

The State of Learning Solutions and Learner Engagement

Boost learner engagement by optimizing learning systems



Sponsored by



State of
the Industry
Research

Contents

Executive Summary	3
To What Degree Are Companies Using L&D Technology?	7
What Drives Today's L&D Programs?	9
How Successful Are L&D Initiatives?	10
How Engaged and Successful Are Learners?	11
Do Organizations Have Good Learner Metrics?	12
How Common Are Learning Portals?	16
What Learning System Capabilities Are Most Important?	19
How Satisfied Are Participants With Their Learning System Capabilities?	20
What Do Most Learning Systems Offer/Include?	22
What Collaboration Features Do Technology Providers Currently Offer?	25
Which Performance-Related Features Are Included in the Learning System?	26
Overall, What Are the Primary Weaknesses of Today's Learning Systems?	27
How Will L&D Technology Change Across the Next Three Years?	28
How Will L&D Strategies Change In the Organization Across the Next Three Years?	29
How Do We Classify High Performers?	30
What Do Higher Performers Do Differently?	31
Key Takeaways	38

Executive Summary

In an age of rapid change and talent shortages, learning has never been more important. But how can organizations get the most out of the learning and development (L&D) function? One answer: by increasing learner engagement levels.

To gain a better understanding of the current (L&D) trends, technologies, and learner engagement, we investigated:

- the primary factors driving today's L&D initiatives and how technology is helping to support key initiatives and learners
- how common it is for organizations to have top-notch learning cultures and what tools may be playing a role
- the type of learning engagement metrics in use today and how organizations measure learner success
- learning system technology usage, satisfaction levels, learning capabilities, features, integrations and the areas requiring the most improvement
- how frequently performance-related features and capabilities are included in learning systems and which ones are used most
- how learning programs and technology are expected to change in the next three years
- the learning and development practices most closely associated with L&D excellence

About this Survey

The State of Learning Solutions and Learner Engagement Survey ran during January and February 2019. We gathered 436 usable complete and partial responses from HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical.

Respondents were located all over the world, but the large majority reside in North America, especially the United States.

The participants represent a broad cross-section of employers by number of employees, ranging from small businesses with under 50 employees to enterprises with 20,000+ employees.



Below are key findings from the study:

Major Finding One: *Most organizations use technology to help drive key learning initiatives, but even among companies that benefit from such technologies, few truly excel at L&D.*

- Over four-fifths (86%) of participants use learning technologies. Large organizations (94%) use such technology more than small (66%) and mid-sized organizations (84%).
- Only 17% strongly agree that their L&D function is excellent, while another two-fifths moderately agree (38%).
- Less than one-fifth of HR professionals strongly agree (16%) that they have established a top-notch culture of learning, though about one-third (31%) moderately agree.

Major Finding Two: *Overall, most organizations are not satisfied with their learning technology systems, a problem that may be related to a lack of cutting-edge features and integration.*

- Only 15% of participants strongly agree that they are satisfied with their organization's learning technologies, though another 33% moderately agree.
- Only 14% strongly agree their learning technologies are well-integrated with each other.
- Only a minority use mobile learning (42%), personalized learning (38%), or micro-learning (27%).
- The biggest change in L&D tools over the next three years will be the need to accommodate mobile devices (69%), followed by the idea that Learning Management Systems (LMS) will increasingly become part of a larger learning platform (51%).

Major Finding Three: Learner engagement is mediocre and few organizations have good metrics.

- Only one-fifth strongly agree that their learners tend to be engaged (22%), though another two-fifths moderately agree (43%).
- Nearly three-quarters of participants (73%) cite learning engagement as a highly important learning system capability.
- However, 45% don't measure learning engagement at all, and another two-fifths said these metrics need improvement (39%). Less than one-fifth said their organization has good metrics (17%).
- When organizations do measure engagement, a basic classroom attendance metric (64%) is most widely used. Only about one-fifth (22%) gauge the business results of the learning experience (e.g., ROI of learning).
- In the future, only about half (52%) think there will be better ways of measuring learner engagement, but roughly two-thirds (63%) say there will be better ways of measuring learner success.

Major Finding Four: Few organizations have access to performance-related data from within their learning systems, perhaps causing them to fall short in delivering on their primary learning initiatives.

- Just two-fifths of participants use their learning systems to access performance-related data (39%) and even fewer have access to employee skills gap (28%) data.
- Career development features are lacking, with just two-fifths having access to individual development plans (40%).

Major Finding Five: *Organizations with excellent L&D functions are more likely than others to:*

- have a dedicated learning portal/website
- have more integrated learning systems
- utilize employee performance assessments, individual development plans and employee skills gap data
- have good learner engagement metrics, including data on online user activity as well as performance/reward achievements (e.g. badges)
- ask learners about their preferences and collect hard data, including how a learner's on-the-job behavior changed and how business results are impacted by the learning experience (e.g. ROI of learning)
- incorporate personalized learning, mobile learning, user dashboards, gamification and micro-learning
- use a variety of collaborations tools, including webcasts, coaching features, group chat, real-time discussions among dispersed people, and enterprise social networks



To What Degree Are Companies Using L&D Technology?

This study was designed to focus on the confluence of learning solutions and learner engagement. Therefore, we started with a question about learning technologies, and we geared most of the subsequent questions to the participants whose organizations use such technologies.

For the purpose of this study, the terms "learning systems" and "learning technologies" are used generally. They apply to all or any organizational learning and development (L&D) technologies, both integrated and stand-alone. A learning platform is a technology that allows organizations to house and integrate online learning products and services.

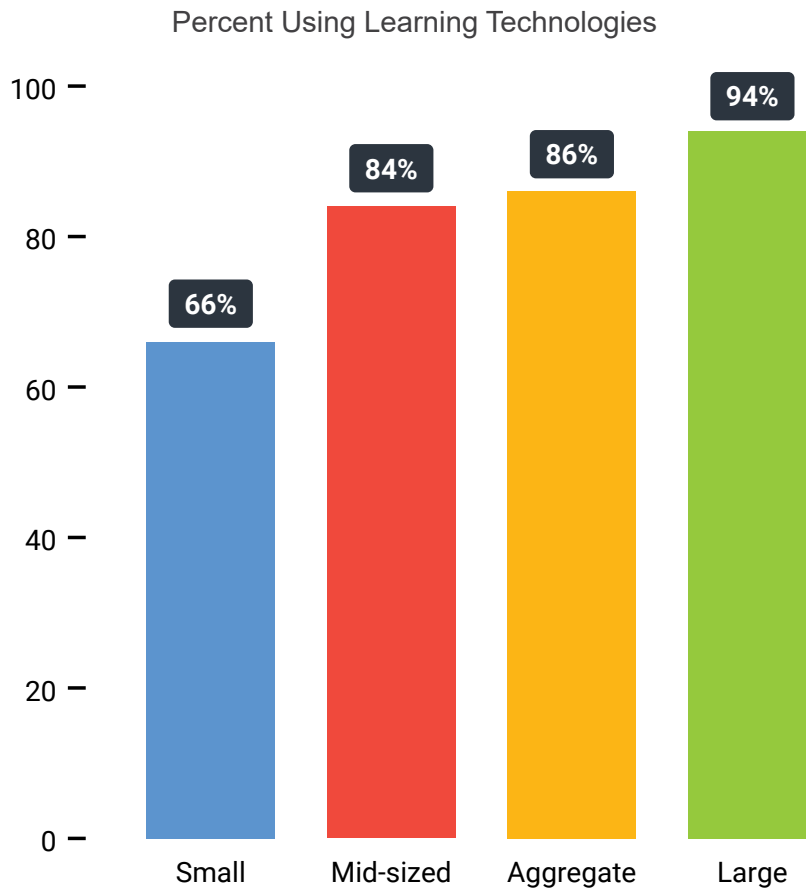
Finding: The majority of organizations, even small ones, use some form of learning technology

Across the past few decades, the advent of the Internet has transformed learning from a predominately classroom and textbook-centric experience to one that is frequently online-centric and uses a Learning Management System or some other type of learning technology. Today, on average, more than four-fifths (86%) of HR professionals say their organizations use technology for the purpose of learning.

Larger firms (94%), however, are more likely to use learning technologies than small (66%) and mid-sized ones (84%). This is likely due to economies of scale. It becomes more efficient to train large numbers of employees and other stakeholders (e.g., supplier companies) via technologies.



Survey Question: Does your organization use any technologies for the purpose of providing learning to employees and/or other stakeholders?*



Small organizations are least likely to use learning technologies

*In this study, we defined large organizations as those with 1,000 or more employees, mid-sized organizations as those with between 100 to 999 employees, and small organizations as those with 99 or fewer employees.



What Drives Today's L&D Programs?

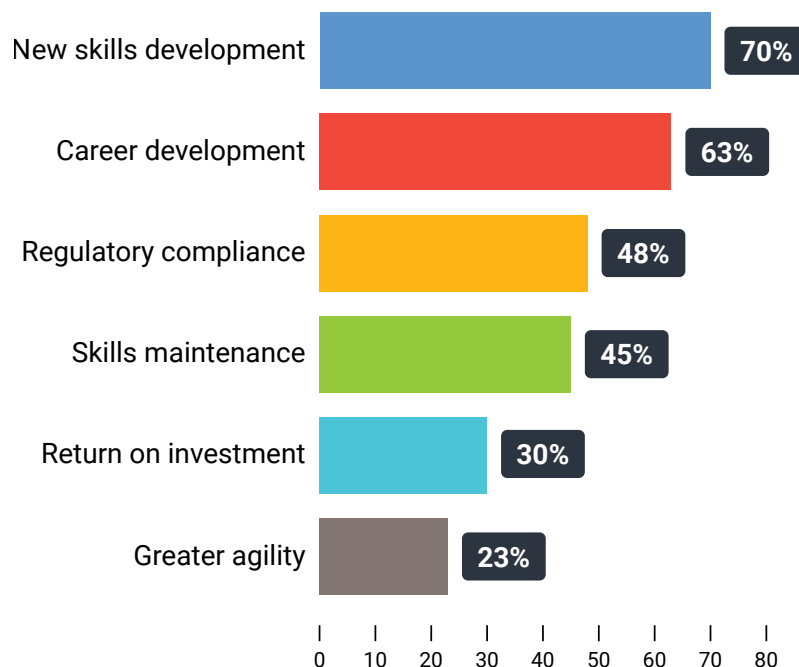
Finding: Two-thirds of HR professionals said the need for new skills drives learning initiatives

When we asked participants to rank the top three factors that are most important in driving learning across the organization, 70% say new skills development.

A little less than two-thirds (63%) say career development is important in driving learning. Most positions have a natural trajectory, but the learning path is often unclear. Helping employees understand how to get there is often key to productivity and retention.

