The State of High-Stakes Learning

INTREPID™

LEARNING AT WORK, TOGETHER.

Intrepid by VitalSource once again surveyed 1,000 learners in the U.S. to determine:
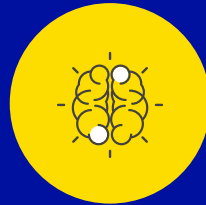
WHAT LEARNERS THINK
are the most high-stakes training topics facing their organization.

WHAT LEARNERS SEE
as the best ways to deliver high-stakes learning.

THEIR ASSESSMENT
of the effectiveness of their organization's L&D culture.

NEW

HOW THEY SEE
leadership defined at their organization, and who they prefer to learn from about leadership topics.
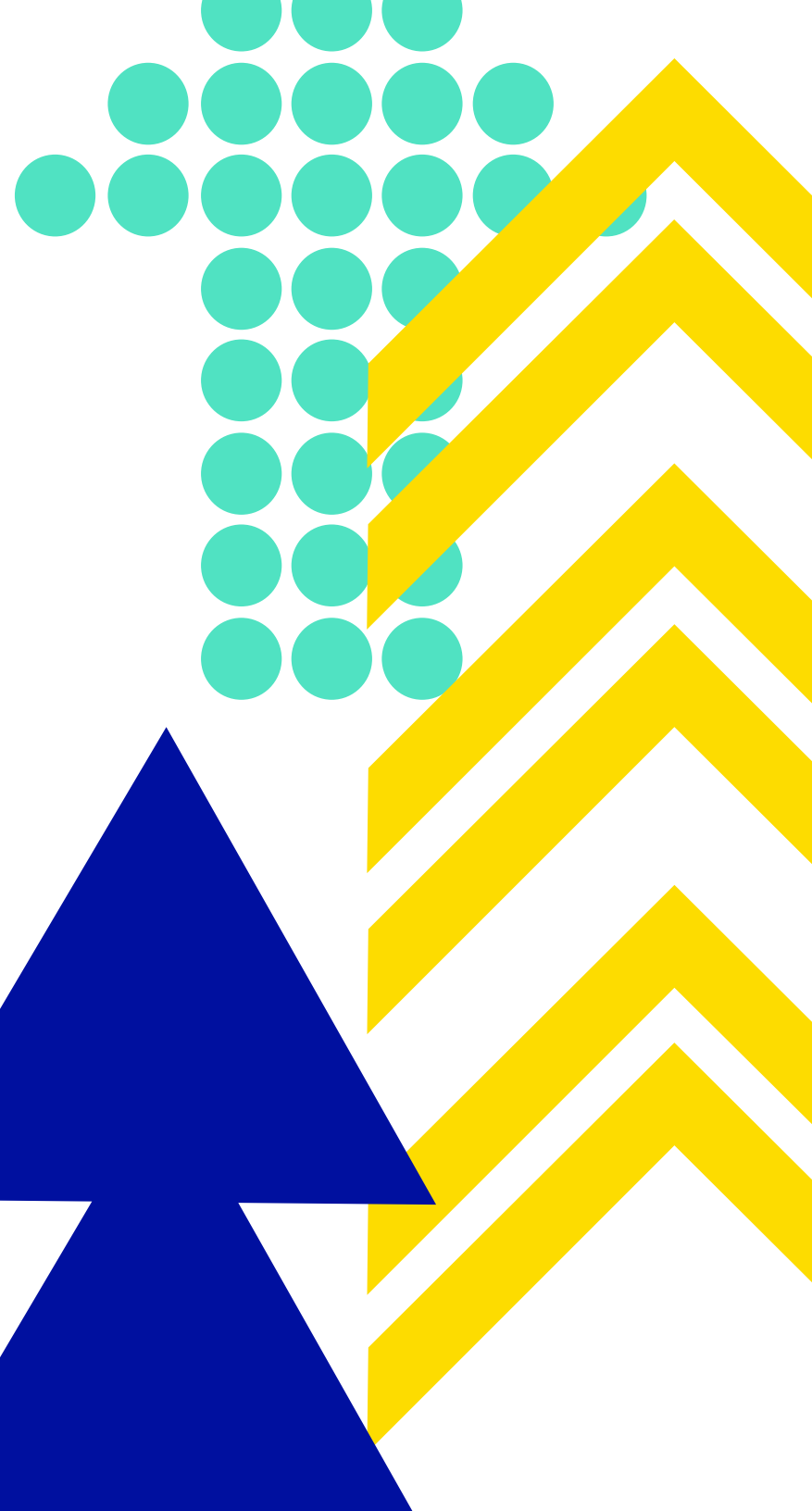
2019 vs 2020 Trends

