Who L&D Practitioners feel they are

We analyzed 70 L&D profiles on LinkedIn using verbatim coding analysis, focusing on a European scope (more than 95% of the profiles are professionals working in France and/or Europe). The following histogram shows the descriptor categories and their respective importance compared to the overall occurrences found throughout our study of these L&D profiles.

This study, combined with the insights from our interviews, provides an opportunity to deepen the observations mentioned above, but also to unveil new dimensions that make up the roles and competencies of L&D professionals.

L&D professionals perceive themselves as much more digital-savvy (Digital Acumen ranks in the top 10 most used descriptors) than the job offers studied previously would suggest, which highlights the progress that recruiters must

make at this level.

However, a rather considerable divergence quickly appears in our study: 67% of these profiles have an HR background, which shows a high prevalence of HR careers leading to L&D positions, in contrast to the trend described above. The clear willingness of L&D leaders and experts to recruit people with a mindset for L&D beyond HR experts has not yet been translated into concrete terms but is certainly expected in the near future.

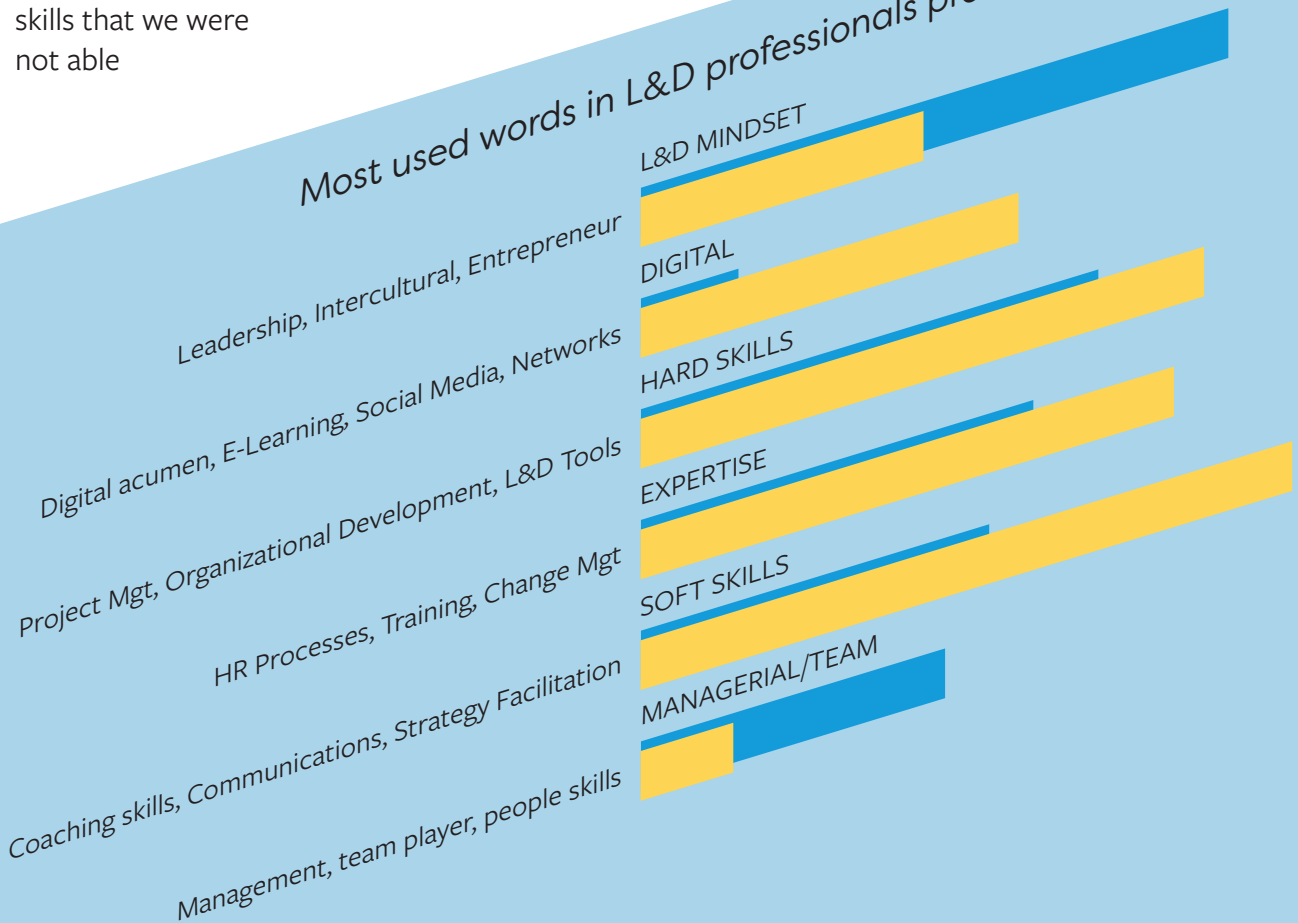
Top 10 most used words by in job offers

- Project Management** (48 occurrences) in Hard Skills
- HR Processes** (47 occurrences) in Expertise
- Training** (41 occurrences) in Expertise
- Management** (36 occurrences) in Managerial/Team
- Change Management** (34 occurrences) in Expertise
- Hiring / English** (22 occurrences) in Hard Skills
- Talent Development** (18 occurrences) in Expertise
- Coaching Skills** (17 occurrences) in Soft Skills
- Digital Acumen** (15 occurrences) in Digital

Seeing as LinkedIn is used to showcase professional skills, our study has shown a much stronger focus on hard skills and expertise compared to our analysis of job offers. This corresponds to the use of LinkedIn as a showcase for peoples' professional skills. However, Different perspective allows us to observe that L&D professionals have acquired a mastery of certain skills that we were not able

to uncover in our analysis of job offers. One to detect, in particular that of "change driver" (mentioned in 34 of the 70 profiles studied). L&D sees their function as a vehicle for change, and practitioners position themselves as a lever for transformation in the organization, through their responsibilities in people

