Navigating the Changing Learning Environment

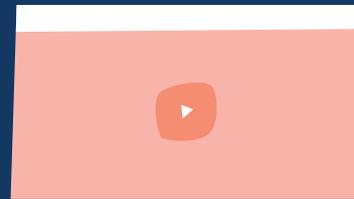2020

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Introduction

Training is no longer just a check-the-compliance box imperative, it is (or should be) a strategic imperative to engage employees and the extended enterprise with learning that positively impacts the business — whether it's directly to the bottom line, employee retention and engagement or meeting the skills needs of the organization. This eBook provides a guide to help with this transition and implement a learning experience that improves results.

Challenges for the L&D Professional

- L&D professionals face a wide variety of challenges, as our research has found.

- At the same time, Learning must handle business as usual with things such as certifications and compliance. In fact, compliance is still the top overall priority for Learning and Development.

Top L&D Priorities
(Scale of 1-3, 3 being highest priority)

Compliance (ethics, safety, policy, etc.)

2.49

Leadership development

2.47

Job-specific technical skills

2.44

Development of high-potential employees

2.12

Products and services knowledge

2.07

Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Survey

Finding the skilled workers they need continues to be a significant challenge for companies. The Brandon Hall Group Skills Gap Survey found that more than 90% have difficulty hiring skilled workers, globally and regionally. This problem will only get worse if L&D cannot shift gears to deliver the skills necessary for the future. Brandon Hall Group's 2019 Learning Strategy Survey found that very few companies are completely prepared to do that.

3

To what degree is your organization prepared to develop the skills that will be required by the business in the near future? *(Numbers don't equal to 100% due to rounding)*

Unprepared
19%

Somewhat prepared
75%

Completely prepared
7%
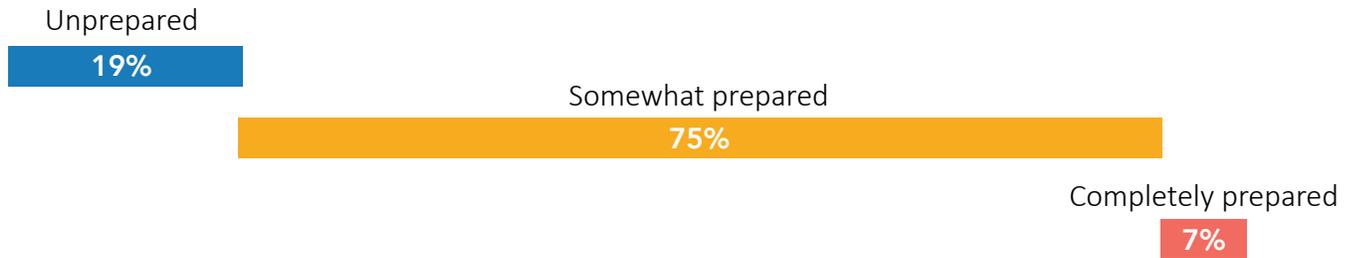
Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Survey

Only 7% of companies are prepared to develop the skills they will need and three-quarters are only somewhat prepared. This portends that not only will the skills gap persist — it is poised to deteriorate further. Organizations must create a learning environment that can address this issue now.

With immediate and competing priorities, an eye on the future and the need to manage learning for external audiences, the learning function finds itself at the heart of a complex ecosystem that is simultaneously strategic and transactional. It can be difficult to manage, especially with the wide variety of technologies required to execute.

Skills Gap Implications

Employee engagement is not where it needs to be
66%

Retaining our best employees is challenging
62%

Creativity and innovation from our workforce is stifled
36%

Our talent costs are higher because our people are not at their full capability
34%

Our leadership is unprepared to handle the current and future needs of the business
27%

We could react faster to market and business conditions
23%

We have more missteps and mistakes happen
22%

Revenue growth could be greater and happen faster
20%

Profitability growth could be greater and happen faster
19%

Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Competency and Skills Development Survey

The Changing Learning Environment

In today's work environment, people are accustomed to having access to answers, knowledge and information when and where they want it. If the organization is not prepared to meet these needs, information will be sought elsewhere, in places where it can't be verified, tracked or measured.