MOST CRITICAL TOPIC

STILL LEADERSHIP

BEST MODALITY

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

LEARNING CULTURE

STILL SEEN AS NEGATIVE

The Trends are Clear from 2019 to 2020

Corporate L&D is still failing the individual learner, even as L&D departments seem to have made some attempts at changing their learning culture and approaches.
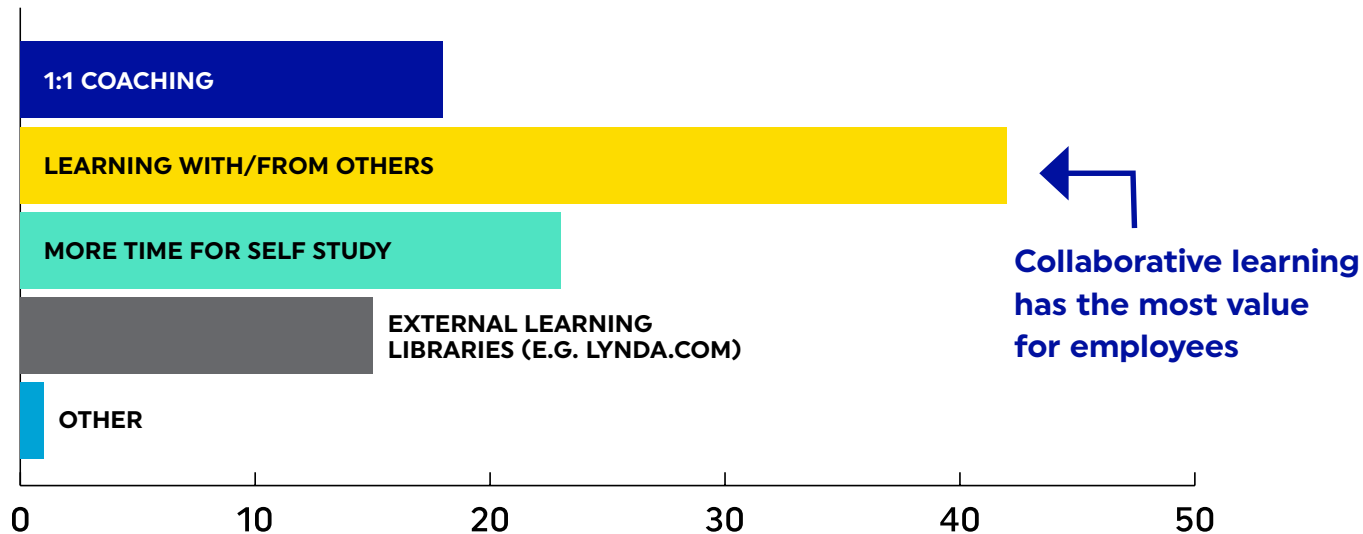
Learners still prefer collaborative learning above all other modalities but aren't being offered this as a frequent choice.

Leadership is again seen as the most critical pain point for organizations, with learners hoping to learn from internal/peer experts within their business's context.

What's Wanted: Collaborative Learning

WHAT TYPES OF CORPORATE L&D OFFERINGS HAVE THE MOST VALUE FOR YOU?

1:1 COACHING

LEARNING WITH/FROM OTHERS

MORE TIME FOR SELF STUDY

EXTERNAL LEARNING LIBRARIES (E.G. LYNDA.COM)

OTHER

0   10   20   30   40   50

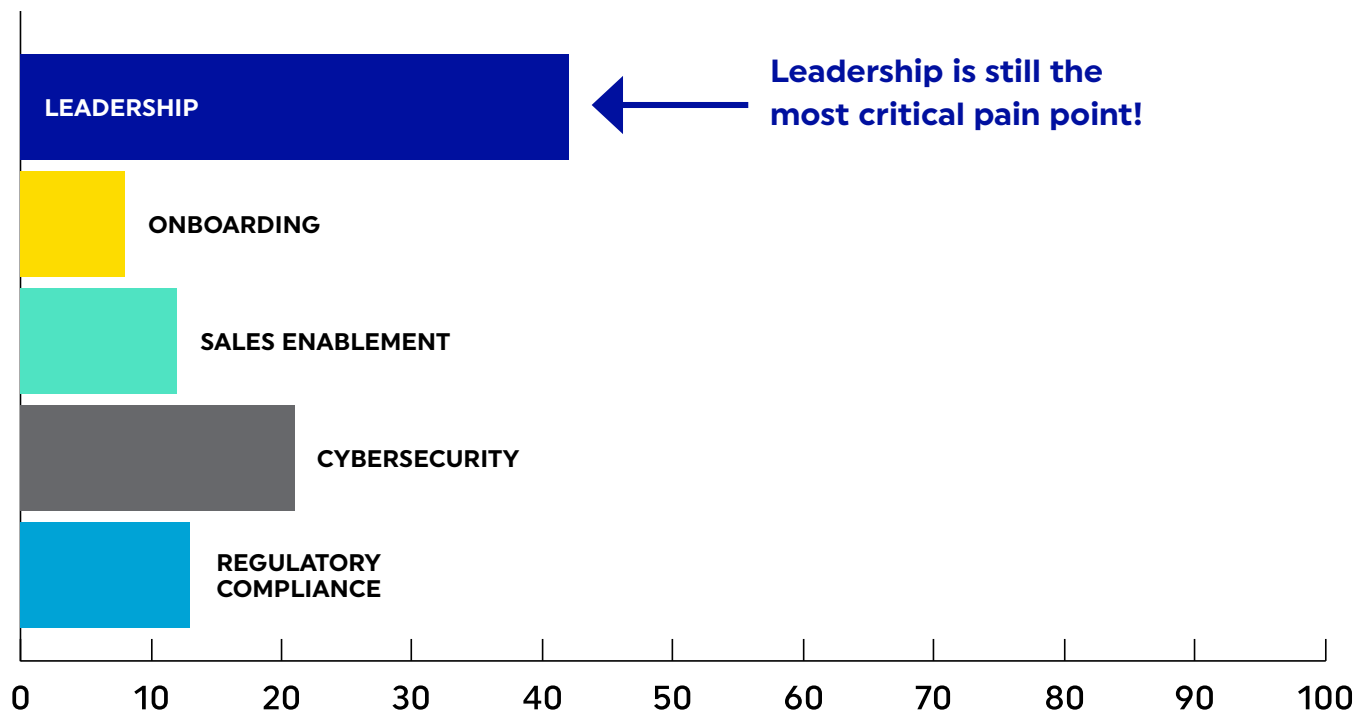**Collaborative learning has the most value for employees**