Most used words in L&D professionals profiles

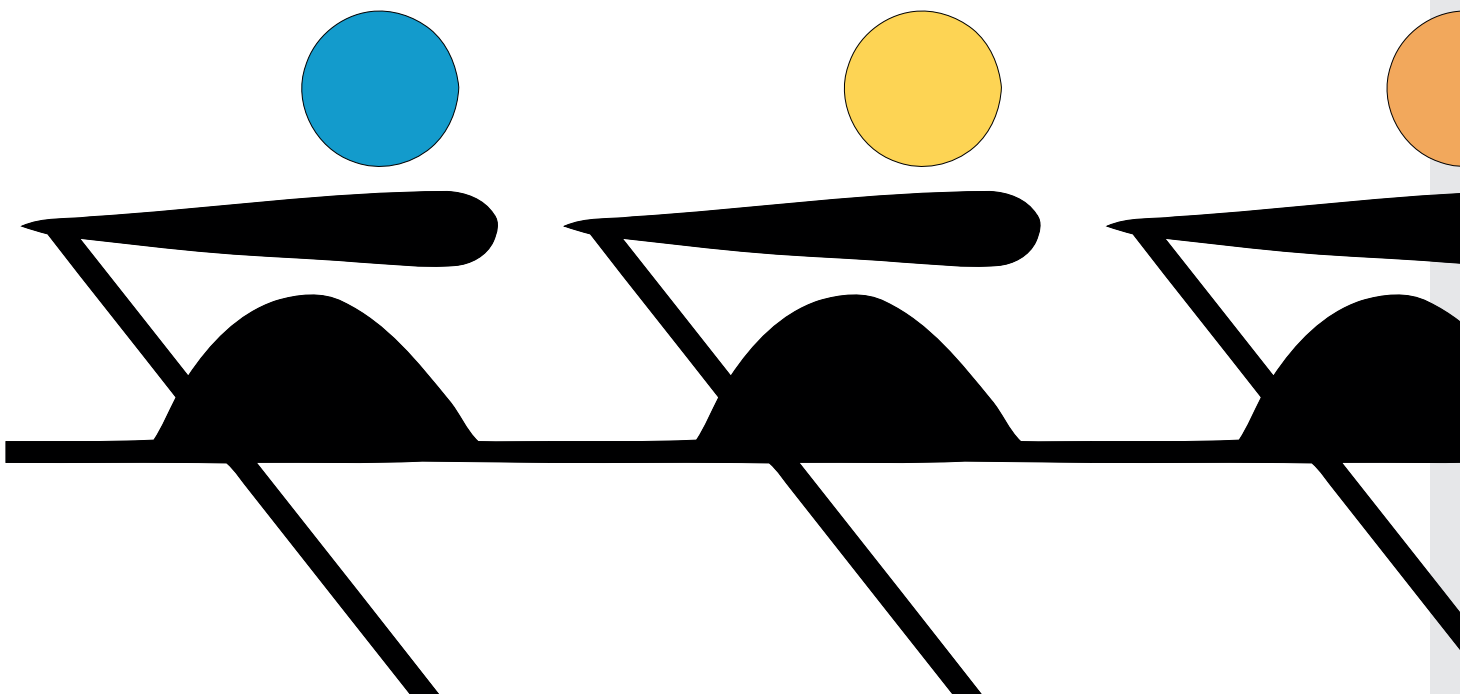


Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

Although it may seem contradictory, L&D profiles today are at a crossroads between people-centric and data-centric profiles. As G. Dietrich (Aperto) mentioned, “*The most important skills for someone working in L&D are a combination of a mindset and People Analytics,*” which helps understand the logic behind this apparently contradictory aspect: people working in L&D must be able to design and build a learning ecosystem to develop workers, and be held accountable for it. As they are turning into architects of an internal Learning Hub, a data-centric approach helps them bring accountability to the function.

The importance of labels such as “Talent Development” (top 8 of the most mentioned) and “Coaching” (top 9 of the most mentioned)

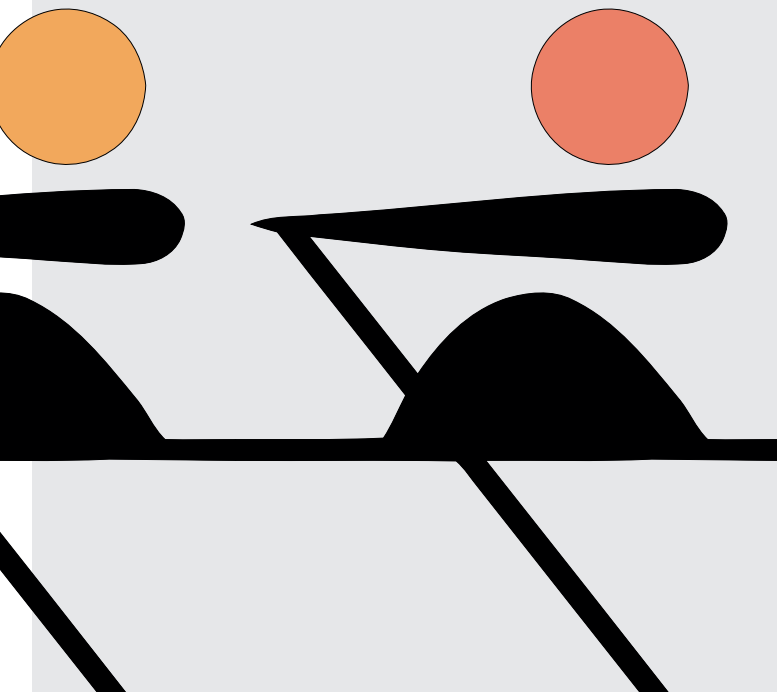
also shows a new view that L&D people have of themselves: they are intrinsically agents of others’ development. Beyond their role as “program managers” and “learning system architects,” they are able to personally offer employees coaching and development sessions, thanks to their own skills in this field.



New expectations = new team needed!

We believe that L&D people are no longer just content providers and/or simple program managers, but must take a new place in the organization, as engineers of a learning ecosystem. This ecosystem and its sustainability, as well as their responsibilities for the development of people, turn them into change drivers, while requiring them to make a significant effort in terms of accountability. These changes in the function therefore call into question traditional L&D competencies and require companies to think carefully about the skilling of L&D teams.

Talking to Daniel Vonier from SAP, we understood that having diverse profiles in L&D teams is essential, and while there is no secret recipe, Daniel feels that *“A great mix would be based upon three pillars: people with a data analyst or UX development background, people with psychology and behavior knowledge, and finally people coming from the business.”*



Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

We believe that these 3 pillars can help in building a highly efficient L&D team, and to do so, they should be understood as follows:

Data Analyst/Software Developer

Data Analyst/ Developer profiles bring their expertise on data analysis, supporting the L&D function's accountability in the company by allowing its performance and impacts to be managed through data crunching and analysis. UX developers and related backgrounds contribute their focus on User Experience (UE) and User-friendly platforms, enabling them to come up with ideas and methods to enhance learners' experience (LX). David Hindley, former HRD for Danone and Disney supports this notion: *"An L&D function with great standards on EX (employee experience) is very rare on the market, even if it is an important part of its impacts. It is very needed."*

Business Profiles

People coming from the business have a better understanding of the business needs and how to translate them into L&D policies. They know how to talk to business leaders, understand their technical language and sub-cultures within the organization, as well as how to meet their expectations. David Hindley adds that *"any L&D team should at least comprehend people with a good understanding of the business and field experience."*

Psychologist

Psychologists profiles or people with social sciences backgrounds bring their understanding of human behaviors and learning processes at the individual scale, and they know what triggers to leverage in order to enhance the learning curves and knowledge acquisition for individuals. Complemented with coaching expertise, these profiles can provide learning frameworks and co-development processes fitting the learners culture, mindset and behaviors in the organization. An important part of their responsibilities is to ensure that their L&D team's content is pedagogically sound and reliable as they are also supporting people development and bridging individual goals with those of the organization.

The Magic 3 The well-balanced L&D Team



The emergence of new profiles in L&D along with traditional HR profiles make it possible to foresee new types of positions within the L&D function in the near future.

Building Future-Ready L&D Teams

For example, the emphasis on the employee's experience in a learning situation, combined with the recruitment of a profile with a background in UX development, can lead to the emergence of the **ELX (Employee Learning Experience) Designer**: they interpret the knowledge to be acquired into enhanced learning experiences. They perfectly know the various learning processes and which platforms (digital or offline) to use in order to optimize learning, and can even design these themselves.