The third most widely cited factor is regulatory compliance, cited by about half (48%) of organizations. Staying in compliance is an issue that most companies face at one time or another, although this is particularly true for highly-regulated industries such as healthcare, banking and manufacturing.

Survey Question: What three factors are most important in driving learning in your organization? (select up to three)



Career development and compliance are also key drivers

How Successful Are L&D Initiatives?

Finding: Few have excellent L&D functions or top-notch learning cultures

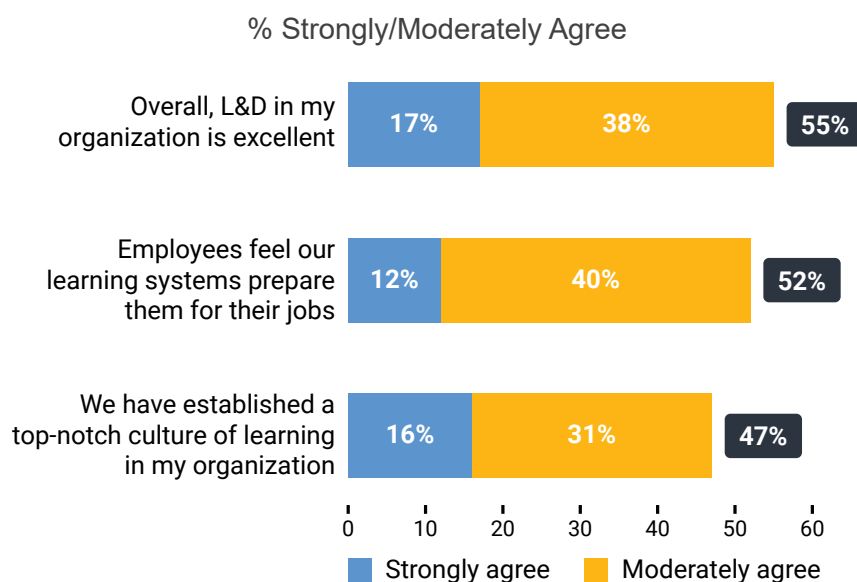
Learning technologies do not, in themselves, guarantee learning excellence. In fact, among those with such systems, only 17% strongly agree that their overall learning and development is excellent, although another two-fifths (38%) moderately agree. The good news is that over half (55%) agree to some extent that L&D is excellent.

Achieving a top-notch learning culture is a higher bar to reach. Just 16% strongly agree that they have established a top-notch culture of learning, with another 31% moderately agreeing. This means, of course, that fewer than half agree at all that they have a top-notch learning culture.

Because much of formal and informal learning today is carried out online, excellent learning is often reliant on a good technology implementation. However, only 12% strongly agree that employees feel their learning systems help prepare them for their jobs, although another 40% moderately agree.



Survey Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about learning in your organization?



Many learning systems are seen as failing to prepare employees for their jobs

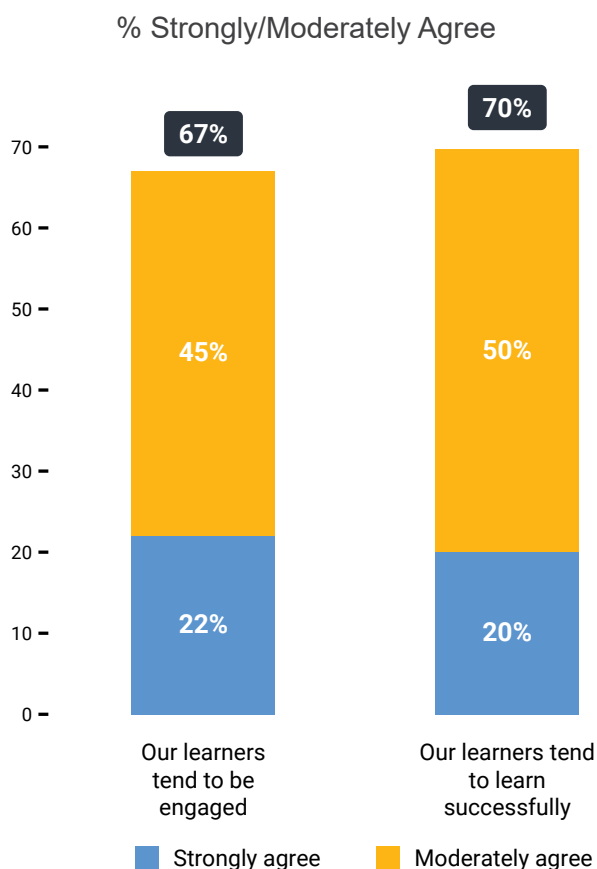
How Engaged and Successful Are Learners?

Finding: Few strongly agree learners are engaged and learning successfully

For the purposes of this study, we defined an engaged learner as someone who is active in their learning, motivated to expend effort, and eager to participate in their learning. It is generally assumed that engaged learners are more successful learners. Only 22% of HR professionals strongly agree that learners tend to be engaged (22%), although another 45% moderately agree.

Slightly fewer respondents strongly agree their learners tend to learn successfully (20%), although half (50%) moderately agree.

Survey Statement. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:



Engagement and learner success could be described as mediocre

Do Organizations Have Good Learner Metrics?

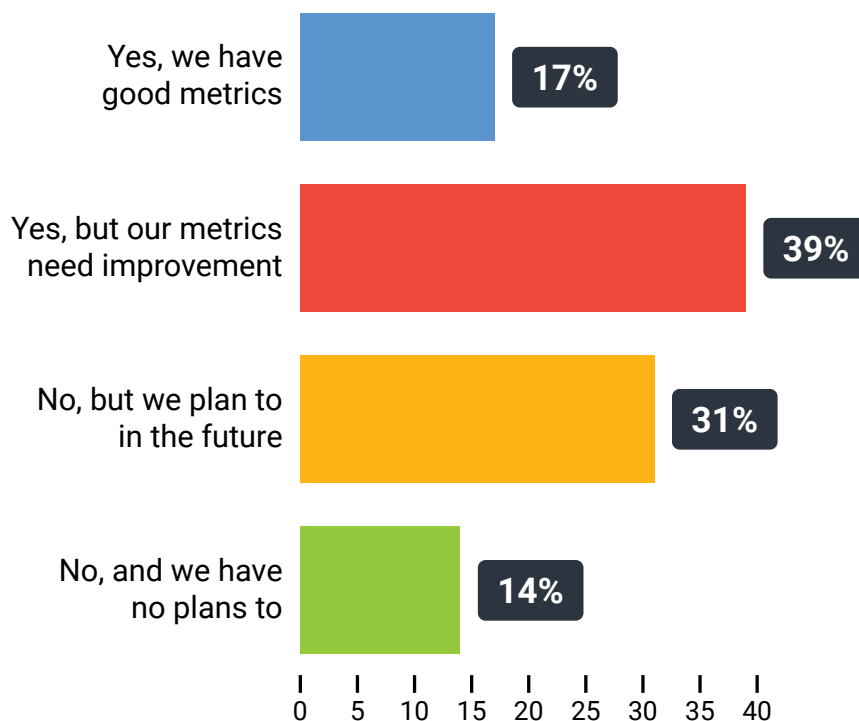
Finding: Although over half measure learner engagement, far fewer have good metrics

We asked participants if they measure learner engagement. Only about one-fifth say, “Yes, we have good metrics” (17%) and two-fifths say, “Yes, but our metrics need improvement” (39%). Therefore, combined, just over half of participants measure learner engagement (56%), but only 17% think they measure it well. Moreover, another 14% have no plans at all to measure it.

The good news is many participants who are not measuring intend to measure learner engagement in the future (31%). However, getting insightful metrics is what matters most. Organizations not only need metrics, they need good ones.



Survey Question: Does your organization measure learner engagement?



Many currently are not measuring learner engagement at all

Finding: Learner engagement metrics frequently rely on classroom attendance

To learn more, we queried participants who said their organizations have learner engagement metrics. It turns out a variety of metrics are used. Unfortunately, however, the most commonly used metric is classroom attendance (63%). While it is nice to know if a learner attended a session, this metric on its own gives little insight into whether an employee is actually engaged.

Survey instruments (56%) are the second most widely used metric. It's difficult to make a judgement about the effectiveness of this method since surveys come in so many forms. However, surveys can at least attempt to gauge emotional engagement with the material.

Other metrics included question answering (43%), response rates (42%), online activity (41%), question asking (41%) and frequency of logins (26%). The “other” category (4%) responses include the following types of metrics: evaluating if employees stay for the full duration of the learning event, hard metrics such as an increase or decrease in the number of accidents per season, and correlations with performance reviews.



Survey Question: How does your organization measure learner engagement? (select all that apply)



Only one-third of respondents focus on learning achievements

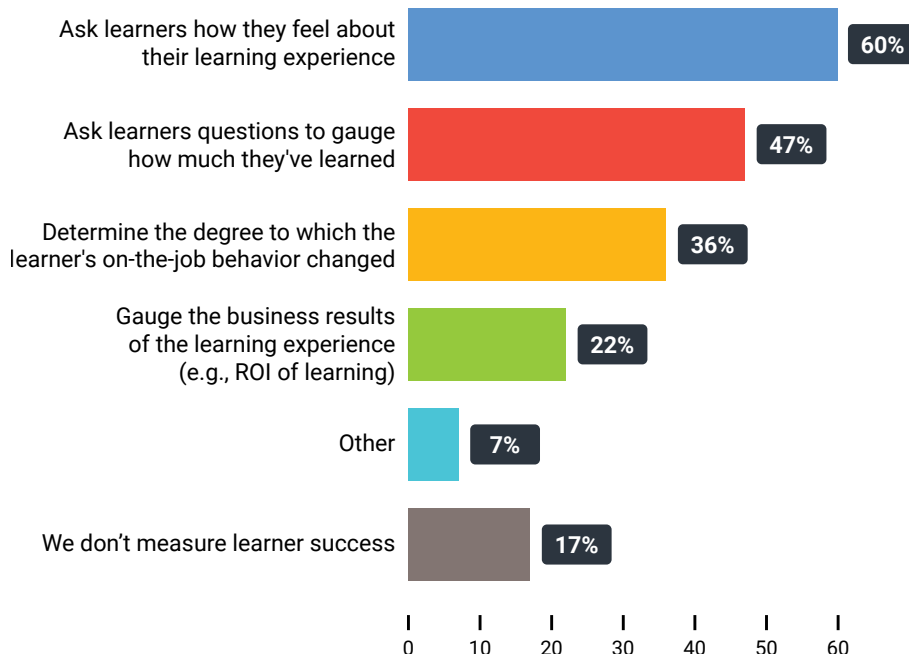
Finding: Learning success measurements are frequently soft and subjective

We asked HR professionals about whether and how to measure learning success. We found that although most (83%) measure learning success in some way, the most widely used methods can be described as “soft” and subjective.