This trend also continues from 2019: learning with/from others was once again at the forefront of learners' minds when it comes to the best modality for critical training topics. A collaborative online approach also allows for 1:1 coaching opportunities and self-paced learning as well as interactive learning, meaning that a collaborative online approach in fact ticks the box of the top 3 preferred modalities.
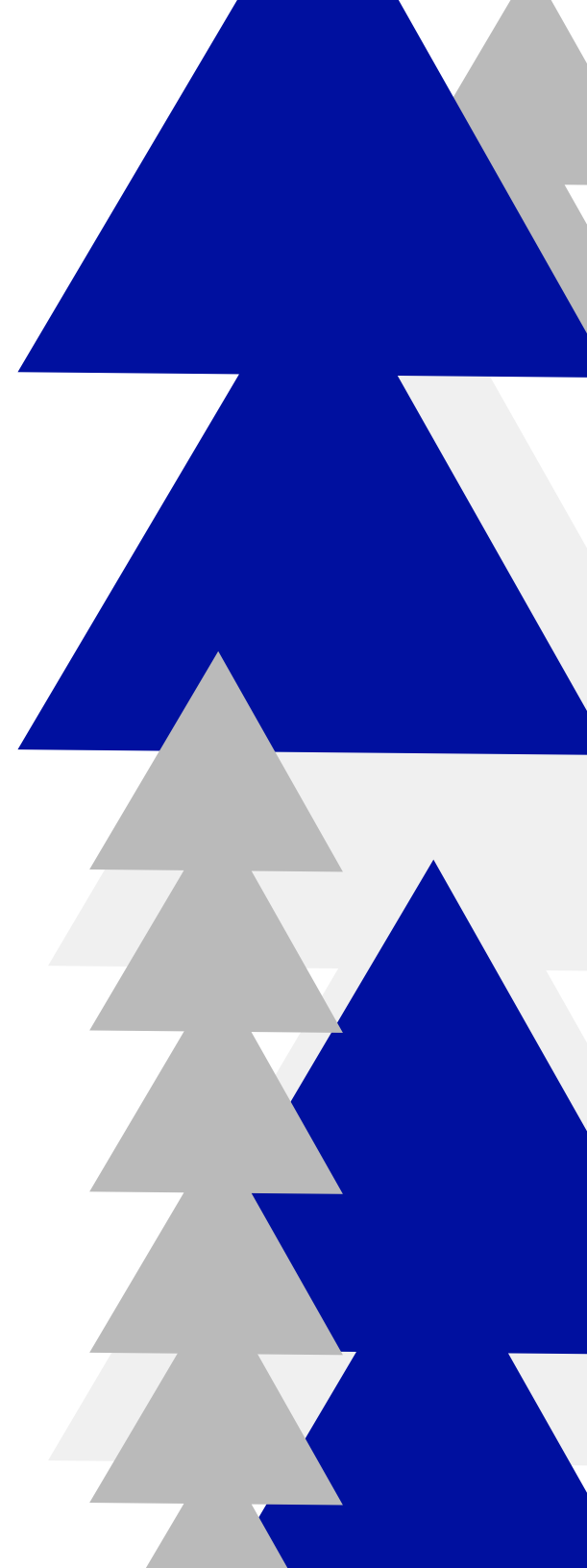
What's Critical: High-Stakes Training from the Learner's POV
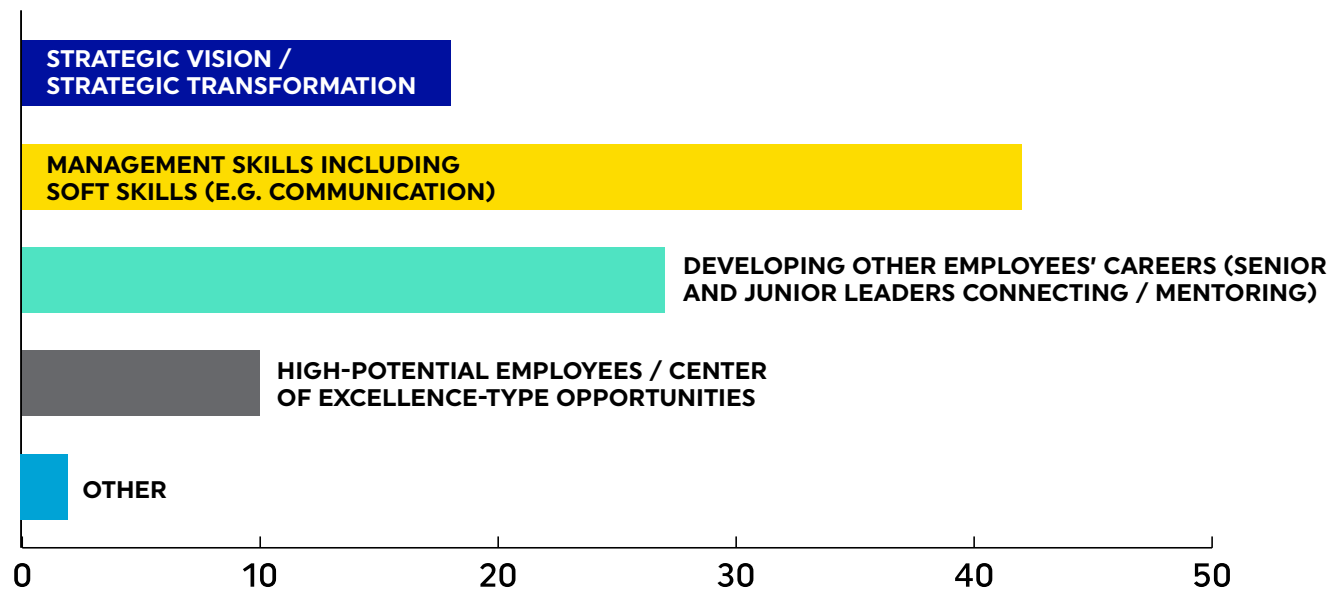
WE ASKED LEARNERS:

What is the biggest, most important training topic your organization should focus on in the coming 2 years, the topic that is the biggest "business critical" pain point in your organization? (e.g. leadership, sales enablement, onboarding, soft skills – but could be anything pertinent to your organization's successful future)

LEADERSHIP

← **Leadership is still the most critical pain point!**

ONBOARDING

SALES ENABLEMENT

CYBERSECURITY

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Leadership was the overwhelming choice, twice as high as the next most popular answer, cybersecurity.

WE FURTHER ASKED HOW IS LEADERSHIP MOST OFTEN DEFINED AT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

STRATEGIC VISION /
STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

MANAGEMENT SKILLS INCLUDING
SOFT SKILLS (E.G. COMMUNICATION)

DEVELOPING OTHER EMPLOYEES' CAREERS (SENIOR
AND JUNIOR LEADERS CONNECTING / MENTORING)

HIGH-POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES / CENTER
OF EXCELLENCE-TYPE OPPORTUNITIES

OTHER

0   10   20   30   40   50

We then talked to three leadership experts to see how they view this learner response, and whether "management including soft skills" is indeed what will really move the needle for businesses in 2020 and beyond.

Expert Analysis

"

"Learners have got it spot-on: communication and interpersonal skills are the key to great corporate leadership. The research shows that trust in their manager is what causes an employee to be engaged, work really hard, stay with the company, and cooperate with co-workers. What gets delivered in terms of training and what actually makes the difference between a really effective manager or leader are often disconnected, however. What we see as most important is getting managers (new or senior) a fact-based understanding that becoming a great leader begins with establishing relationships founded on trust, and being able to have conversations that matter in a way that deals with negative emotions and fosters positive emotions. Because if I as an employee don't believe in the leader, I'm not going to buy into the leadership. And that's not what they tell you in college, that the quality of your career will be your ability to build positive and proactive relationships. You have to learn it along the way."

SCOTT BLANCHARD, PRESIDENT, THE KEN BLANCHARD COMPANIES

"

"For organizations going through digital transformation, management skills are more central and more important than ever. Digital transformation involves a cultural transformation to become more agile, failure-friendly and attuned to clients/market, And it's manager/leaders who must bring everyone along in that journey. It's like management skills need to go on steroids to provide excellent direction-setting, ongoing coaching & feedback, and clear, timely communication to not only achieve the transformation, but to win in a whole new way in the future."

SINDRI ANDERSON, MANAGING PARTNER, ENACT LEADERSHIP

Interestingly, the majority of learners would prefer to learn leadership skills from an internal expert/ peer, a new question in our survey for 2020. This top answer speaks to the need for L&D departments to wrap company context and input from internal leaders into their leadership programs, even those based on 3rd party external expertise. And it speaks to the underlying request from learners to learn with and from others in a collaborative, contextualized way rather than from generic off-the-shelf learning, where they have to make the leap to their own company's strategies and organizational ins- and-outs on their own.
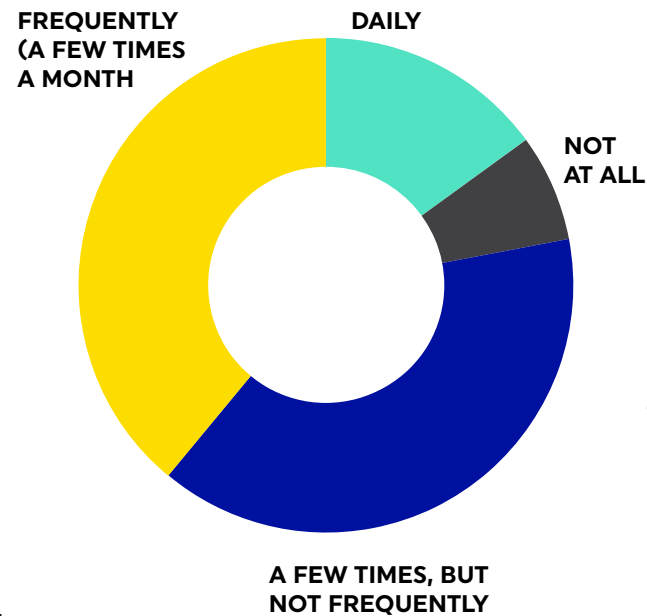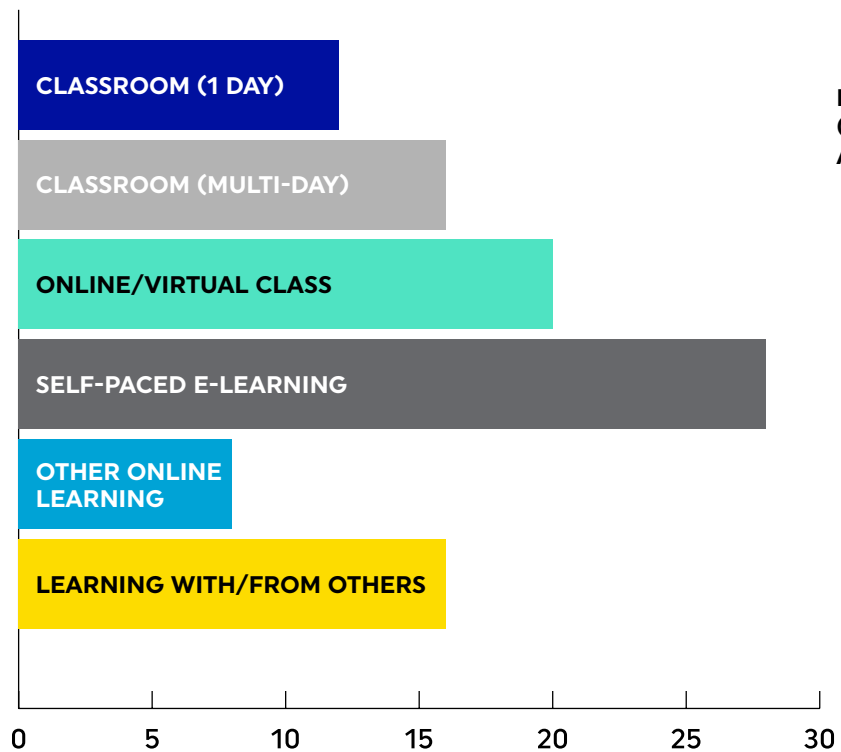
INTERNAL EXPERT