The Data Analyst/Performance Consultant job will also emerge within the L&D function. Such a profile must have the dual ability to analyze business intelligence data and L&D data, and then combine these analyses to report on the impacts of the L&D function's activities to business leaders.

Becoming the architects of a system that promotes the learning mindset also implies that management will be necessary to make it sustainable. With this in mind, the function of **Community Engagement Manager** will ensure that L&D takes responsibility for ensuring the

sustainability of the learning community formed within the organization. They can make sure that there is a constant drum beat of content, communications, new learning experiences, etc., and would continuously manage employees' engagement in learning.

These new jobs do not imply that more traditional roles will disappear, but simply that they will evolve. To satisfy these evolutionary needs, organizations must allow themselves to develop and acquire the L&D mindset presented above. Thus, competencies in organizational development, change management, systemic thinking and digital upskilling will be vital to build a thriving learning ecosystem.

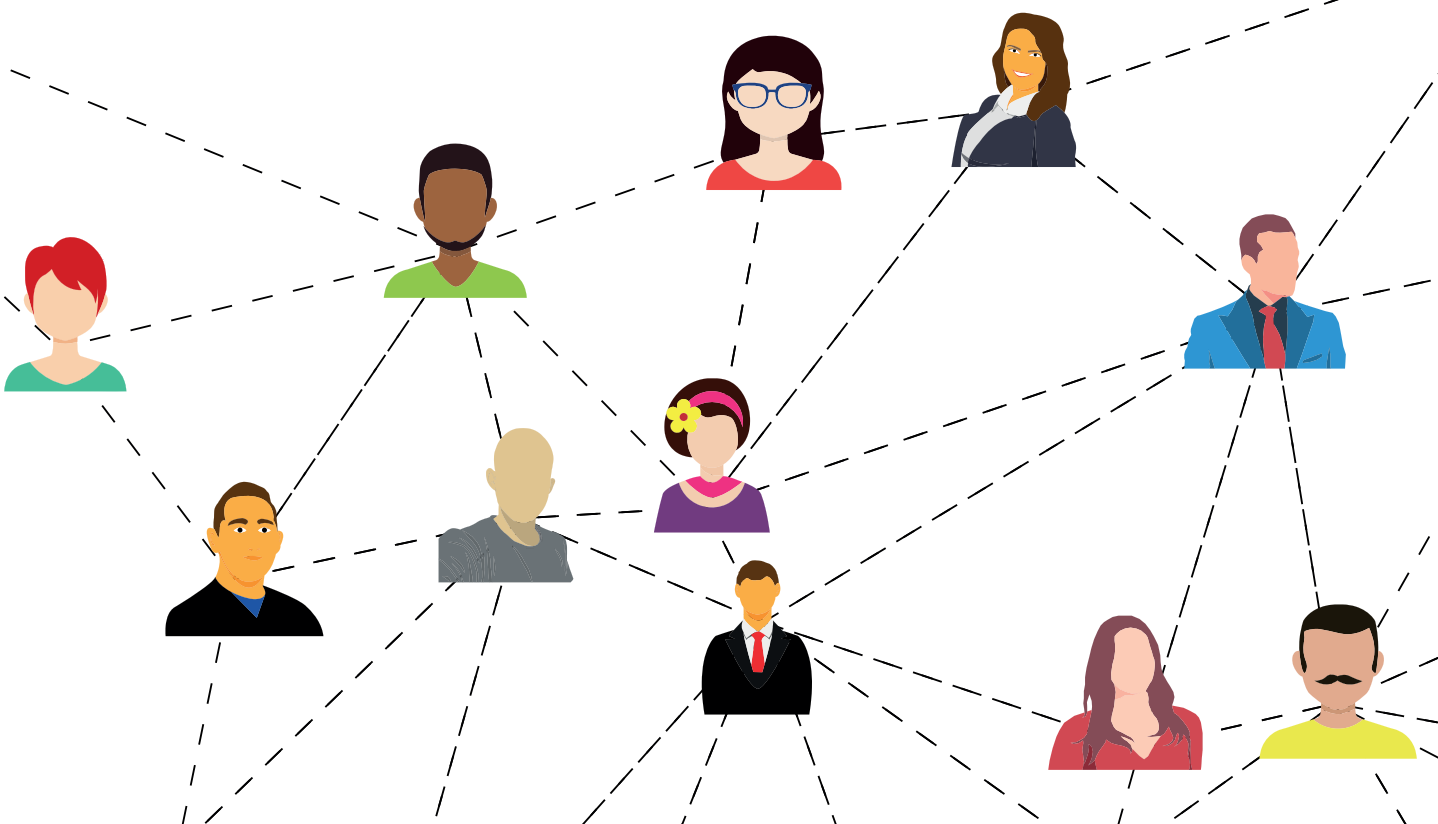


The L&D function, and in particular its professionals, are at the intersection of evolutions that may appear contradictory at first glance. For example, they are asked to be both people-focused and data-centric. Traditionally, the HR function supplied a dominant proportion of the people working in L&D, but this trend has shifted towards diversification, and new profiles appear that embody the L&D function's refreshed identity. To meet its newfound positioning as an architect of an internal Learning Hub, a learning mindset leader and a change driver, L&D must arm itself with profiles in data analysis, UX/EX, development and learning psychology, to name a few. Digital remains an area in which companies must improve their efforts, both in the recruiting and in the training of their L&D practitioners. Finally, so many upheavals require further strategic and in-depth reflection on the development of L&D practitioners' skills.