Organizations today most frequently focus on asking learners how they feel about their learning experience (60%), and nearly half (47%) ask learners to gauge how much they’ve learned (47%). Although this information can be helpful, it is based on the opinions of the learners themselves rather than on more objective measures of learning success.

Fewer organizations are obtaining “hard” metrics. About one-third are determining the degree to which the learner’s on-the-job behavior changed (36%) and a fifth are gauging business results of the learning experience (22%).

Survey Question: How does your organization measure learning success? (select all that apply)



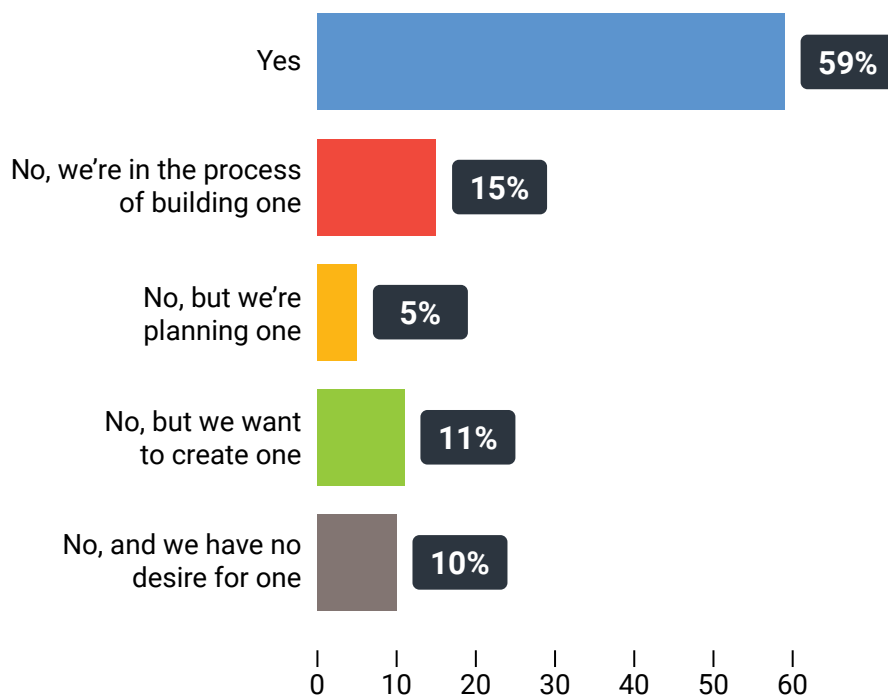
Only 22% gauge the business results of learning

How Common Are Learning Portals?

Finding: Most companies have (or will have) a dedicated learning portal/website

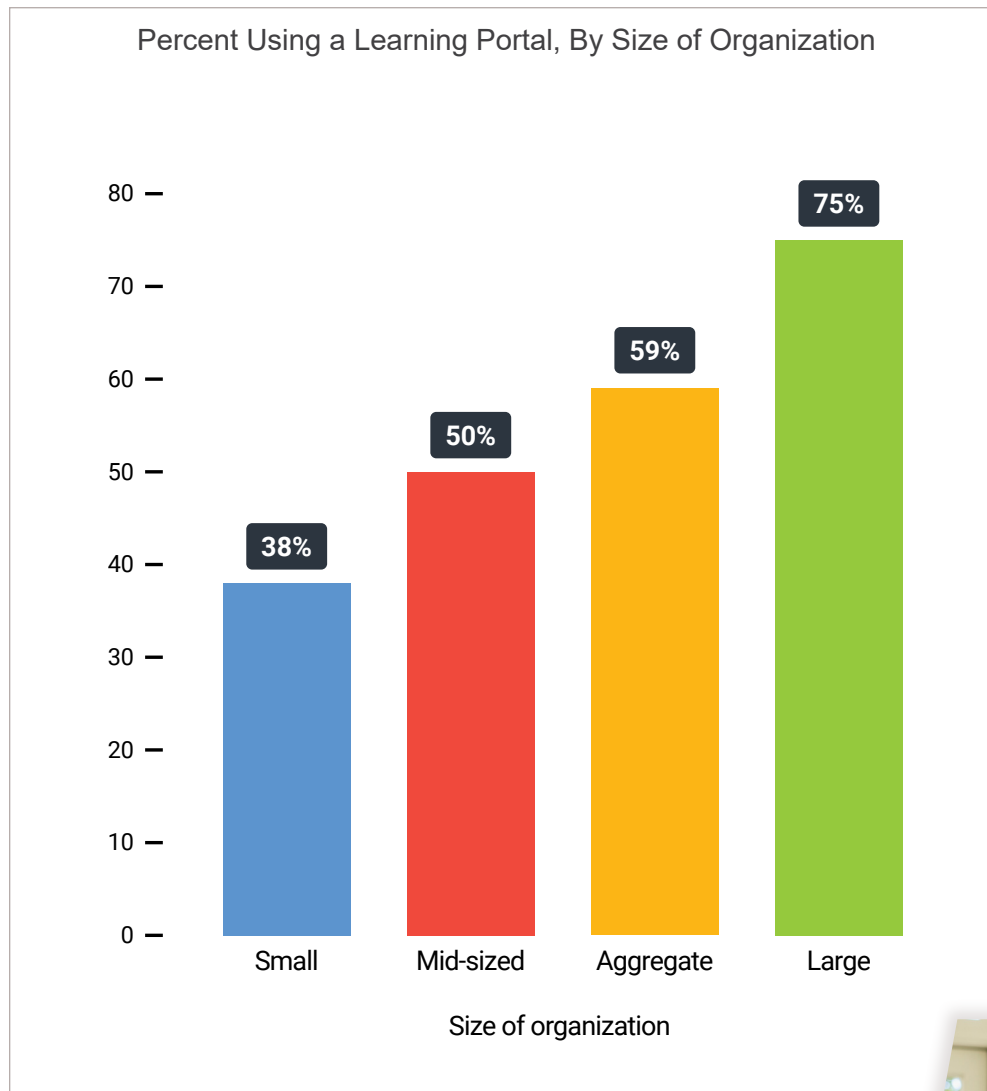
About three-fifths (59%) of HR professionals currently have a dedicated learning portal for employees. In addition, another 15% are in the process of building one and 5% will build one in the future. Only 10% have no desire for a learning portal, suggesting that portals have emerged as a mainstream component of today's learning infrastructures.

Survey Statement: Do your employees have a single place (i.e., "learning portal" or website) where they can go to access learning in your organization?



Just ten percent have no desire for a dedicated learning portal

The usage of portals varies by size. Among firms that use learning technologies of some sort, three-quarters (75%) of larger companies have a learning portal, compared with just half of mid-sized firms and two-fifths (38%) of small firms.

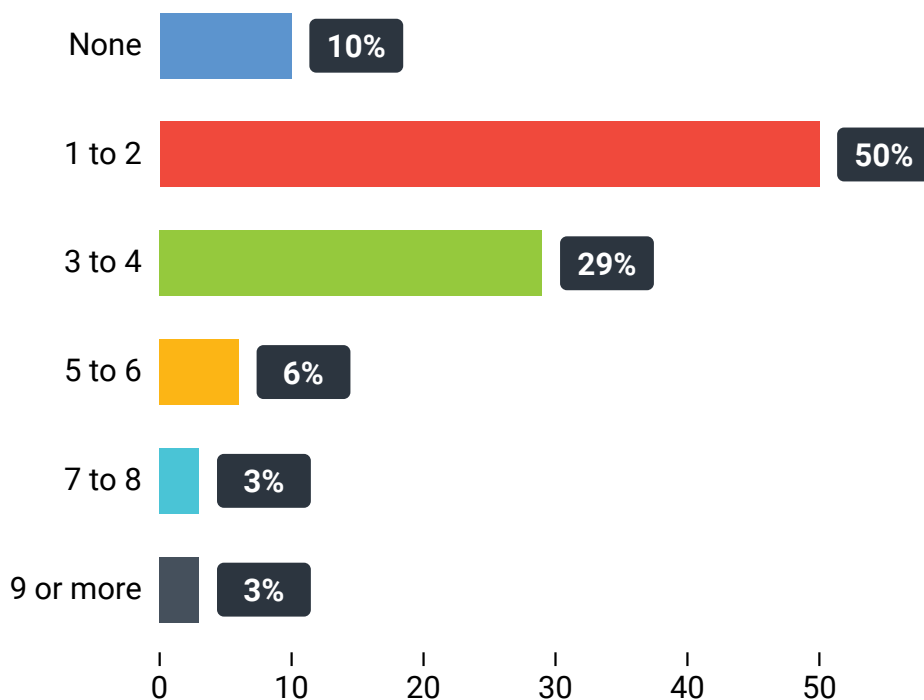


Finding: Participants frequently use multiple point solutions

Given the wide usage of portals, we might expect a relatively low usage of stand-alone or point solutions. But that's not the case. Most organizations (90%) use at least one point solution for learning. Half use one or two of these solutions, and 41% use three or more point solutions.

Generally speaking, there are at least three primary reasons to use point solutions. First, some purchase and maintain multiple learning systems for different divisions or geographic regions and locales. Second, technology vendors may offer unique products and services that are not available within the larger LMS, human resource management system (HRMS) or enterprise resource planning (ERP) software.

Survey Question. How many stand-alone (i.e., point solution) learning solutions does your organization use?



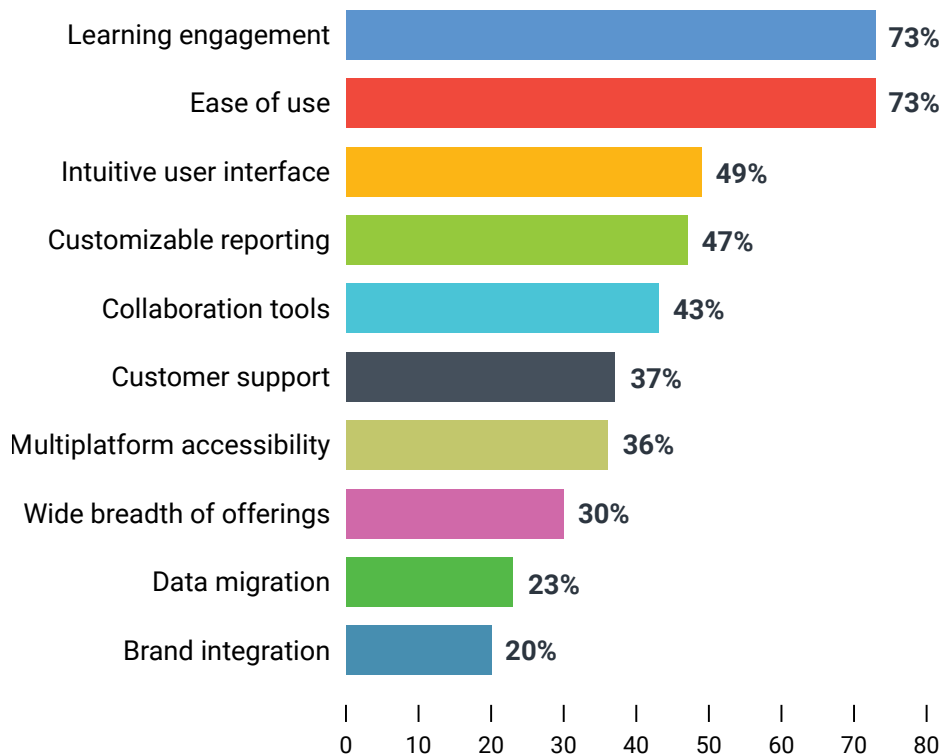
Just ten percent use no point solutions for learning

What Learning System Capabilities Are Most Important?