EXTERNAL EXPERT

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80
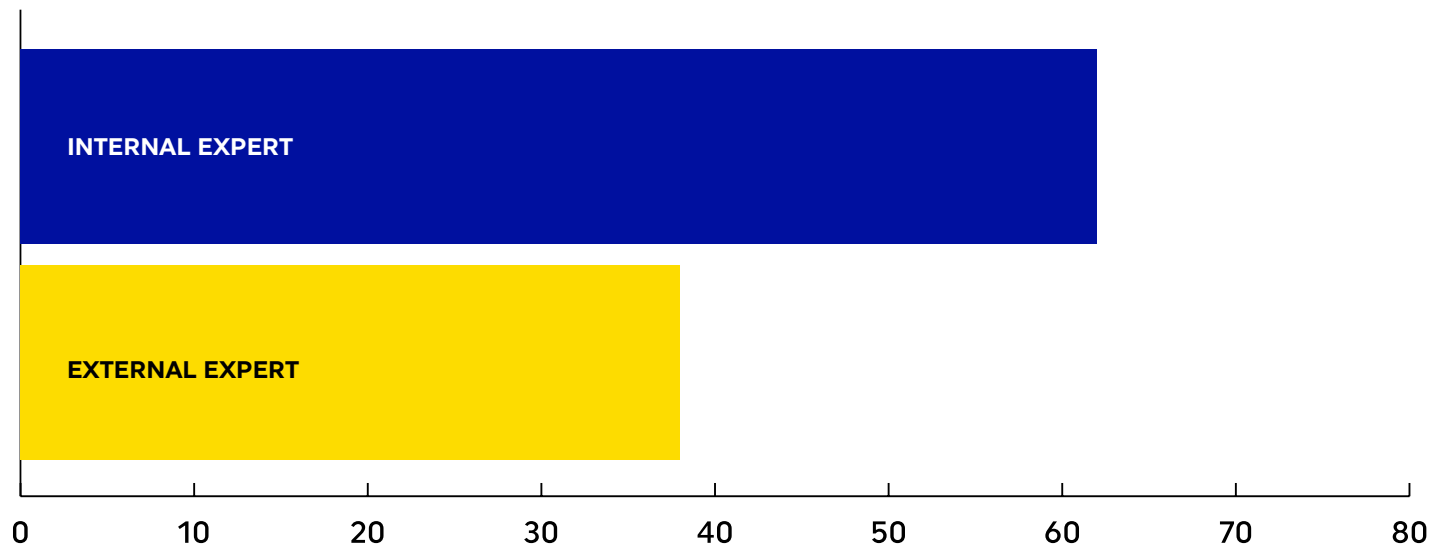
Current State of L&D