3.2

Powering the Learning Organization

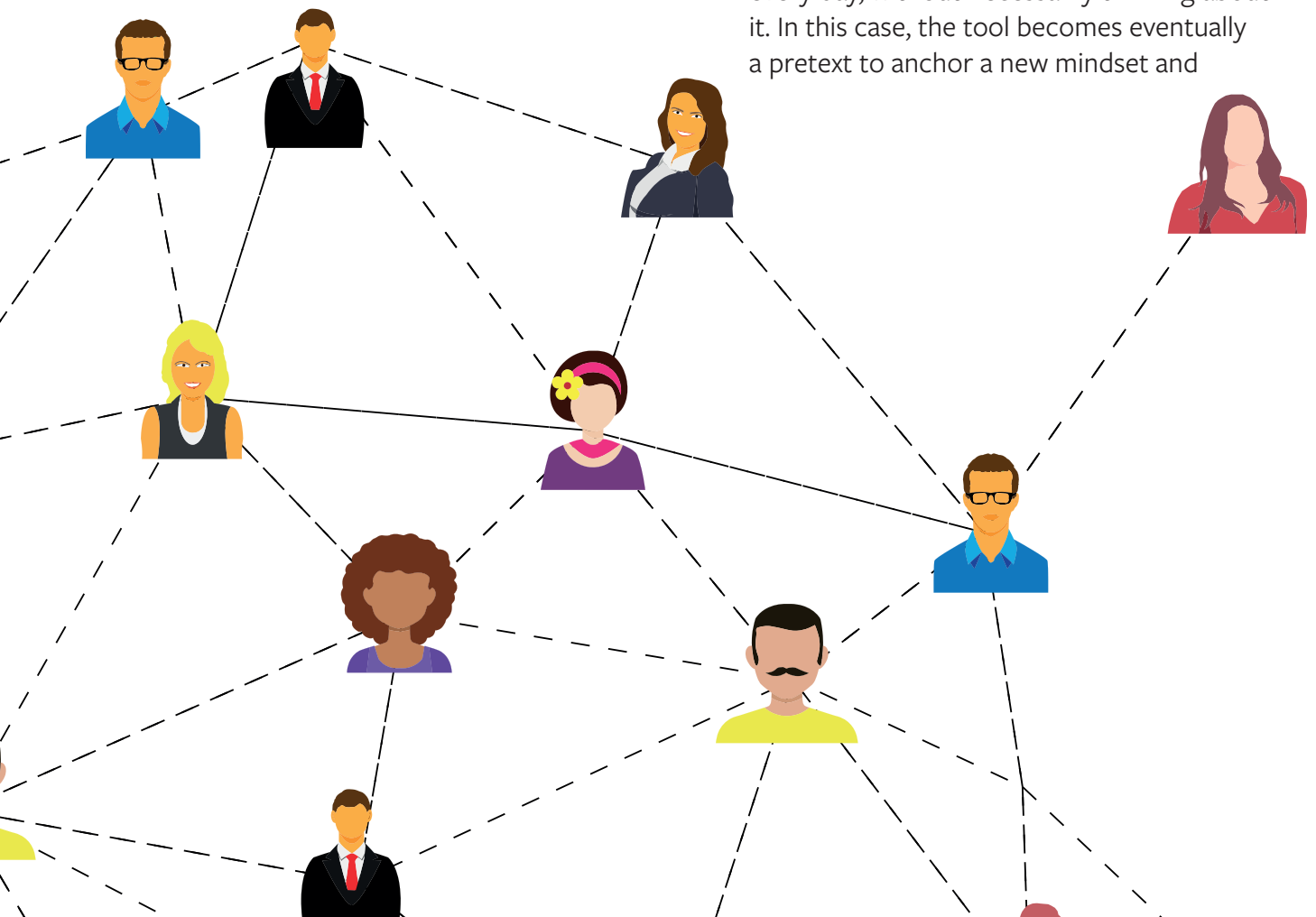
The concept of Learning Organization has become quite popular these days, to say the least. First coined in the work of systems scientist, Peter Senge, to describe organizations that facilitate the constant learning of their members and continuously transform themselves, the phrase has caught-on to the point that it sometimes seems like it has turned into a marketing catchphrase rather than an approach to organizational learning. However, the value of this concept lies in the characteristics that Senge highlights as core dimensions of the Learning Organization: **systems thinking** (considering the organization as bounded objects), **personal mastery** (individuals' commitment to the process of learning), **mental models** (or most specifically, the organization's ability to challenge assumptions and generalizations), **shared vision** and **team learning** (the capacity of the organization's members to learn from each other).



Our research and conversations with L&D professionals have us convinced: while some of the traditional roles of the function have been challenged by the evolutions of learners' behaviors and the multiplication of access to content, requiring new ways to address learning and development needs, L&D is currently tasked with a greater responsibility: acting upon those five dimensions in order to help build true Learning Organizations.

Driving the learning mindset

We asked many of the L&D leaders that we interviewed what it meant to drive a learning mindset within the organization. Most of them mentioned L&D's responsibility in motivating, engaging and supporting employees in a process of continuous learning and development, in such an integrated way that it becomes a reflex and therefore a mindset. This is why micro-learning is more than a question of platforms and content, but rather a way to familiarize individuals with the habit of learning on-the-go, every day, without necessarily thinking about it. In this case, the tool becomes eventually a pretext to anchor a new mindset and



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drive learning behaviors. But larger L&D programs can also be designed in a way that fulfills their specific learning objectives while also imbedding the overall learning mindset within the organization. For instance, Learning Expeditions are used by many companies as an opportunity to expose individuals and teams to the most recent trends and contents affecting their business, but also to put them in a habit of exploring and questioning assumptions, a mindset that more and more workers need to develop in their daily job duties.

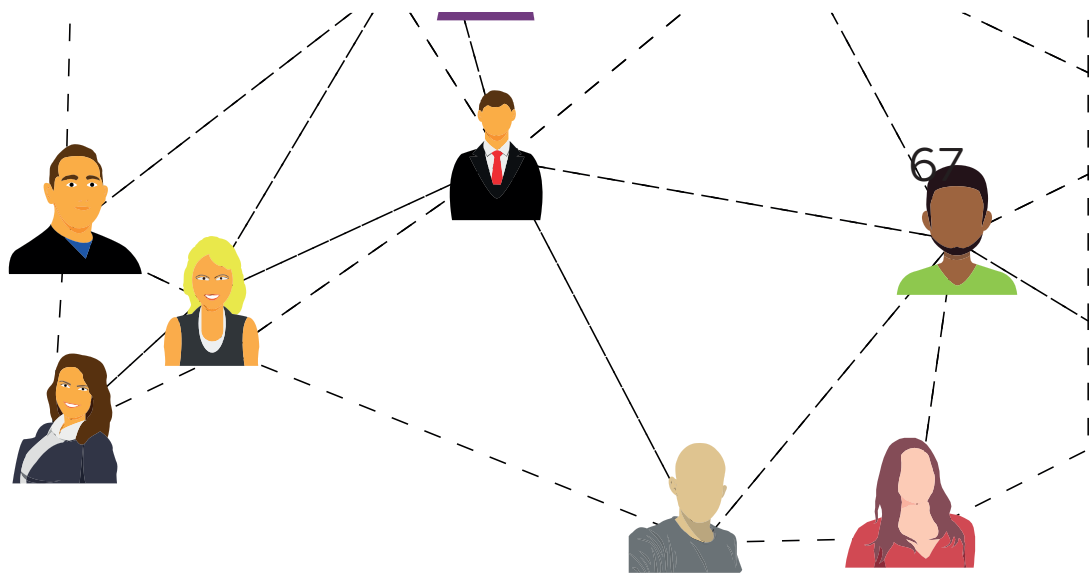
This means that L&D often needs to have a “hidden agenda”, and to design learning journeys with several implicit goals in mind.

At Mazars, this is manifested through the intentional mix of hierarchical levels within learners’ cohorts in order to expose them to different ways of working. At LVMH House, the executive development arm of LVMH, programs are all thought of in order to “include several learning dimensions within the same program”.

Being quite thoughtful about the implicit and meta objectives of each learning program is a way for the L&D function to improve the personal mastery of each member of the organization without them even knowing. It’s one of the many ways to subtly teach them how to learn. However, if we consider – and most of our interviewees do – that L&D’s focus is moving towards learning how to learn, then the purpose and process also need to be made explicit to the learner. **It becomes L&D’s role and responsibility to educate the organization and its members on the importance of continuous learning.** As evoked by Daniel Vonier (SAP), “we are more and more tasked with supporting people in clearly understanding what they need to learn in order to reach their next position or development goal. People don’t know what they don’t know, and we can make it clearer, and guide them towards the relevant content”.

“One of L&D’s major responsibilities is to drive a learning mindset, creating a safe place where executives and future leaders can access disruptive content and learning experiences”.