Finding: Nearly three-quarters say learner engagement and system ease of use are essential

When we asked participants to select the five important learning-system-related capabilities, learner engagement (73%) and ease of use (73%) rise to the top. These two categories are, of course, related. If a system is hard to use, learners are less likely to be engaged, which makes it more difficult for learners to learn successfully. Along a similar vein, roughly half want an intuitive user interface (49%), which tends to result in greater ease of use. About half also want customizable reporting, probably because such reports can help organizations develop and track learning engagement and success metrics.

Survey Question: Which five of the following learning-system-related capabilities are the most important to your organization?
(choose up to five)



How Satisfied Are Participants With Their Learning System Capabilities?

Finding: Only 15% strongly agree that they are satisfied with learning technology

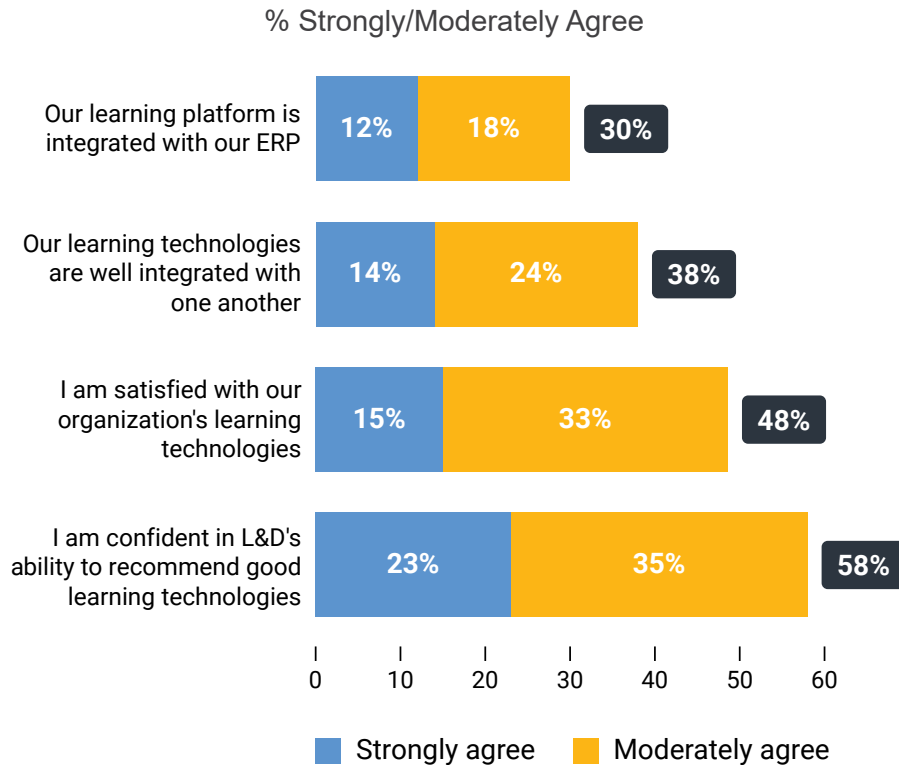
Most responding HR and L&D professionals want more from their learning technologies. Only a small percentage of respondents (15%) strongly agree that they are satisfied with their learning technologies, and just 33% moderately agree with this statement.

One central reason for this dissatisfaction is, apparently, a lack of integration among systems. Only about two-fifths strongly (14%) or moderately (24%) agree that their learning technologies are well integrated with each other. Without key integrations, organizations can struggle because they lack real-time learning data and because ease of use is hindered. Moreover, they cannot easily connect learning outcomes with other business outcomes. Only 30%, for example, indicate their learning platform is integrated with their ERP.

Given the lackluster overall scores with respect to learning technologies, it is interesting to find that organizations have a somewhat higher degree of confidence in L&D's ability to recommend good learning technologies. It's possible that some L&D departments have a good idea of how to create successful learning systems but run into other obstacles, such as lack of budget.



Survey Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about learning technologies in your organization?



Note: For the purpose of this survey, a learning platform is a technology that allows organizations to house and integrate online learning products and services.

What Do Most Learning Systems Offer/Include?

Finding: Organizations incorporate a variety of capabilities to engage their learners

When we asked HR professionals to indicate which learning capabilities are present in their technology solutions, we found over two-thirds use online courses (67%). Such courses tend to be at the heart of most learning systems.

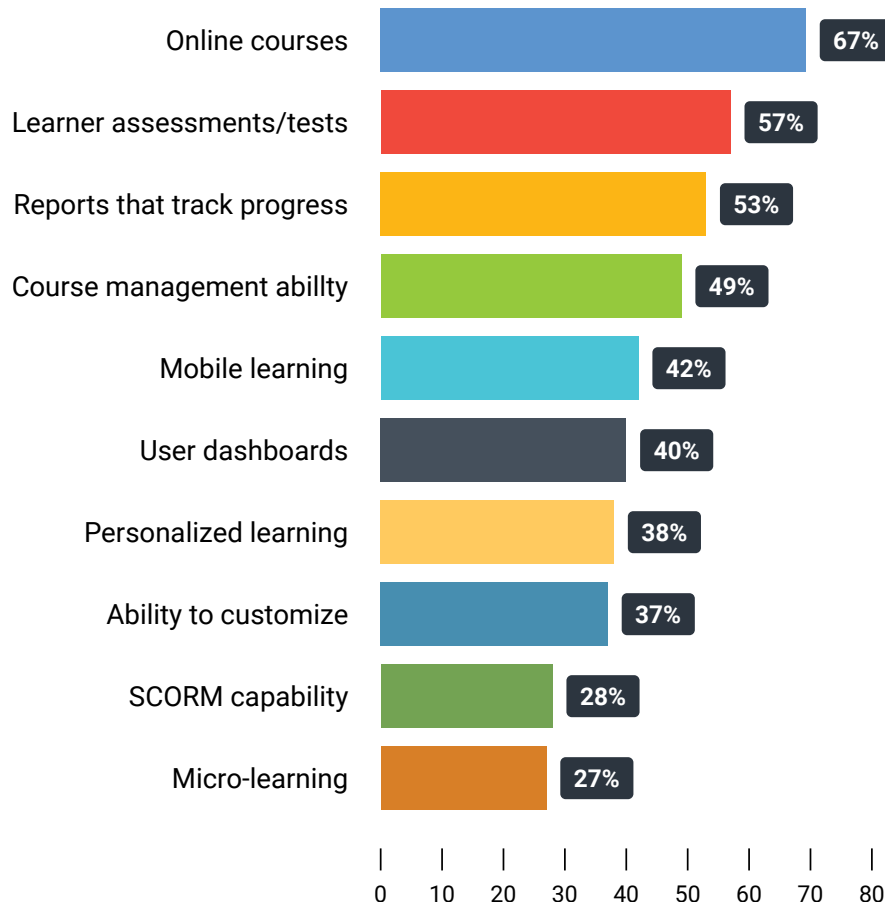
The primary benefit of online courses is the material can reach a lot of people at once and learners can learn on their own timetable and pace. Companies using online courses for training can also save on travel/room rental costs.

On the other hand, online courseware can be expensive, whether an organization is subscribing to, purchasing content or creating content. Another potential drawback is that online courses can be too lengthy for busy employees. Moreover, sometimes course content has been designed for the masses and so does not always adequately address the skills an employee needs to meet specific on-the job needs (or teach what may be company-specific).

One bit of good news is that mobile learning, user dashboards, and personalized learning are capabilities enjoyed by well over a third of respondents. L&D experts have been striving to make progress in these areas for years. Back in 2013, for example, a survey conducted by ATD and i4cp [found](#) that only 31% said learning content was available through mobile devices, and that was up from just 15% in 2010.



Survey Question: Which of the following capabilities does your learning system have? (select all that apply)

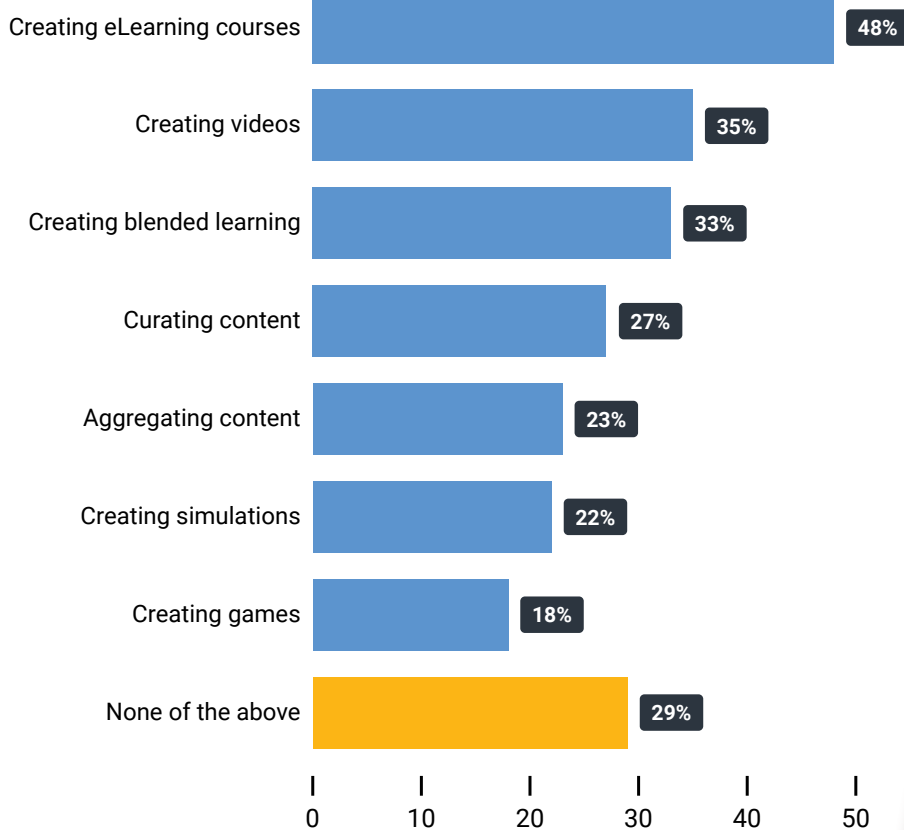


Lengthy
online courses
sometimes
designed for the
masses are more
frequently used
than personalized
learning tools