HOW MUCH DID YOUR ORGANIZATION'S L&D HELP GROW YOUR CAREER LAST YEAR?
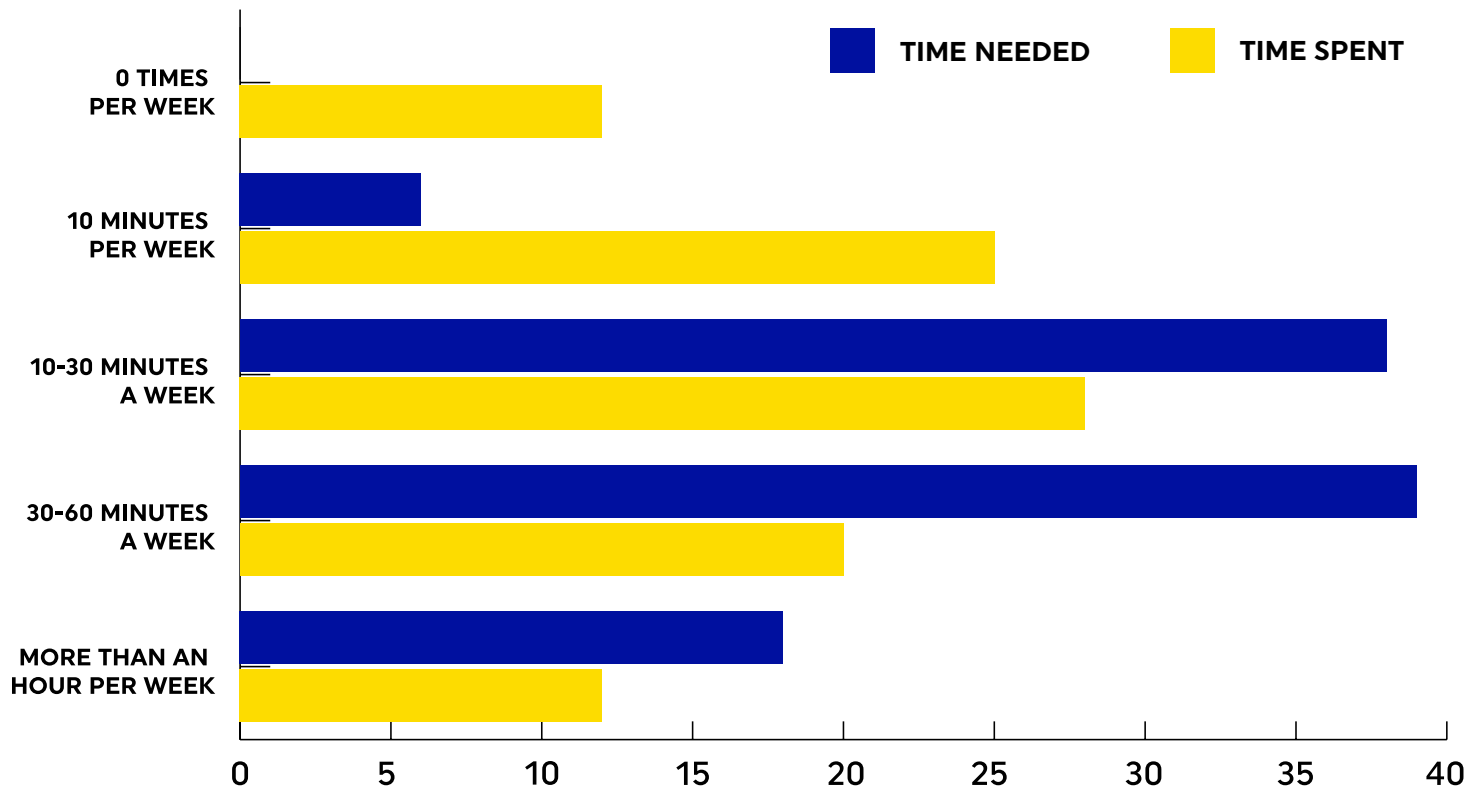
58%

WHAT TYPE OF PROGRAM WAS THE LAST ORGANIZATION-DELIVERED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT YOU COMPLETED, AND HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU LEARNED HAVE YOU APPLIED IN YOUR WORK SINCE THEN?

Bar chart categories:
- CLASSROOM (1 DAY)
- CLASSROOM (MULTI-DAY)
- ONLINE/VIRTUAL CLASS
- SELF-PACED E-LEARNING
- OTHER ONLINE LEARNING
- LEARNING WITH/FROM OTHERS

Axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30

Donut chart labels:
- FREQUENTLY (A FEW TIMES A MONTH
- DAILY
- NOT AT ALL
- A FEW TIMES, BUT NOT FREQUENTLY

Time Needed vs Time Spent

There is a disconnect between the amount of time learners think is needed to make a meaningful change in the effectiveness of their day-to-day worklife, and the amount of time they are currently devoting to professional development per week.

Legend: ■ TIME NEEDED (blue) ■ TIME SPENT (yellow)

Category	Time Needed	Time Spent
0 TIMES PER WEEK	—	12
10 MINUTES PER WEEK	6	25
10-30 MINUTES A WEEK	38	28
30-60 MINUTES A WEEK	39	20
MORE THAN AN HOUR PER WEEK	18	12

What this tells us is that employees know what it takes to be successful, but they're mostly unable to get there using the learning tools made available to them. Empowering learners—not with unfettered access to giant libraries of generic content, but with real collaboration, on-the-job-application opportunities, and specific company context—will help move the needle for businesses, as well as creating more satisfied individual employees.