Pedro Gonzalo
Société Générale

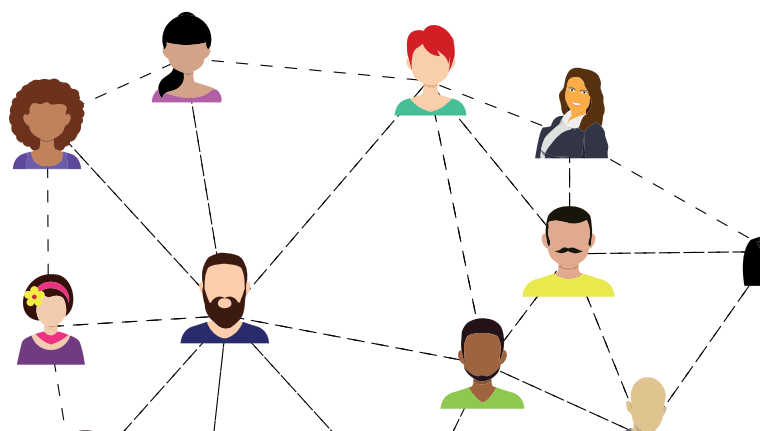


But beyond the content, the learning process itself can be made explicit and this is turning to be one of the main areas of responsibility of the L&D organization, especially as experiential learning becomes a stronger focus in the design and delivery of the programs. In contexts of experiential learning, it is quite crucial to highlight that learning emerges from a cycle composed of experimentation, reflection and conceptualization.

In an era of content abundance, L&D practitioners are meant to provide the space, time and means for reflection, contextualization and application.

Pascal Jouvin (LVMH) highlights this core responsibility of L&D: *“The role of L&D can be summed up in the Awareness-Reflection-Action triad. There are many things we can do to raise awareness (Learning Expeditions, talks, etc.) but I feel that I have most value in supporting people in their reflection. Getting them to think about what the new insights mean to themselves, to their team, and to the organization. That way, the L&D function gets people prepared for action.”*

This focus on making learning processes more explicit is one of the ways in which the mental models that limit peoples’ observations are challenged.



Powering the Learning Organization

The Internal Learning Ecosystem

Triggering and sustaining this learning mindset may seem to be the ultimate objective of the L&D function in the organization, but it is in fact only one element of the ecosystem that it must build. We like to think of this system as a hub that comprises elements that the corporate L&D function can (and should) be acting upon in order to drive the Learning Organization. Some of these components are inherited from the traditional missions of L&D and will still remain fundamentals of L&D's mission, even though contextual elements and the evolution of learners' behaviors are bound to change the way they are implemented:

Ensuring L&D efficiency in the organization: guaranteeing access, supporting business performance, updating knowledge and skills.

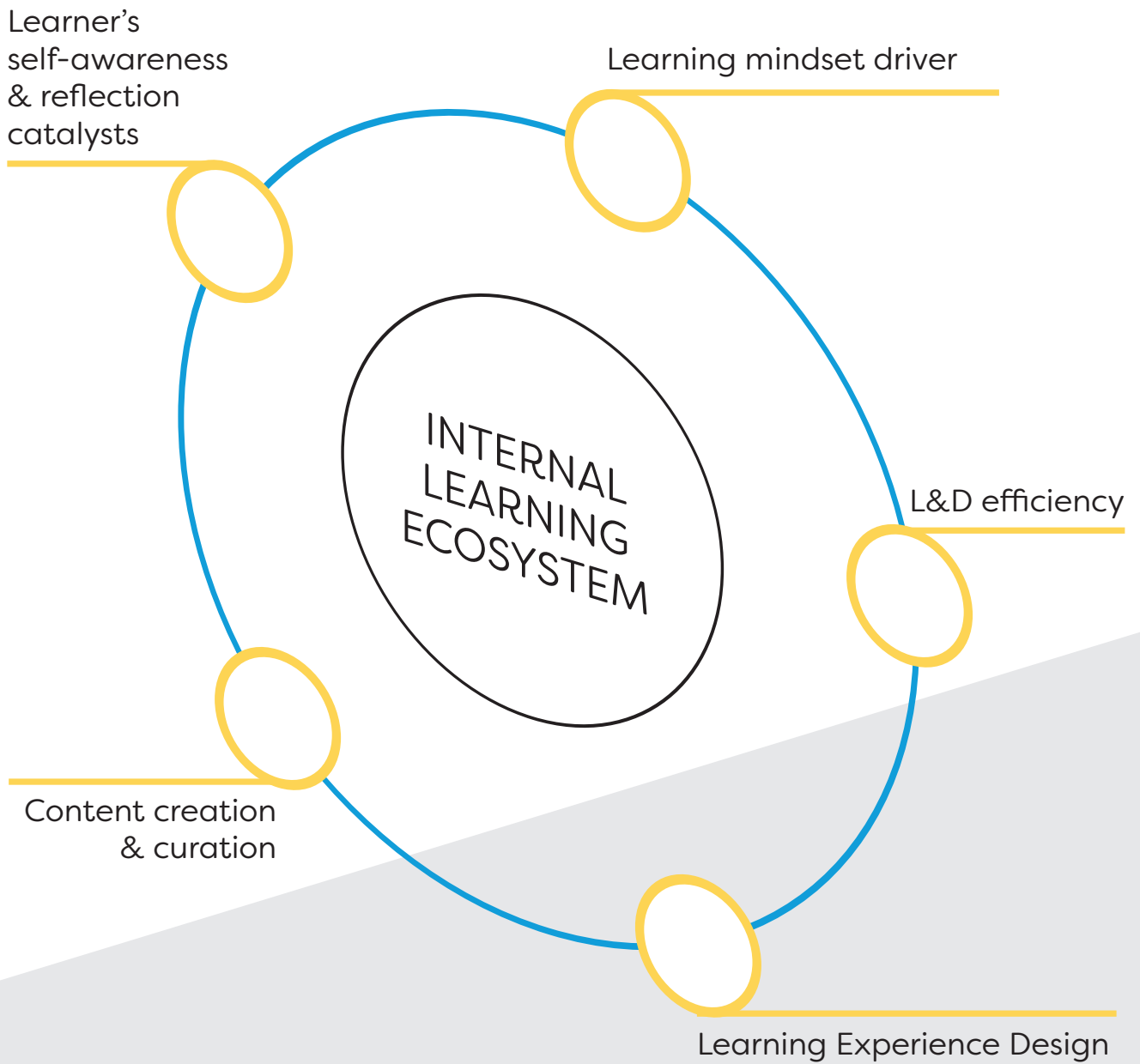
Content curation and creation: diversifying formats and delivery platforms to fit learners' behaviors, supporting learners as they navigate the wealth of information available to them within the organization and beyond its boundaries.

Learning experience design: optimizing and updating the user experience and innovating in formats to make learning attractive.

But beyond these dimensions, we can add at least two more than are bound to become core facets of the L&D diamond:

Learners' self-awareness & reflection catalyst: teaching people how to learn, and helping mental models beneath the level of awareness.

Learning mindset drivers: coordinating a number of initiatives in order to nurture a learning and development spirit within the organization and with its ecosystem.