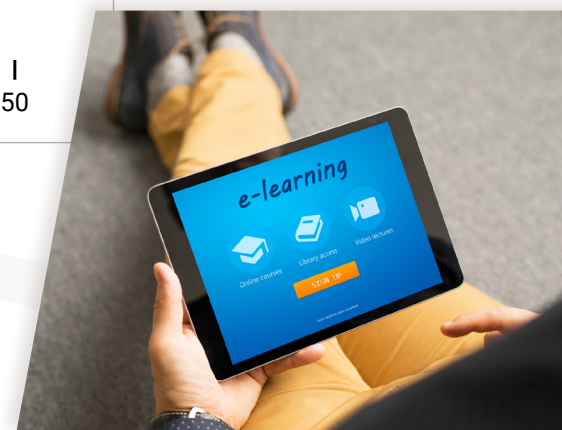
Finding: Many organizations create as well as provide learning content

Although 29% of the participant organizations do not have *any* of the listed content creation/curation capabilities, most have at least one, the most common of which is the ability of create eLearning courses (48%). Although relatively few have the capability of creating simulations (22%) or games (18%), over a third can create videos (35%) or blended learning (33%).

Survey Statement: Which of the following creation and/or curation capabilities does your learning system have? (select all that apply)



About half can create eLearning courses



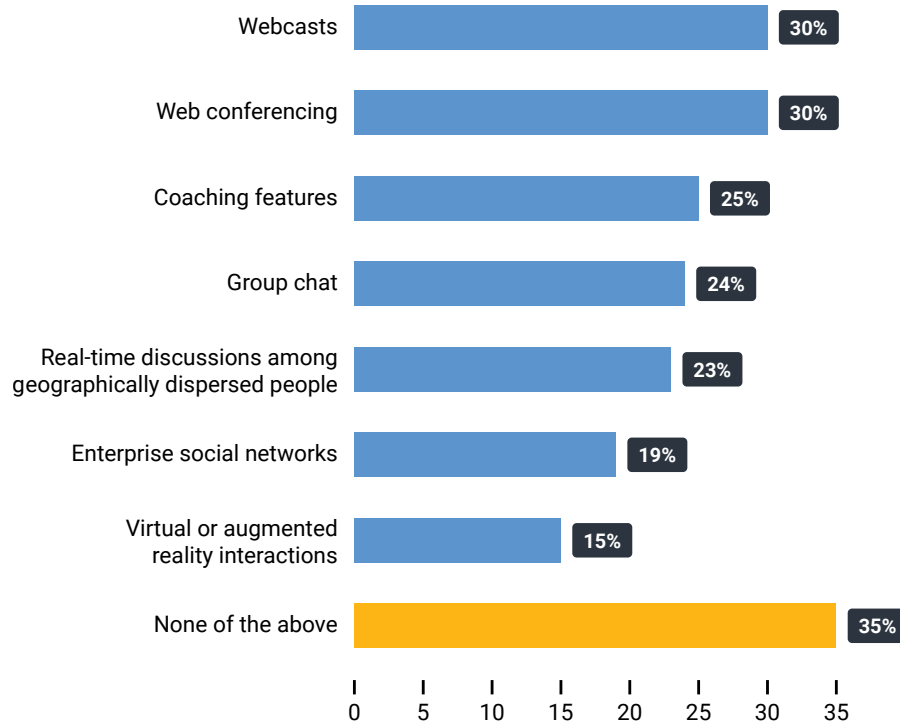
What Collaboration Features Do Technology Providers Currently Offer?

Finding: Collaboration features are relatively uncommon

Over one-third (35%) of participants said their systems do not offer collaboration features, which is surprising given the societal changes commanding a more collaborative work environment. Indeed, both internal and external colleagues are often the best source of hard-to-find information. It is possible that some systems have such features but are not being utilized.

The most commonly used collaboration tools are webcasts and web conferencing, both used by 30%. About one-quarter offer group chat and real-time discussions among dispersed people. Fewer HR professionals say their learning technology offers features such as enterprise social networks (19%) and virtual or augmented reality interactions (15%).

Survey Question: Which of the following collaboration features does your learning system have? (select all that apply)



Webcasts and conferences are most frequently used


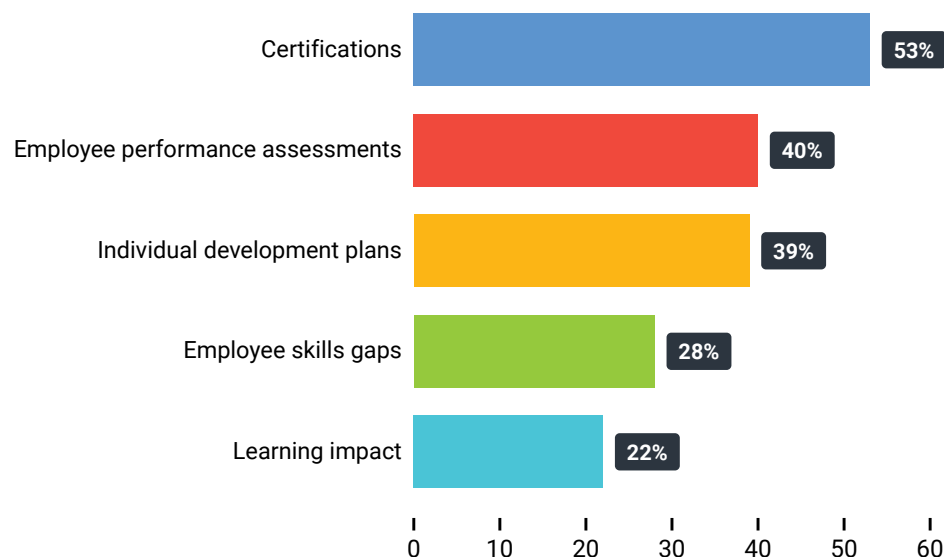
Which Performance-Related Features Are Included in the Learning System?

Finding: Performance-related features often include certification but seldom include learning's impact

We asked, “Which of the following performance-related features does your learning system include?” The top answer is certifications, included in about half of participant organizations (53%). In fact, most are unaware of the overall “learning impact,” with less than one-fifth (18%) measuring it. Just two-fifths (39%) have a system that includes individual development plans (IDPs) and less than one-third (28%) can shed light on employee skills gaps.

Given these findings, it is possible and perhaps likely that most L&D professionals as well as direct supervisors do not have a clear picture of how learning impacts performance. We suspect this lack of clarity is one of the reasons many learners are disengaged and L&D is not as effective as it could or should be. If employees feel that the time they spend learning can be connected with their IDP or their actual job performance, they might be more highly engaged in learning.

Survey Statement: Which of the following performance-related features does your learning system include? (select all that apply)



Most systems track/include access to certifications but lack data on skills gaps

Overall, What Are the Primary Weaknesses of Today's Learning Systems?

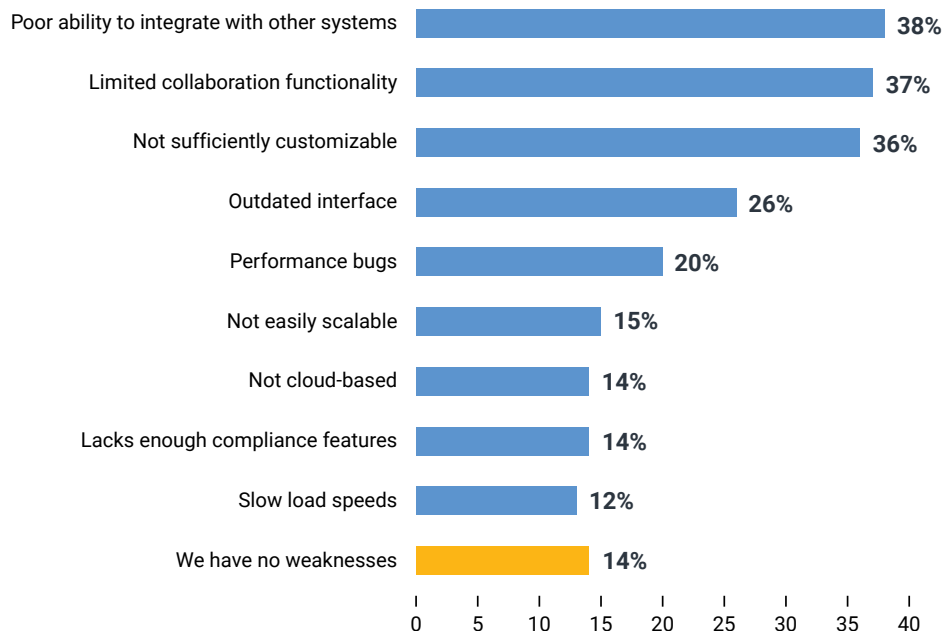
Finding: Organizations experience a variety of challenges with learning systems

We asked, “What are the primary weaknesses of your learning system?” Echoing other findings in this report, HR professionals struggle most in three areas:

- integration
- collaboration
- customization/personalization

Although solution integration brings benefits, it can also be challenging. It is sometimes difficult for organizations as well as their vendors and partners to keep pace with technology advances and changing industry standards. Learning personalization might also be made easier if one system could “see” how the individual learner has performed on another system.