The No.1 thing

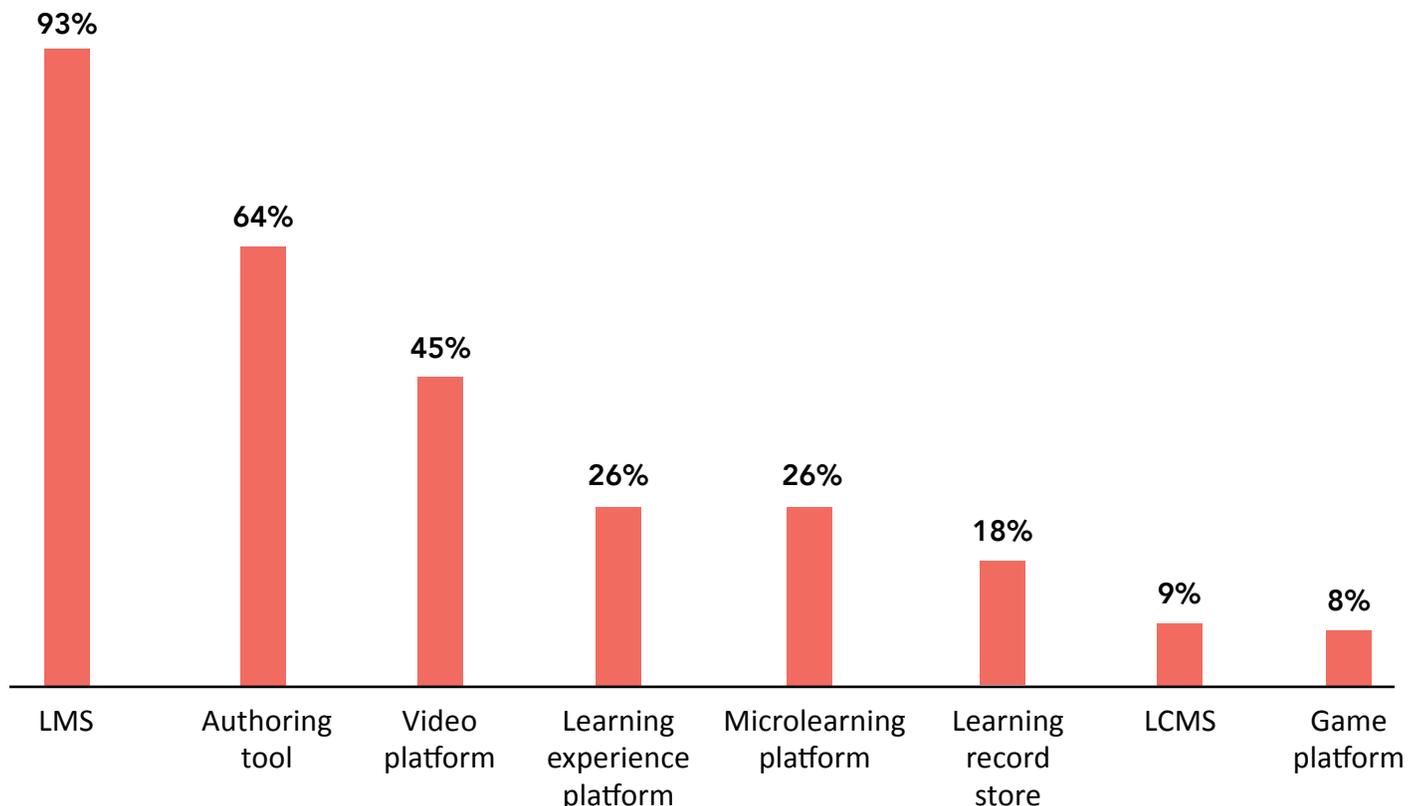employees want from learning technology is access to

information.