Powering the Learning Organization

L&D with no boundaries

We are aware that building a Learning Organization is a mission that goes beyond the sole responsibility of the L&D function, and that it can only happen in an organization that puts learning forward, enables experimentation and change across all of its structures and practices. However, L&D can act as the champion of the Learning Organization, ensuring that a shared vision of learning is achieved, maintained and updated across the board.

The shift towards this capacity might actually be the reason why in many companies, L&D's is moving within the organization, leaving the HR realm either to live a more central and independent life (Mazars is a good example of that), or sometimes moving closer to the strategy department.

Overall, the decentralization of L&D and its growing independence from HR shouldn't appear as a threat to the function, but rather an opportunity to support the business in bringing the Learning Organization to life, by building L&D relays across several divisions and functions. Enabling more stakeholders to "claim L&D" is a chance to amplify impact.

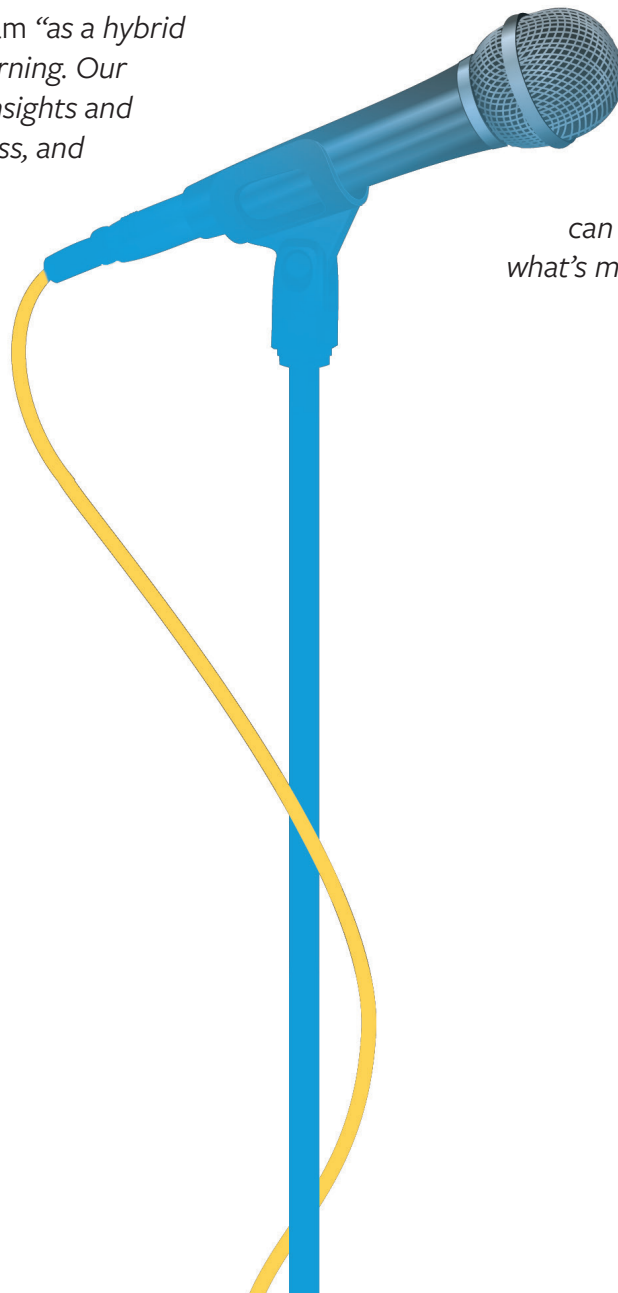
Some L&D and HR professionals are nonetheless – rightfully - concerned with a risk of dilution. As stated by Pedro Gonzalo, *"It's likely that in the near future, the design aspect of L&D will move away from being the central responsibility of the HR function, more stakeholders will be involved in it. This is a huge opportunity for L&D but can be a threat to HR."*

But many professionals have already started to investigate new formats, new models of collaboration with other teams within the organization and with a wider ecosystem.

A place for experimentation

Proposing new formats for learning and development turns the L&D function into a creative agency that can provide other units with fresh ideas and support in their implementation. Janin Schwartau from thyssenkrupp, sees her team *“as a hybrid between Consulting & Learning. Our ambition is to bring new insights and new impulse to the business, and to work with people in the organization in order to actually implement new management concepts and new ideas in the organization.”*

At Belfius, the L&D team has created a “TYC” (Train Your Colleague) program, described by Camille Gillon: *“Employees come in, in a sort of Open-Mic session, to present on their area of expertise (things as diverse as branding, RGPD requirements, Blockchain, etc.). It’s like a speed-dating session in which people can choose to learn about what’s most interesting to them.”*



Powering the Learning Organization

Reaching new audiences

“The scaling of L&D is an important issue: the trend is to give more and more employees access to programs that used to be exclusive to an executive elite”, says Pedro Gonzalo. And we are happy to see this trend in action, with experiential learning and leadership development programs being opened up to wider audiences within the organization.

At TF1, the “Connect” program was designed to immerse all of the nearly 2500 employees into the evolving media ecosystem and to expose them to innovation methods and tools, through 3-day learning expeditions or action-learning

seminars in cohorts of 25, encompassing various hierarchical levels and functions. In many organizations, such an offering would have typically been reserved to an executive crowd but the TF1 University, the company’s L&D arm, chose to make it available across the board. Such example shows the many perspectives open to L&D professionals in order to increase their impact within the organization.

We could also imagine expanding the ecosystem of learning even further by designing programs that bring together current members of the organization and external stakeholders.

Indeed, as organizations act more as networks, we are seeing more and more companies come to us for support in designing learning programs for members of the organization along with their partners and customers.



TF1 Connect, scaling transformation through L&D

In 2017, Groupe TF1, one of France's leading media groups, launched an immersive 3-day learning journey in which each full-time employee was invited to participate. This program, co-created with the employees, was designed to familiarize learners with the changing media ecosystem and to train them on innovation methodologies and tools. Beyond raising awareness about the evolutions of their industry, this program has brought together employees across hierarchies, created a shared vision and provided common grounds for the company to adapt to a challenging business environment.

WDHB had the privilege of co-designing and delivering this program from June 2017 to December 2018 together with TF1's HR team, for over 750 employees. In 2018, TF1 won the U-Spring Trophy rewarding France's most innovative corporate universities.



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Actors of change, guardians of purpose

When asked about his work at Saint-Gobain, head of L&D Dominique Pépin told us: *“These days, my work in L&D is mainly focused on organizational transformation & changing management ways and practices.”* This was echoed in most of the interviews we conducted across the course of our research.

It appears that the fields of L&D and change management are increasingly intertwined.

In a VUCA world, L&D programs can be designed in order to raise awareness around the acceleration of change, but also to build capabilities and skills in resilience, adaptation and creativity.

As highlighted by Arnaud Bosom, Chief HR Officer of TF1: *“A year ago, there was a widespread perception that change was happening to us, and that we were not orchestrating a response to it. Things seems disorganized, change didn’t appear as harmonious. The L&D programs we have been running have contributed to bringing this sense of harmony, of highlighting the positive*

dimensions of change while showing that the organization was ready for it.

It has also instilled a notion of patience, as transformation happen at a deep level and require time to be conducted efficiently”.