Survey Question: What are the primary weaknesses of your learning system? (select all that apply)



Insufficient integration, collaboration and customization represent the biggest system weaknesses

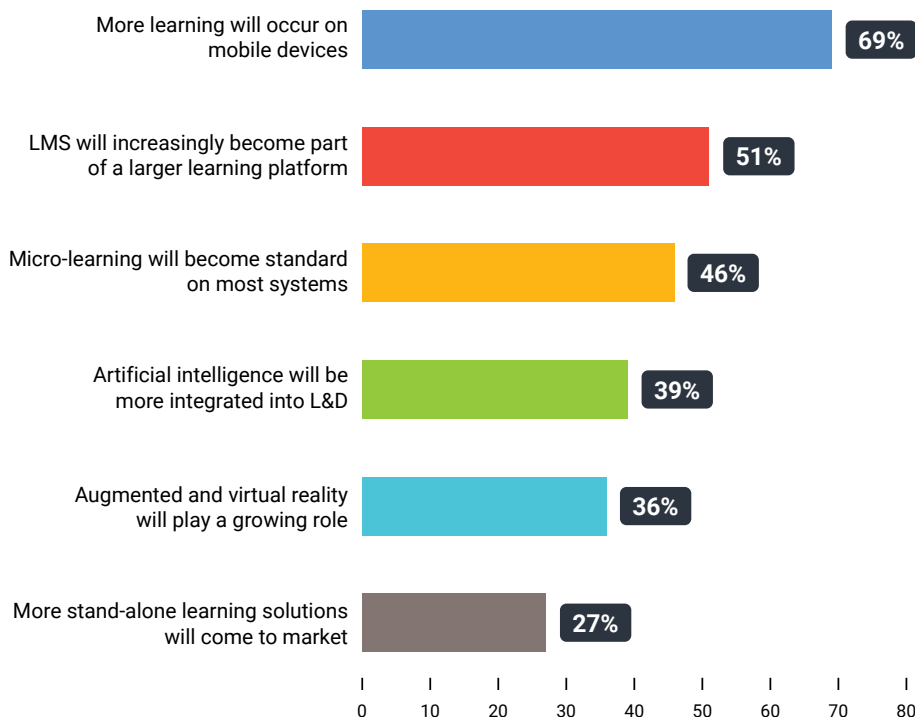
How Will L&D Technology Change Across the Next Three Years?

Finding: A majority think more learning will occur on mobile devices

Communication has become increasingly mobile, and most respondents believe that even more learning will occur on mobile device (69%) over the next three years. This gives learners greater freedom to get just-in-time learning on their own mobile devices, typically making for a more engaging learner experience.

About half think LMS will become part of a larger learning platform. Nearly as many believe micro-learning will become standards on most platforms. Over a third foresee greater usage of artificial intelligence and augmented and/or virtual reality.

Survey Question: How do you feel L&D tools will change in your organization over the next three years? (select all that apply)



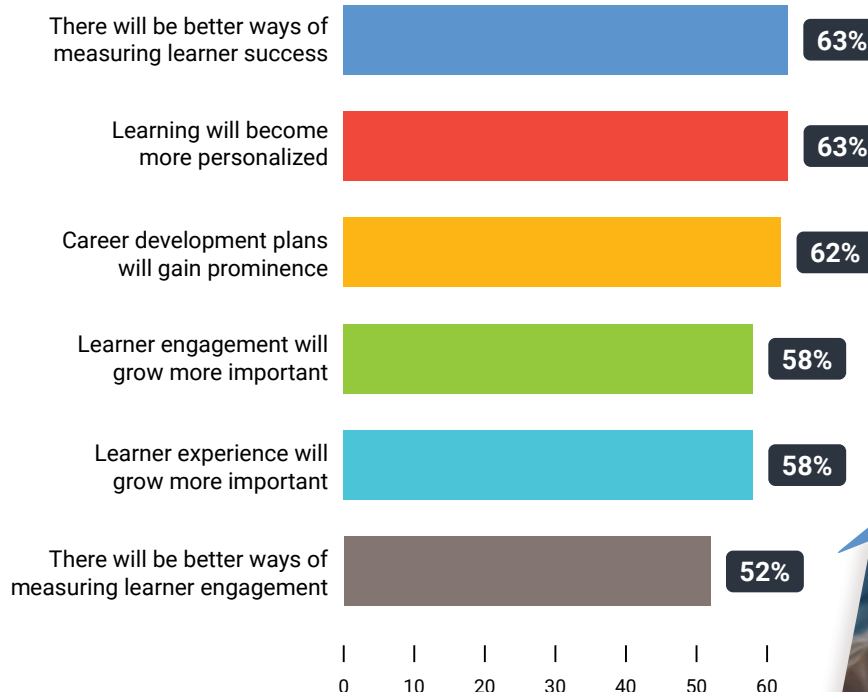
Over a third believe augmented and virtual reality will play a growing role

How Will L&D Strategies Change In the Organization Across the Next Three Years?

Finding: About two-thirds think learning will become increasingly measured, personalized and career-focused

Looking ahead three years, nearly two-thirds (63%) say there will be better ways of measuring learner success, creating greater learning personalization and allowing for more career development usages. Despite the fact that so many respondents value learner engagement, only about half (52%) say there will be better ways of measuring learner engagement over the next three years.

Survey Question: How do you feel L&D strategies and tactics will change in your organization over the next three years? (select all that apply)



Companies are least confident in their future ability to measure learner engagement



How Do We Classify High Performers?

For this report, we conducted various analyses to gain insights into which practices are most widely used by organizations that successfully manage L&D. We looked at two groups:

- **Higher Performers:** These represent respondents who indicate that they *strongly agree* or *moderately agree* that, overall, learning and development is excellent at their organization.
- **Lower Performers:** These represent respondents who indicate that they *strongly disagree*, *moderately disagree* or *neither agree nor disagree* that, overall, learning and development is excellent at their organization.

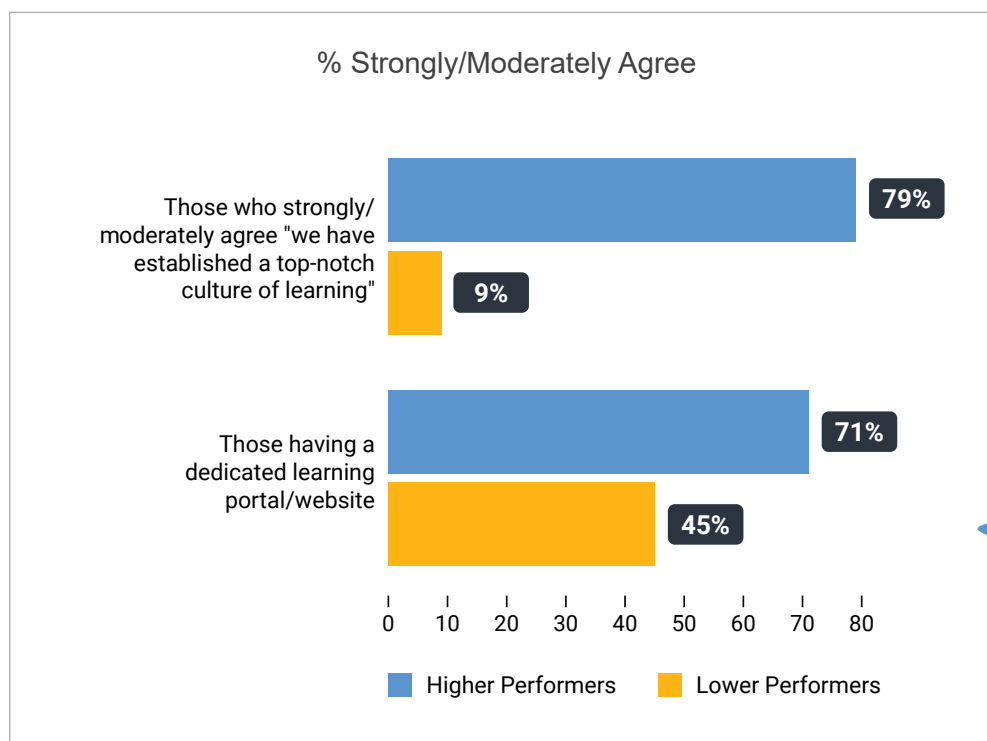
Both groups are technology users. Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to success in improving L&D, we do see intriguing relationships that might result in greater success.



What Do Higher Performers Do Differently?

Finding: Higher-performing organizations more strongly embed learning as part of their culture and have a dedicated place/portal employees can access for learning

Higher-performing organizations are more likely to believe they have established a top-notch culture of learning (79%), compared with lower-performing organizations (9%). One reason for this might be that Higher Performers are more likely to have a dedicated learning portal/website (71% versus 45% for Lower Performers). However, to make learning portals successful, employees must be engaged enough to use them and must feel their organization doesn't see such usage as a "waste of time."

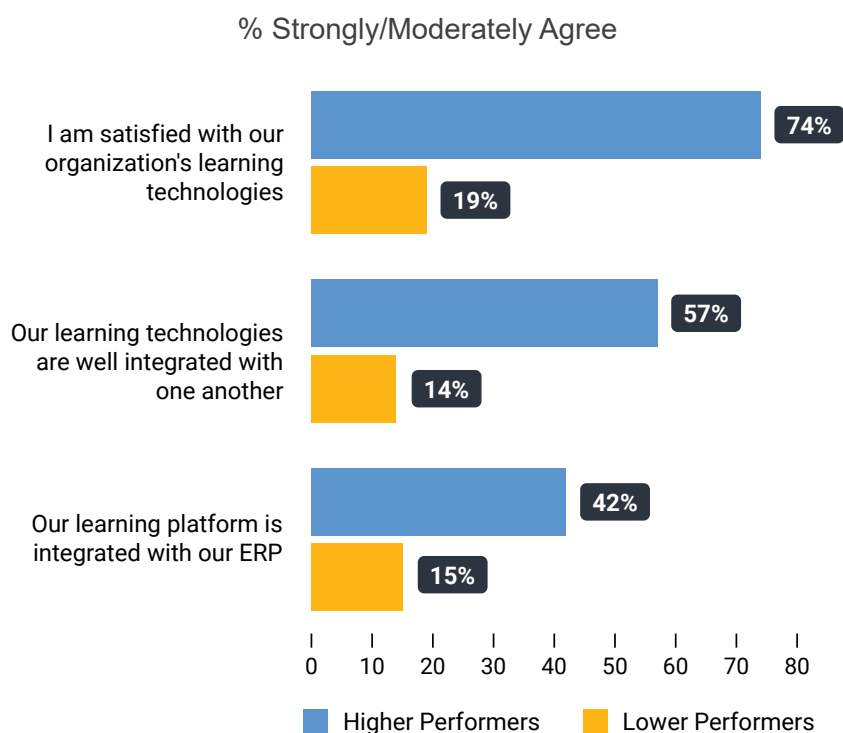


Lower Performers are less likely to have a dedicated learning portal/website

Finding: Higher-performing organizations are more satisfied with their learning technologies

Higher-performing organizations are more likely to strongly or moderately agree with the statement, “I am satisfied with our organization’s learning technologies” (74% versus 19% for lower-performing firms). One reason for this may be that Higher Performers are better at integrating their various learning technologies. Nearly three-fifths (57%) of Higher Performers strongly agree and moderately agree that their learning technologies are well integrated with each other, while this is true for only about one-sixth (14%) of Lower Performers.