Source: Brandon Hall Group Learner Perspectives Survey

At the same time, employees are busier and more distracted than ever. A strictly event-based learning environment cannot meet the needs of the learner or the business. This is driving organizations to rethink the entire learning ecosystem. Where there was once an LMS and possibly an authoring tool, there is now a wide array of different tools and technologies being deployed.

Learning Technologies Deployed

Technology	Percentage
LMS	93%
Authoring tool	64%
Video platform	45%
Learning experience platform	26%
Microlearning platform	26%
Learning record store	18%
LCMS	9%
Game platform	8%

Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Learning Experience Survey

The definition of what is inside the ecosystem is changing as well. It is no longer necessarily contained within the four walls of the organization. For many companies, this includes suppliers, distributors, resellers, franchisees and often the customers themselves. This adds unique requirements to the technologies required to build the ecosystem.

85%

of companies will make at least some investment in extended enterprise learning in 2020.

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook
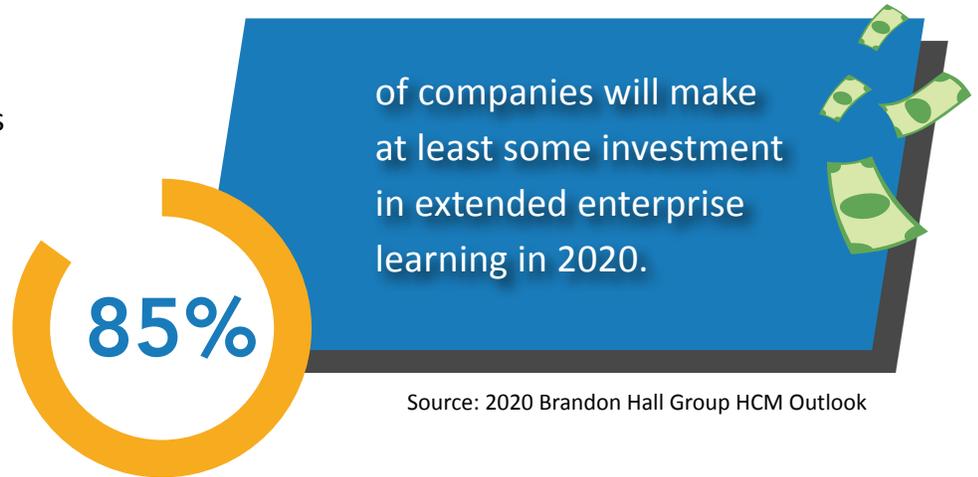
The Skills Gap

The other piece of this puzzle is skills. Using these high-impact approaches to address skills gaps can mitigate much of the risk that comes with these gaps. These risks can go a long way to holding back the business.