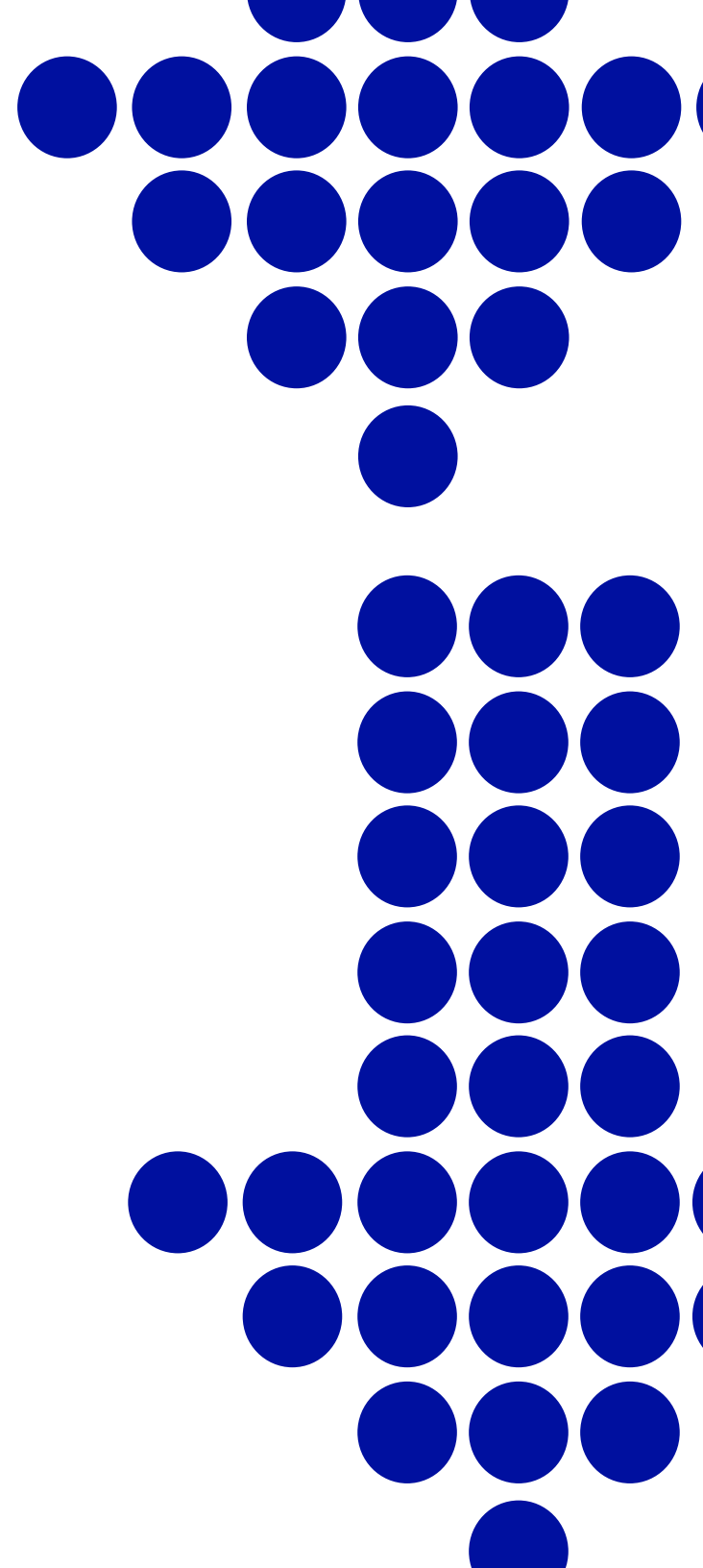# HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LEARNING CULTURE AT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

17.66%

22.62%

34.62%

25.1%
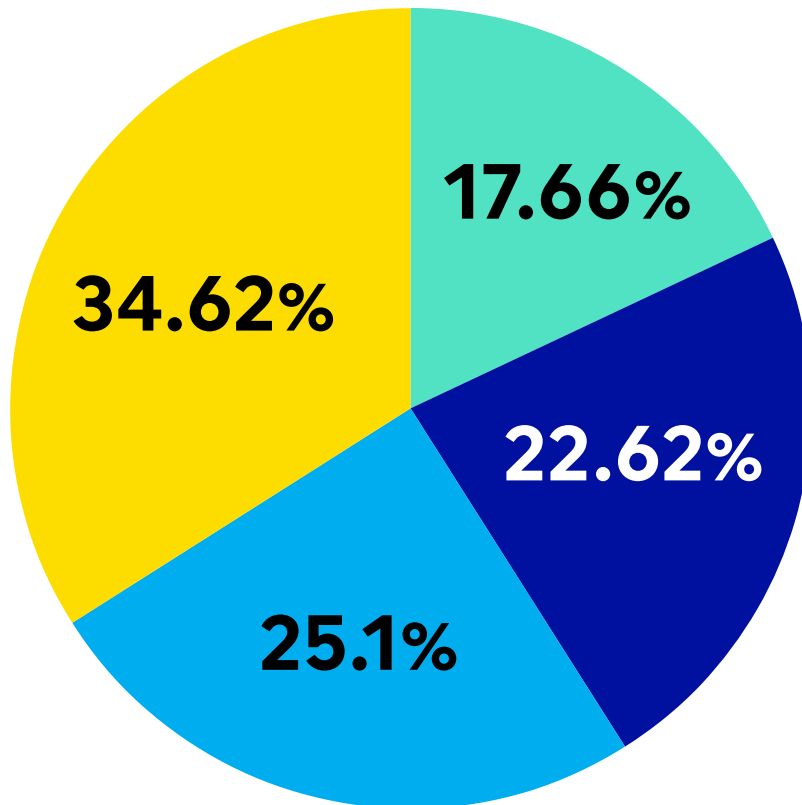
- OUR CEO TALKS ABOUT LEARNING BUT WE DON'T REALLY HAVE FORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- TICK THE BOX/AFTERTHOUGHT

- ENTHUSIASTIC BUT OFF-THE MARK / NOT ACTUALLY USEFUL

- EMBEDDED IN THE ORGANIZATION / MEANINGFUL AND USEFUL

From the Learners Directly: Organizational Learning Culture

As in 2019, we gave learners the chance to respond freely in describing their organization's current learning culture. Last year, the responses were 60/40 negative to positive. This year a third category emerged, which we're bucketing as "one step forward, two steps back." These comments show that although L&D has made some efforts in the last year to change approaches or be more effective, they're still falling short of the mark.

NEGATIVE LEARNING CULTURE EXAMPLES

- Sheltered, cutoff, old, distant.
- Not good enough
- Minimal
- Non existent
- Not taken seriously enough and not planned ahead.
- Hands off, find the training you need and we might pay for it. No direction as to what is important.
- It's a last minute, only when we need it, scramble
- Exclusive; privileged; for the few.
- Rare and useless
- Ignored
- None
- Insecure, uninformed, lazy, soft
- Slow and antiquated
- Non existent. Fake. Disappointment.
- This organization thinks people should already have all the knowledge needed for the company to grow when they start working here.
- Chaotic, up in the air, messy

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK EXAMPLES

- Highly encouraged, not always effective.
- They like to roll out fancy sounding programs with a lot of industry buzzwords, but when it is actually executed it is lackluster compared with how it was presented.
- Learning is offered, but there's not a strong effort to make sure employees truly have the option to participate - i.e. Supervisors pay lip service to the importance of learning, but they do not free up employees to attend by covering their work, etc. So they can be out of the office.
- Well-intentioned but poorly organized.
- They are all for it but never want to pay for it.
- Willing yet becomes an afterthought due to other priorities
- Earnest but misguided.
- Looks good on paper
- They really see the benefit of training the employees it just isn't always successful how they choose to do it.