Survey Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about learning technologies in your organization?*



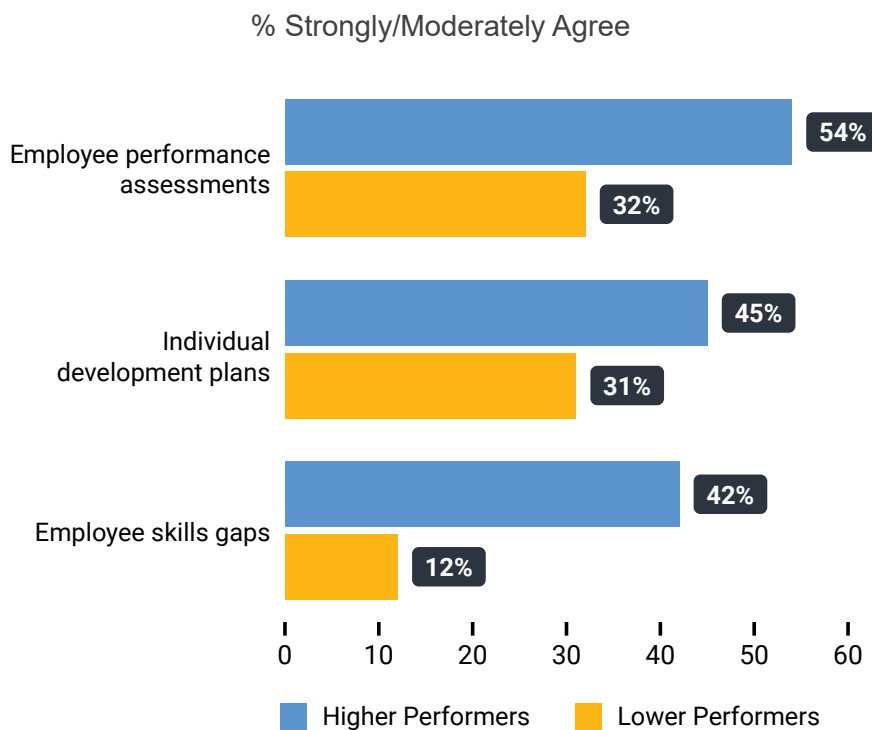
Higher performers are more likely to integrate their learning and ERP platforms

*Note: For the purpose of this survey, a learning platform is a technology that allows organizations to house and integrate online learning products and services.

Finding: Higher-performing organizations integrate or have direct access to performance-related features via their learning technology platform

Over half (54%) of Higher Performers have a learning technology that gives them access to employee performance assessments, while this is true for about one-third (32%) of Lower Performers. Hence, managers can more easily access information about where an employee is in terms of skills/development. Likewise, Higher Performers have greater access to employee skills gap information from within the learning system.

Survey Question: Which of the following performance-related features does your learning system include? (select all that apply)

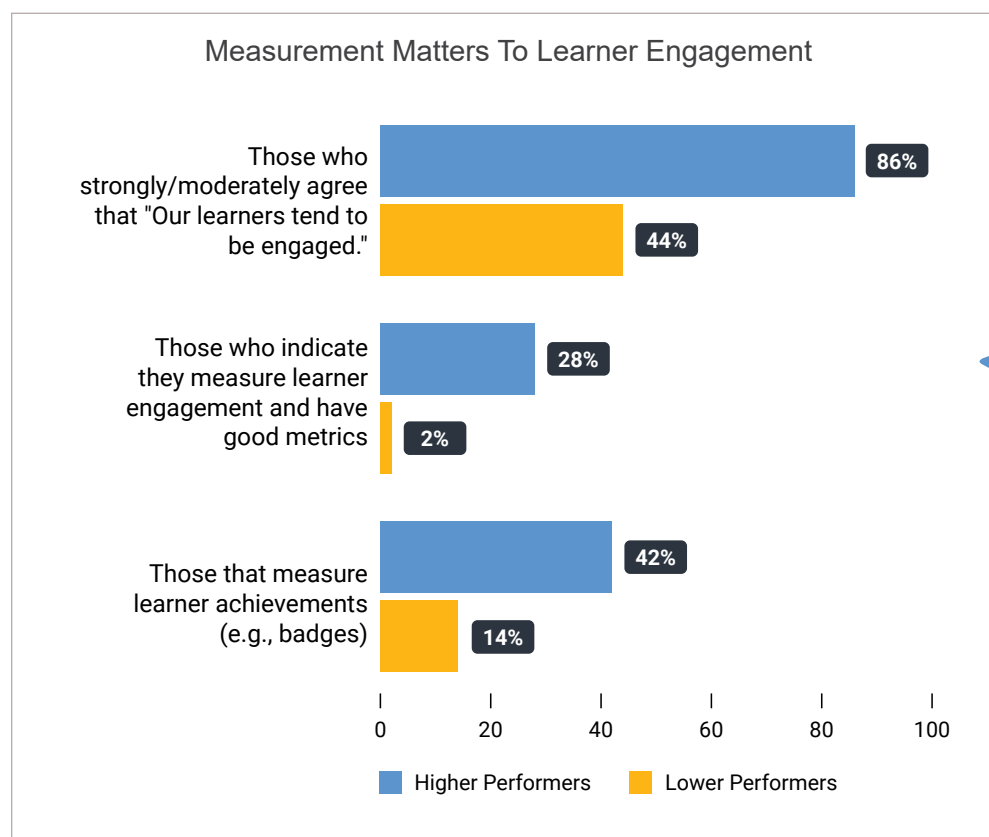


Lower Performers far less likely to have access to employee skills gap information

Finding: Higher-performing organizations have more engaged learners as well as better engagement metrics

Higher-performing organizations are nearly twice as likely to indicate that their learners are engaged (86% strongly agree or moderately agree, versus 44% for lower-performing firms). Better metrics may play a role. Higher Performers are much more likely to have good learner engagement metrics, and they are three times more likely to measure learner achievements.

Why would metrics matter? Because Higher Performers are better able to track activity and achievement. Metrics can point to specific problems, allowing the organization to make needed adjustments to learning technologies, culture, leadership training, performance management systems and more.

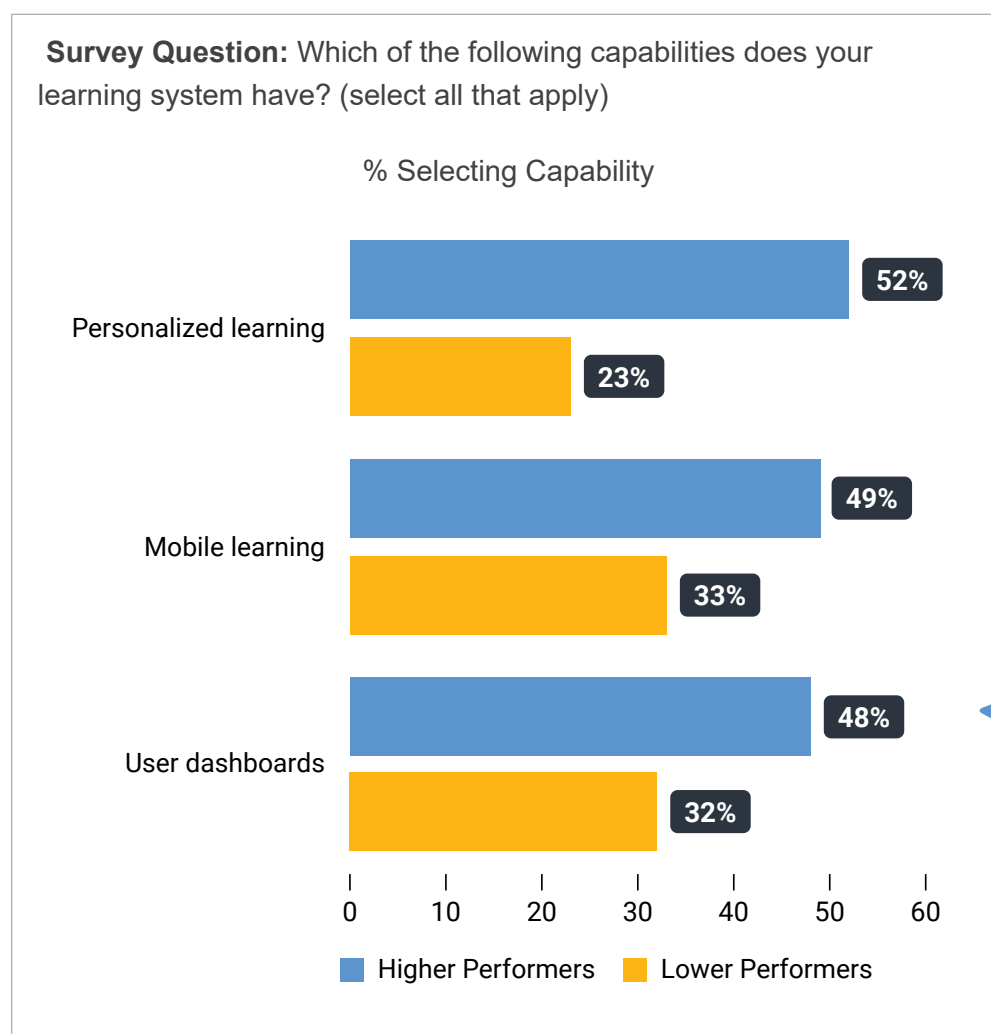


Higher Performers more frequently track learners' online activity and reward/ performance-related learning achievements

Finding: Higher-performing organizations are more likely to provide a personalized learning experience

Higher Performers are over twice as likely to offer personalized learning. Personalized learning can consider an employee's individual background with respect to content interests, career goals, learning style preferences and more. This is typically thought to result in a more engaging employee experience.

In related findings, Higher Performers are more likely to provide mobile learning as well as user dashboards.