Addressing skills gaps not only ensures the workforce has the right skills, but it also engages them and keeps people with the right skills from looking elsewhere.
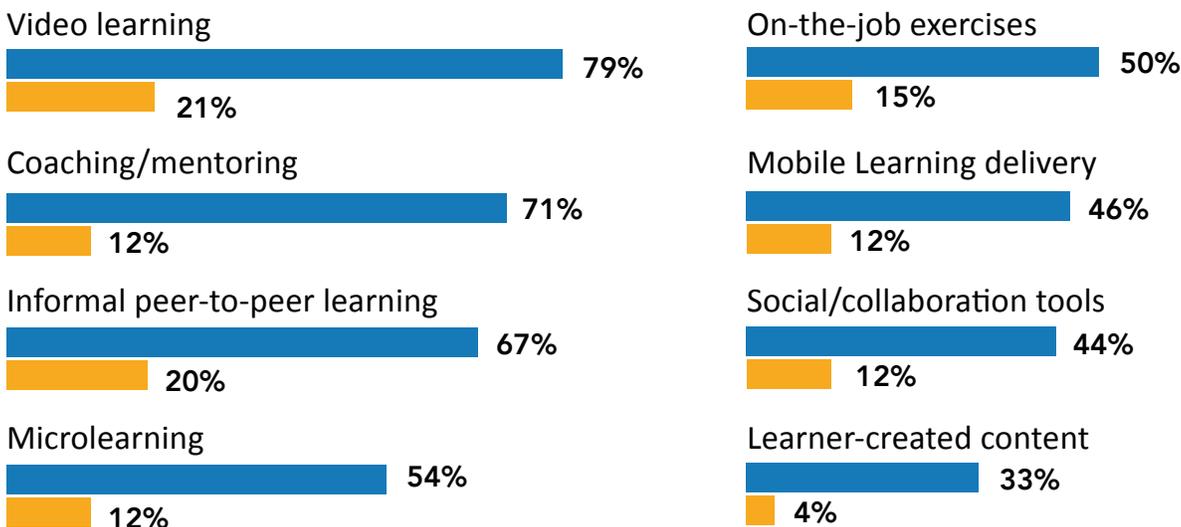
Impacting Business

To ensure learning has an impact on the business, companies are having success using the new tools and modalities that are expected from a modern learning environment. They can create learner-focused experiences that are personalized to learner needs. Organizations doing so are achieving better results than those that are not. In our research, we identified those companies that say their learning efforts have had a positive impact on the following outcomes:

- Time to productivity/effectiveness
- Voluntary turnover/employee retention rates
- Employee engagement
- Individual performance
- Manager/supervisor observations
- Team effectiveness

We consider these organizations to be delivering "high-impact learning" compared to those whose learning efforts are not having as much of a positive effect. These high-impact companies are much more likely to use newer learning experiences. In addition to getting the learning environment right, companies must continue to get compliance right. If not, the consequences range from a minor inconvenience to work stoppage to injury or death. By pulling compliance into the overall strategic outlook of learning, companies can mitigate risk and improve outcomes like retention and engagement. People like to work in safe, ethical environments.

Tools Often or Always Used

- High impact
- Low impact

Video learning
79%
21%

Coaching/mentoring
71%
12%

Informal peer-to-peer learning
67%
20%

Microlearning
54%
12%

On-the-job exercises
50%
15%

Mobile Learning delivery
46%
12%

Social/collaboration tools
44%
12%

Learner-created content
33%
4%

Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Learning Experience Survey

Using These Tools to Impact Your Business

While it's tempting to think technology will answer the need, organizations must ask themselves these questions to determine their requirements before looking for products:

> **What are the training needs across our business?**

> **What is our current program missing?**

> **Are our learners needs satisfied?**
> **Are they engaged by our content and delivery?**

> **How do we use new technology to close skills gaps?**

> **How do we meet compliance for the modern learner?**

> **How do we extend training beyond our employees to contractors, partners, customers and associations?**

> **How do we measure the impact — engagement, skills, compliance and satisfaction?**

With these questions and more, you can first set the requirements to determine what is needed in your organization before buying and implementing anything new. Then when you do, it will be focused on your needs, solving your problems and providing measurable results.