POSITIVE LEARNING CULTURE EXAMPLES

- Innovative
- Proactive and positive.
- Flexible
- Good
- Encouraged Highly
- Up to date
- Helpful and encouraged
- Adaptive and cohesive
- Diverse, accepting, open
- Steady
- Open-minded
- Awesome
- Thorough

Proactive

Useful

Open

Structured

Relevant

Collaboration

Inclusive

Active

Incentivized

Modern

Empowering

Variety of topics

Supportive

Teamwork

Innovative

Context

Quick

Organized

Accountable

Lessons To Be Learned

In 2019 we said the state of high-stakes business challenges is 'unprepared' and the state of the learner was 'quite frustrated.' Not much has changed on those fronts in 2020, but the opportunities remain vibrant and viable for corporate L&D to respond to learners' clear requests for collaborative leadership (and other) training.

But self-paced e-learning, the most-reported last organizational training received, is clearly missing the mark when it comes to the desire for learning with and from others collaboratively, and isn't leading directly to the kind of on-the-job application required for real behavior change and organizational transformation.
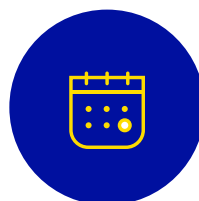
BASED ON THIS DATA, CORPORATE L&D DEPARTMENTS NEED TO:
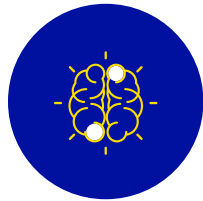
FACE FACTS: COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IS THE PREFERRED MODALITY when it comes to the most critical training topics. E-learning and ILT just aren't cutting it.
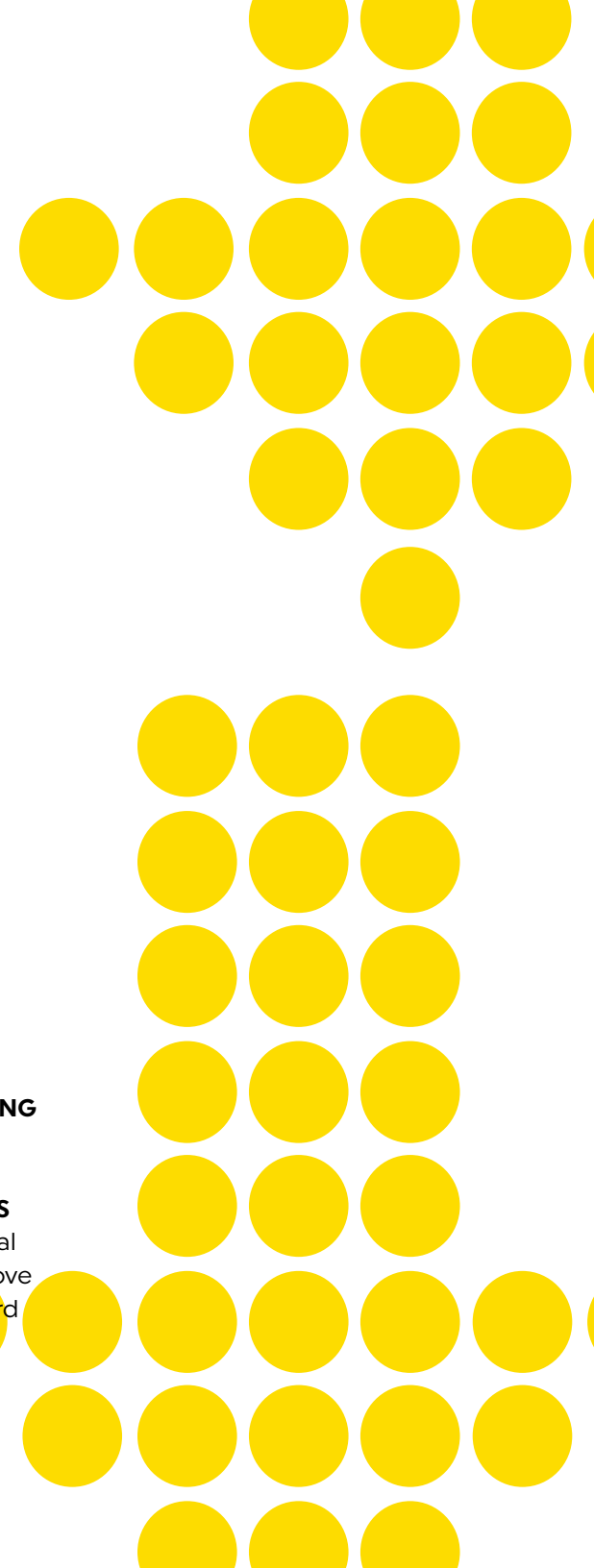
TIE LEARNING PROGRAMS DIRECTLY TO DESIRED BUSINESS OUTCOMES and communicate this link more clearly to employees

GIVE LEARNERS THE HALF-HOUR MORE LEARNING A WEEK they feel is necessary to see a real difference in their day-to-day jobs

FOCUS ON LEVERAGING EXISTING TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS in addition to external training in order to move business goals forward

INTREPID