Awareness and development are key elements in a transformation journey, should it happen at the individual, team or organizational levels. However, making change sustained requires more than building acceptance and developing new skills, it also means anchoring them in daily action. **And while the implementation of learnings in real-life projects has traditionally fallen outside of the L&D scope, it may become more prominent as change management becomes one of the roles of L&D, and as accountability becomes a more widespread requirement of the function.**

L&D expert Annemie Ress sums it up this way: *“With a higher level of freedom and trust, L&D needs to respond to higher expectations: it’s much more about building a system rather than simply building a program”*. Bénédicte Marchal from Belfius states it in concrete terms: *“The follow-up to learning programs is becoming more important. We can’t consider the training as a parenthesis in the employee’s daily life. We need to ensure a discipline, a real follow-up in order to anchor the change”*.

While L&D becomes a more visible actor of change, it should also increasingly be considered a guardian of identity and purpose within the organization. In an age of reduced time and

“The best advantage for any L&D expert will be their mindset of helping people understand how to become their best selves.”

**Annemie Ress
PurpleBeach**

Powering the Learning Organization

attention-span, in which learners have access to a -sometimes overwhelming – plethora of content and are increasingly autonomous in how they interact with it, the role of L&D must shift towards sense-making and purpose-safeguarding. We should not forget that learning is an act of self-exploration as much as it is about gathering and transforming knowledge. Learning leads to questioning assumptions, it requires for the learner to get deeply involved and bring their whole selves into it beyond the mere consumption of information. As stated by Daniel Vonier, *“In the future, L&D will focus more on leadership, on behavior, personality awareness and traits. People will need to work on their drivers, motivations, etc., and for this they will still need more structured, dedicated time and iteration.”*

Educating people about the purpose of learning, bridging individual and organizational development through a process of sensemaking is one of the most decisive tasks of L&D in the near future.

And frankly, we couldn't be more excited about it.



To Recap

The setup of L&D teams is definitely changing, leading us to believe that we will see more and more UX developers, data analysts as well as human behavior and cognition experts in the next few years. This comes in response to two growing requirements for the L&D function: being more data-driven to increase efficiency and improve accountability; and developing contents, formats and experience that strongly integrate state-of-the-art knowledge of the human brain and abilities.


But what's changing even more rapidly is the expectation of the organization towards L&D, pushing the function to become more ambitious than ever before. This ambition will be translated into more experimental formats, sometimes designed and executed with other organizational stakeholders. It will also lead L&D to design high-touch programs and contents that might have been traditionally reserved to high level executives, for new audiences in the organization.

More than providing contents, courses and programs, L&D leaders are now expected to power the Learning Organization and contribute to driving change. This might affect the place that L&D holds in the organization as new organizational setups emerge beyond its traditional inclusion within the HR function. But as many professionals mentioned to us, this change might just provide a huge opportunity for L&D to gain visibility and up the ante when it comes to quality and impact.

Final Thoughts

L&D professionals seem to be navigating in clear weather, but our research has shown that many divergent movements are bubbling beneath the surface. In building this report, we have tried to unveil some of the main trends, challenge the obvious and bridge some apparently-contradictory directions.

On the one hand, the explosion of content and rise of platforms have been shaping new expectations towards learning ease and experience, challenging corporate L&D to improve user interfaces, provide ubiquitous access and making it more difficult to compete for attention. At the same time, the world of work has become increasingly complex as well-defined frontiers and boundaries are now getting blurred and work is turning elastic. In a context where the concept of employee retention is losing power, L&D professionals are pressured to rethink their audiences, but also their metrics of impact.

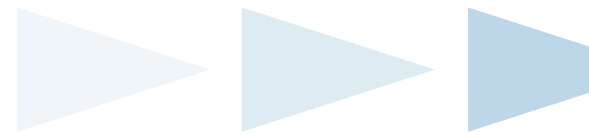


Yet today's L&D function is not only challenged and pressured but also encouraged and given an augmented stage. The L&D function nowadays has more opportunities than ever to provide value to the organization. First by using the growing resources at its disposal in order to solidify the essentials: building on the learnings from the world of UX/UI to provide outstanding learning experiences; choosing to create, buy or curate learning contents based on the audience, the need and the resources available; involving users in the design and delivery of their own or their peers' learning journeys. But the value also lies in the less tangible – but all the more crucial – aspects of L&D strategy and design: building programs that bridge individual and organizational development; integrating recognition mechanisms and collective rituals; and thinking ahead to support lifelong employability beyond the strict boundaries of the organization.

All this contributes to a slow but definite shift in the functions and roles of L&D, which also affects teams structures and employee profiles. As L&D practitioners become architects of the learning ecosystem, new jobs are created

within the L&D function and the challenge lies in building teams that balance analytical profiles with expertise in psychology and human behavior. Digital skills are increasingly highlighted though L&D organizations seem slow at integrating digital as a core competency. While L&D largely remains a sub-domain of HR, teams are integrating more and more profiles outside of HR, with a growing tendency to hire team members with backgrounds in business consulting. It appears quite likely that L&D will gradually move outside of the HR realm and might come much closer to strategy. This tendency is quite aligned with the movement that tends to make the L&D function a major actor of change management, with a clear mandate to power the Learning Organization: this means a stronger responsibility in architecting and coordinating the learning ecosystem, feeding the learning mindset and experimenting with novel approaches outside of the traditional scope of L&D. But it goes hand in hand with a mission to maintain consistency and drive sense-making by acting as a guardian of purpose within the organization.

This is no small task.



Staying abreast of all these changes requires L&D to embrace newfound ambitions, adding a whole new realm of roles and responsibilities while continuously increasing quality and impact for a more demanding audience. To support L&D professionals as they navigate this challenging – but increasingly rewarding – world, we have summarized below the key recommendations based on our findings from this research.

1 Design for a shorter attention span

Offer bite-sized learning nuggets

Not all learnings can come in bite-size and there is no doubt that multimodal, presential and spread-out learning curriculums will remain as relevant (if not more) than in the past. But it is worth thinking about which types of contents can be delivered efficiently in shorter, more regular formats. Bite-size learning doesn't need to be limited to technical training; if designed thoughtfully, it can only support awareness-building, skill development and behavioral change.

Meet learners where they are

Mobile content and on-the-job learning are here to stay, so it is worth investigating innovative ways to design appealing content, or point learners towards existing channels. Thinking of on-the-job learning as an opportunity instead of a distraction from work means respecting users' learning curves and designing for **efficiency**.

Design learning journeys for continuity

Bite-size doesn't mean disjointed bits of content. In the attention economy, L&D practitioners' challenge is to imagine cohesive formats that include various touchpoints and keep the learner engaged as they navigate autonomously between platforms and experiences.

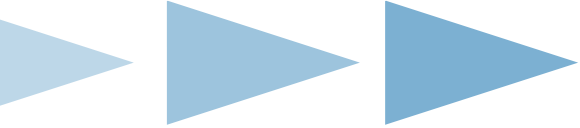
2 Don't fight the consumer platforms, use them

Don't reinvent the wheel – Curate!

Curation has been a buzzword for almost a decade now. However, when it comes to L&D, it is a guideline as relevant as ever in order to ensure efficiency, cut cost but also to conform with learners' habits and bring in continuity between learning in the personal life and learning in work contexts.