Making it Happen

There is no doubt technology will play a key role in how companies take on new learning challenges. And while it is not the only solution, it is an important piece of the puzzle and the one that will let organizations effectively execute their strategies. To that end, there are other considerations around the types of technology that can see a company through.
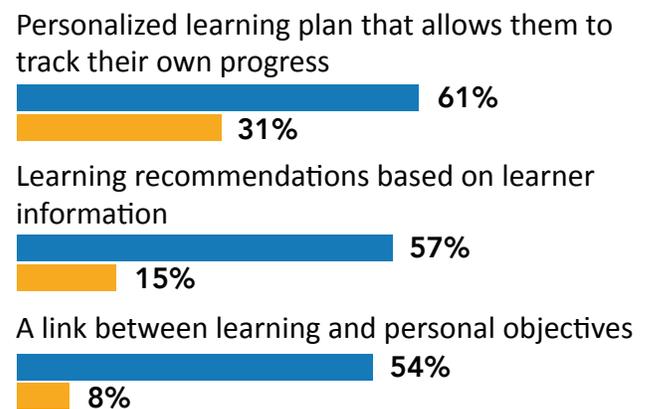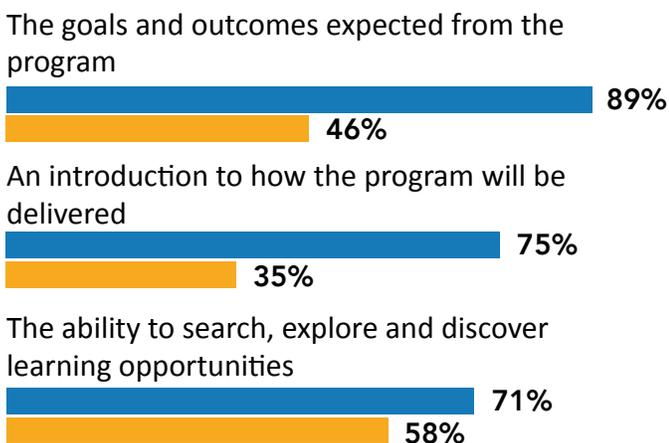
DESIGN FORWARD

People are accustomed to being able to use and navigate technology from their first interaction. Most modern interfaces require zero training, and that is what is needed from work-centric technology, too. Admins and learners want easy to use tools with very short learning curves that make their jobs easier — not harder.

EXPERIENCE

The learning experience has evolved based on the needs of the modern learner and the technology to meet those needs. To ensure it is truly contextual, High-Impact companies provide recommendations to learners based on things such as their role, career paths and learning they previously interacted with. They also give learners a link between the learning offered and their personal objectives. Companies often believe the "what's in it for me" factor for learning is implicit, but employees who understand the connection between themselves, learning and the business are more engaged and poised for success.

A Contextualized Learning Experience

● High impact　　● Low impact

The goals and outcomes expected from the program
High impact: 89%
Low impact: 46%

An introduction to how the program will be delivered
High impact: 75%
Low impact: 35%

The ability to search, explore and discover learning opportunities
High impact: 71%
Low impact: 58%

Personalized learning plan that allows them to track their own progress
High impact: 61%
Low impact: 31%

Learning recommendations based on learner information
High impact: 57%
Low impact: 15%

A link between learning and personal objectives
High impact: 54%
Low impact: 8%

Source: 2019 Brandon Hall Group Learning Experience Survey

ONE PLATFORM, MULTIPLE USES

Rather than rely on different platforms to solve different problems, organizations are looking for more flexible solutions that can meet multiple use cases, thereby reducing the complexity of the technology ecosystem.

EXTENDED ENTERPRISE

Organizations with a need to deliver learning outside of the organization require technology that allows them to extend their learning efforts, rather than use a separate platform. Whether learners are employees, resellers or franchisees, they benefit from the same type of impactful learning experience. Being able to sell training through eCommerce adds a revenue-generating facet to learning, which is typically seen as a cost center.

REPORTING

It is more critical than ever for learning to demonstrate the impact it is having on the business. Without proper data collection and reporting, it can be difficult to establish the connection. In Brandon Hall Group's research, organizations that display strong KPI performance are far more likely to measure learning on multiple performance outcomes than lower-performing companies.

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY WORK

In the end, the ultimate goal is to take learning from an event that's seen as separate and removed from the job and make it an indispensable tool for doing the job right. To do this requires technology that can put learning resources into the hands of learners when and where they need it, as close to the point of performance as possible.

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