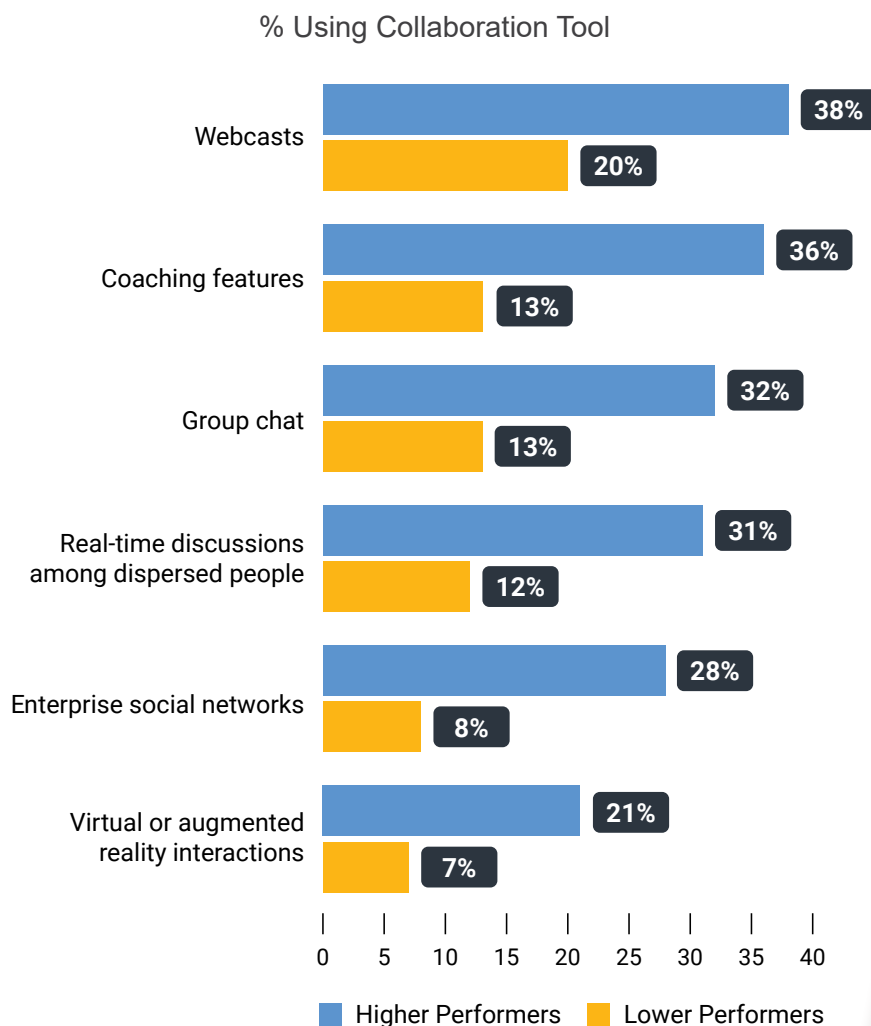


Higher Performers are more likely to provide user dashboards

Finding: Higher Performers incorporate collaboration features more often

Although the learning systems of most Higher Performers do not use collaboration features, such organizations are much more likely to use them than Lower Performers. For example, they are about twice as likely to use webcasts and over three times more likely to use enterprise social networks.

Survey Question: Which of the following collaboration features does your learning system have? (select all that apply)



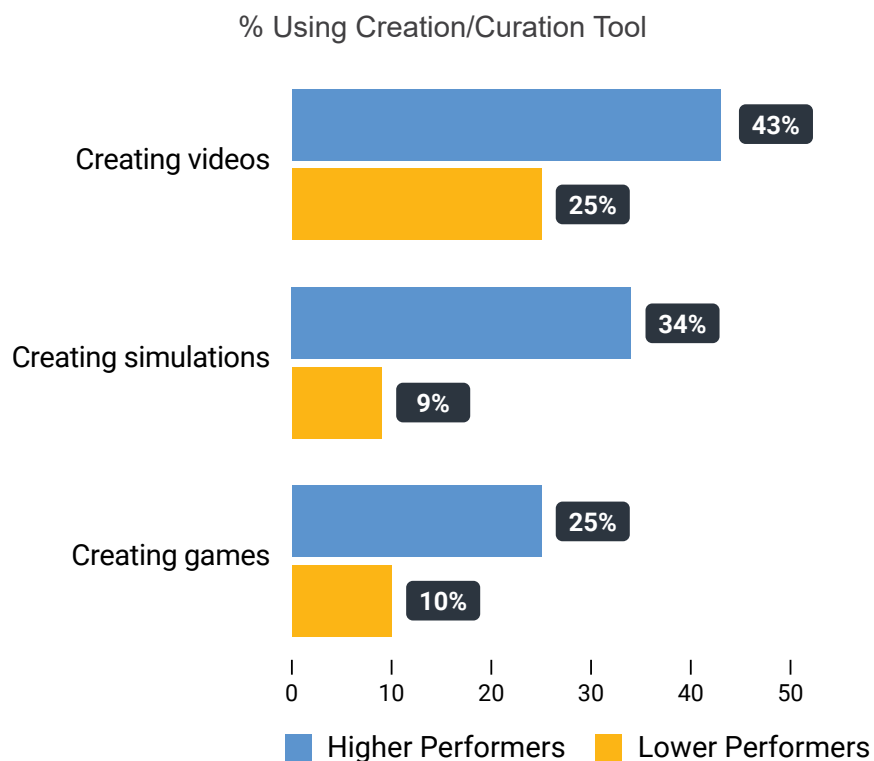
Higher Performers are more likely to give learners opportunities to collaborate



Finding: Higher Performers are more likely to be learning “creators”

It is relatively easy to purchase off-the-shelf learning materials for eLearning systems. It is more difficult, however, to create learning materials that customize to the needs of specific organizations. Higher Performers are, however, considerably more likely to create their own materials, especially videos, simulations and games. This suggests they are also more likely to have internal resources such as instructional designers. Although this kind of creation requires human and monetary resources, it can also result in customized learning that is scalable in large organizations, decreasing the need for expensive instructor-led learning and development.

Survey Question: Which of the following creation and/or curation capabilities does your learning system have? (select all that apply)



Higher Performers are much more likely to create simulations



Key Takeaways

Below are suggestions for how organizations might improve their learning solutions, learner engagement and overall learning effectiveness.

1

Consider creating a stronger learning culture. A learning culture requires more than just good technology solutions, although those may help support such a culture. In a learning culture, employees and other stakeholders not only have access to good L&D resources, they are encouraged and motivated to use them. In such cultures, people are eager to learn new things and inspired to use them to the best advantage of the organization. They not only have the right skills, they demonstrate the right behaviors, which include discussing and sharing new knowledge with colleagues. Generally speaking, learners are highly engaged in top-notch learning cultures.

2

Assess learning technologies and evaluate options for key integration points. Our research indicates that most organizations are using technology, though few are fully satisfied, and most struggle with integration, usability and a lack of customization capabilities. Do current learning technologies and the overall learning architecture support the near-term and long-term strategic plans of the organizations? Consider how integrations might help, particularly with respect to sharing key data among different systems so that L&D can more easily get an overview of the learning of specific employees. Consider integrating performance management so that learning can be better linked to performance and career development. Before conducting major launches of new technologies or integrations, get input from key learners and managers to figure out how they prefer to learn online.

3

Leverage learning portals. Although learning portals are common, particularly among large organizations, they do not guarantee a good and accessible learning system. Portals may be a necessary first step but, as part of a larger learning strategy, it is imperative for organizations to define the overall purpose of the portal. What are the primary learning objectives (e.g., better career support, new skills development and learning to meet compliance requirements or something else)? What barriers impede usage? Identify the best learning tools and make sure they are prominent in the learning portal.

4

Develop detailed action plans. Identify which learning tools and processes are most highly associated with increased productivity. Which ones help employees improve their deliverables, projects or day-to-day tasks? Also, consider how L&D is viewed. Are the messages sent to employees about learning more likely to encourage a growth mindset or cause them stress? As part of this process, determine how managers can inspire employees to take control over their own learning without micro-managing their learning experience.

5

Hone learner engagement metrics. By their own admission, few organizations are using good learner engagement metrics. They tend to rely on activities such as monitoring classroom attendance (i.e., did they show up or take a course) rather than on monitoring achievements or the milestones. Determine the best ways to measure and monitor learner engagement. Can learning be explicitly linked to greater career opportunities? Do dashboards, badges and/or gamification make a difference? What metrics can you get from your systems, and what else is needed to assess the returns on learning?

6

Make personalized learning a priority. For years, most organizations have been designing content to reach large audiences. While these courses have value, they often fall short because individuals learn differently and have different learning needs, and the courses can be too time-consuming. Personalized learning can help to optimize the time an employee spends and also make them more engaged in what they are learning because the learning is segmented for their needs. One way to personalize learning is to give an employee an assessment and then recommend learning based on the results. Another way to personalize it to an employee's IDP. The system can then recommend content based on career needs, key business challenges and employee interests.

7

Place emphasis on coaching and/or mentoring. Think about ways that learners might be paired with the mentors and/or coaches either online or offline. Sometimes the best learning occurs when people can bounce ideas off a great coach. Moreover, employees sometimes don't feel as comfortable going to their direct managers when they need help. Coaches can share their perspective and experiences and augment the learning experiences employees get from their managers, colleagues and formal learning systems.

8

Consider cutting-edge collaboration features. The learning technology marketplace is evolving rapidly. There are numerous features that have been introduced over the past few years to better support collaboration – essentially allowing learners to learn from their peers, customers, managers, direct reports, suppliers and others across the organizations. The underlying philosophy is that everyone has something to teach. Collaborative learning can help learners remember more and apply relevant learning to real work-life scenarios. Consider tools such as online social networks, online forums, and perhaps fun-based leaderboards.

9

Continue to make headway on mobile learning and other technologies. Mobile learning has increased in recent years. Such learning will only become more popular, and younger workers expect to be able to learn on their mobile devices in a just-in-time manner. In coming years, some mobile learning may occur via immersive technologies, such as augmented reality. Keep abreast of new developments and plan on making learning more accessible to employees. Consider harnessing other learning approaches as well, such as micro-learning, gamification, artificial intelligence and more. Through experimentation, learning professionals can determine which of these approaches is most effective for their organizations.

10

Review L&D relative to other HR programs. By taking an informed look at an organization's recruiting needs (skills needed now) as well as succession and workforce planning initiatives (skills needed in the future), learning can be better tailored so it can fill skills gaps across the organization. Are learning plans well aligned with other strategic plans, both within and outside of HR? Are employees starting to learn the skills that they'll increasingly need in the near future?

About Intrepid Learning by Vital Source

Intrepid is the collaborative learning platform that empowers organizations to solve high-stakes business challenges through engaging and applied learning at scale. We are disrupting old-school corporate training technologies that focus on content delivery. Our platform provides engaging opportunities to apply learning at work and to learn with peers, because we all learn from practice and from one another. Intrepid's approach helps individuals learn and improve, and organizations transform and grow. Our intuitive and vibrant interface delivers an experience that can support 20 or 20,000. We've helped customers increase sales, reduce new hire time-to-impact, increase the speed and success of strategic change initiatives, improve employee engagement, reduce training costs, and much more.

About HR.com and the HR Research Institute

The HR Research Institute operates as HR.com's research arm. HR.com is committed to creating inspired and informed workforces by maximizing the potential of HR professionals around the world. Over 1.2 million HR professionals rely on HR.com as the foremost, trusted industry resource for education, career development, and compliance. Offerings include 85+ primary research reports from the HR Research Institute, 400+ annual webcasts, the most comprehensive HR certification exam preparation program supporting SHRM and HRCI certification, legal compliance guidance programming, an on-demand training library housing thousands of lessons and tips, and 13 monthly-themed and interactive HR ePublications.

hr.com and hr.com/featuredresearch