Cheat with pride: copy the best user interfaces available

Or adopt them, even. In digital learning, working with IT and legal in order to provide access to consumer platforms can remove many hassles while fitting with user expectations of a user-friendly and familiar learning interface. In offline learning as well, user experience becomes a key dimension and it's worth benchmarking the leaders in this field.



It's a peer era: find trainers inside the organization

The last ten years have gotten us all used to learning from self-taught experts, enlightened hobbyists, and peers in general. While L&D is a professional's job, there is a huge value in leveraging peer learning and engaging homegrown trainers.

3 Rethink the provider-user relationship

Forget about employee retention, expand the learners' pool

It's no use lamenting the higher turnover of millennial and Gen-Z employees. L&D should rather focus its efforts on providing valuable learning and development opportunities to candidates, alumni, partners and freelancers who gravitate within its ecosystem, as this contributes to employer branding, to community management and to the overall updating of skills and competencies relevant to the organization.

Engage and support users in Do It Yourself design and delivery

Adopting the "prosumer" logic in L&D ensures maximum relevancy, it contributes to the visibility of the L&D function within the organization and to the identification of talent. It also adds more layers of learning, by teaching L&D professionals to develop new approaches, and upskilling employees in content and experience design.

4 Keep the essentials...

Don't downplay the motivational dimension of L&D: it's all about rituals

The more formal dimension of L&D shouldn't be sacrificed for the sake of modernity. On the contrary, we should think of ways to reinforce the motivational as well as the team-building aspects of L&D – this is all the more important as digital learning takes precedence over offline programs in certain areas.

Focus on experience: make every program feel unique

User expectations are higher as we jump into the experience economy. The time and resources freed in content development (by curating rather than producing everything in house) should go towards a focus on delivering memorable experiences.

Remember that learning happens in communities

L&D programs have traditionally been thought of in cohorts. But thinking in terms of learners' communities enables us to explore informal learning processes and to be more aware of what happens between formal touchpoints in the learning journey.

5 ... But think wider

“Blended” is not a combination of platforms, it’s an intentional design approach

Calling the combination of classroom and e-learning “blended” is wistfully restrictive. Blended learning should be thought of as a purposeful design approach to L&D that seeks to adapt as seamlessly as possible to the user’s learning curve and provide the right content, in the right format, at the right moment and through the right platform.

Expand access: develop high-touch L&D beyond executive audiences

We now have many tools and resources available to provide a wider audience with learning and development formats that used to be reserved to an executive elite. Let’s think of how immersive and experiential formats can be scaled efficiently, of how digital tools enable the dissemination of knowledge and the spreading of new practices.

6 Embody the organizational learning mindset

Enable awareness, support reflection

L&D has traditionally been associated with knowledge diffusion and with skills development. But in an era of widespread organizational transformation, awareness and reflection emerge as core drivers of change, and they should go hand in hand.

Go beyond content: focus on context and culture

Providing contents is easy, but the rising expectation is that L&D will act as a safeguard of

context and culture, translating information into insights that are relevant in the organization’s context and actionable within its culture.

Facilitate sense-making

L&D is turning into a guardian of sense and purpose, educating individuals and teams on the importance of learning beyond functional objectives and ensuring that learning is used for personal growth and organizational development.

7 Advise on the future

Research and define tomorrow’s skillsets

The L&D function is in a good position to act as a think tank, developing research and foresight capacities to provide the organization with insights onto the skillsets that will be required in the future.

Help employees anticipate their future within & beyond the organization

L&D’s role as coaches and advisors to employees regarding their lifelong employability is increasingly emphasized as employees understand the need to reskill while being confronted to a fast-changing context.

8 Get ahead in technology

Don’t fight automation – focus on the craft

In L&D as in most functions, automation can be perceived as a threat. However it also means using the right tools and mindset so your routine can work by itself and frees up time. You can now focus on creative design and high-touch delivery.



AI is – slowly – coming

Well. It's not there just yet. And there are many legal and regulatory aspects that might impede its development in the next few years, especially in Europe. However, many L&D professionals are already foreseeing the day when learning contents can be pushed to employees at just the right time as needs arise. We believe the slow emergence of AI is above all an opportunity to get ahead and start thinking how L&D can avoid the risk of resembling troubleshooting and maintain maximum relevancy.

9 Upskill your own team & lead by example

Ramp up digital competencies in your L&D Team

This doesn't mean only to hire and train people to have digital development skills, but mostly to integrate L&D team-members with a strong awareness of how digitalization has impacted learners' behaviors and expectations.

Integrate new profiles: Engagement specialists, Experience Designers & Data Analysts

New jobs are emerging in L&D, showcasing areas of increased importance within the function: user experience, community engagement and data analysis all ultimately lead to bringing more accountability to the function.

10 Drive the change

Develop an integrated learning ecosystem

Key elements for L&D professionals to work on now include learning efficiency, content creation & curation, experience design, spreading of the learning mindset, and learners' self-awareness and reflection. But these should be thought of as an integrated ecosystem in which each element feeds onto the next, requiring tight collaboration within the L&D team and with other organizational stakeholders.

Challenge the status quo, including L&D's place in the organization

L&D's place within the organization might be evolving, but this shouldn't be seen as a threat to its importance. Bringing more ambition to the L&D department comes with increasing its visibility and gaining autonomy as a corporate function. At the same time, decentralizing certain roles might just end up deepening and amplifying impact.

10 Key Take Aways

Design for a shorter attention span

Offer bite-sized learning nuggets

Meet learners where they are: mobile & on-the-job learning

Design learning journeys for continuity

Don't fight the consumer platforms, use them!

Don't reinvent the wheel – Curate!

Cheat with pride: copy the best user interfaces available

It's a peer era: find trainers inside the organization

Rethink the provider-user relationship

Forget about employee retention, expand the learners' pool instead

Engage and support users in Do It Yourself design and delivery

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About WDHB

Since the invention of the Learning Expedition by WDHB 30 years ago, we have been at the forefront of organizational learning. We are driven by the vision of a world that allows each and everyone to leverage experiences and exchanges across cultures to grow personally and professionally. Business landscapes, technologies as well as consumer and employee expectations have drastically changed and being able to constantly learn, unlearn and relearn has become more essential to strategic success than ever before. For individuals and organizations wishing to embrace new mindsets on change, agility and disruption, we count as trusted and purpose-driven partner. Together, we co-create the right solution to trigger, accelerate, solidify or sustain organizational transformation.

Founded in 1989 in the San Francisco Bay Area, WDHB has evolved to become a small but truly global company, with offices in Denver, Paris, Singapore and Zurich. We have delivered more than 600 bespoke L&D programs, and our network of partners and contributors spans 5 continents. More about us at www.wdhb.com

About WDHB Lab

Our lab team is a network composed of researchers, strategists and experts in L&D, psychology, organizational behavior and innovation management. Our goal is to explore the drivers of learning and change within individuals, groups and organizations, in order to design new and disruptive formats to enable sustained transformation. We are always on the lookout for diverse talent. If you would like to react to our publications or to suggest collaboration opportunities, please feel free to touchbase with us at lab@wdhb.com



“Learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn”.

Peter Drucker

