

# Top 8 L&D Beliefs:

## Myths and Truths *Uncovered*

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What Most Learning Pros Get Wrong (and How to Get Ahead)



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# Introduction and Key Findings

In a profession built on evidence and evolution, even the most experienced learning professionals can fall for persistent myths. We surveyed over 400 learning and development (L&D) leaders across roles, education levels and years of experience to uncover the most common myths in the field today.

Here's what we uncovered:



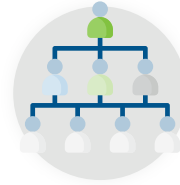
## **Tenure helps.**

The more years of experience an L&D professional has, the more likely they are to spot myths correctly.



## **Education level doesn't matter.**

Education wasn't correlated with L&D professionals' ability to identify myths. Myth-busting is an ongoing skill, and learning never stops.



## **Job hierarchy doesn't matter.**

L&D professionals fell victim to myths at the same rate across job roles.

Certain myths are more prevalent than others. **L&D professionals were able to tell fact from fiction 73% of the time, but certain facts and myths were more likely to stump them.** Here are the top eight most missed items from our survey:



# Information must be consistently refreshed, or it will rapidly "decay."

Myth No. 1

**Only 19%** of L&D professionals answered correctly (recognizing that memory decay depends on context), making this the most commonly held L&D myth.

Ebbinghaus' famed "forgetting curve" postured that memory decay occurs rapidly in the absence of reinforcement. It turns out that memory decay depends heavily on the type of information. Ebbinghaus' original research was based on nonsense words with no context. Information with value and context will likely show strong retention for years, even in the absence of reinforcement.

## TAKEAWAY

Reinforcement matters — but context and relevance matter more. Reinforcement is ideal when aiming to improve retention and facilitate behavioral change. It becomes particularly effective after initial learning with quizzes or review sessions, spaced repetition and/or post-training coaching, knowledge checks or webinars.



### TIP

Use microlearning to enhance your training delivery for lasting impact.



#### Keep your training materials concise.

Develop them to solve a specific problem from the outset.



#### Break your training down into bite-size pieces.

Deliver them in focused bursts.



#### Keep the content simple.

Give your learners only what they need. For example, a glossary entry should contain only the information necessary to define a given word.



#### Use social learning.

Your learners spend a lot of time collaborating in your company's messaging platform. Set up dedicated learning channels where they can share tips, tricks or problems.



## Human attention span has decreased in the last 15 years.

Myth No. 2

Only **22%** of L&D professionals identified this as a myth.

The concept of "attention span" is not actually something that attention researchers recognize as a valid construct. The amount of attention people dedicate to something is dependent on that person and the task at hand. There is no evidence to support the idea that our ability to maintain attention has decreased.

**THOSE IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS  
WERE MORE LIKELY TO CORRECTLY  
SPOT THIS AS A MYTH.**



**70% of knowledge comes from job-related experiences, 20% from interactions with others and 10% from formal educational events.**

Myth No. 3

Only **22%** of L&D professionals answered correctly.



While it can be helpful to understand that learning comes from a variety of sources, both formal and informal, the 70-20-10 rule is subject to a certain level of scientific criticism. In particular, researchers caution against a rigid adherence to the numbers themselves, as the proportions are highly dependent on the type of work that the training is focused on. Learn more about [70-20-10](#) and the [concept of the OSF Ratio](#).



## Higher cognitive ability is associated with better training performance.

Myth No. 4...  
Is Actually a *Truth*!

Only  
40%

of L&D professionals answered correctly, while a substantial 60% of L&D professionals believe this truth to be a myth.

In reality, higher cognitive ability is consistently one of the strongest predictors of training performance. Learners with higher cognitive ability can pick up on concepts faster and apply them more appropriately compared to learners with lower cognitive ability.



**THOSE IN MANAGERIAL AND EXECUTIVE POSITIONS WERE MORE LIKELY TO CORRECTLY SPOT THIS AS A TRUTH.**



## Curious how your skills stack up?

Take the Training Manager Competency Assessment at the end of this report.





## People with a more active left brain hemisphere are more analytical, while people with a more active right brain hemisphere are more creative.

Myth No. 5

**48%** of L&D professionals were able to distinguish this statement as a myth.

"Left brained" and "right brained" have become colloquial phrases to distinguish different personality types, with more creative people being described as "right brained" and more analytical people being described as "left brained." While these personality patterns may exist, neuroimaging studies have debunked the idea that they are connected to neural activity and hemisphere dominance.





## The levels of Kirkpatrick's model have a causal relationship such that achieving one level will help you achieve the next.

Myth No. 6

Only **1/2** of L&D professionals answered this correctly.

The [Kirkpatrick Model](#) has served as a helpful foundation to help training professionals start to think about the idea of multiple levels of outcomes. However, further extrapolations of the model have faced scientific criticism. Namely, the idea that the model has a hierarchy and the levels build upon one another in a causal way are two claims that have failed to find scientific support.





## Everyone has a distinct learning style.

Myth No. 7

Only  $\frac{1}{2}$  of L&D professionals were able to catch this myth.

There has been no evidence to suggest that teaching people in their preferred "learning style" has any effect on the amount or quality of learning. Style should match the content, not the learner.

### Learn more about the learning styles myth:

The Business of Learning: Rethinking the Learning Styles Myth in Training Design & Delivery



## Research has largely failed to show generational differences in training preferences and performance.

Myth No. 8...  
Is a *Truth*!

Nearly  
**1/2** of L&D professionals  
believe this truth to  
be a myth.

While there are many hypothesized generational differences, particularly surrounding technology and eLearning, research has largely failed to produce data to back up these stereotypes.



# Tips for Myth Busting

It's easy to fall into the trap of common L&D myths, especially when they sound logical or come from confident voices. Here are some tips to help you avoid these misconceptions:

| How to Spot a Myth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Strategies to Counter a Myth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be cautious of generalizations and intuitive thinking.</li><li>• Test popular assumptions and consider the mechanisms through which they might work.</li><li>• Review the original research, especially when something is presented as research based.</li><li>• Watch for ideas that ignore organizational or role-specific context.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask thoughtful questions to encourage deeper thinking.</li><li>• Share data or research that challenges the myth.</li><li>• Offer a more accurate mental model or use an analogy to reframe the situation.</li><li>• Connect your response to the business context.</li><li>• Be respectful but confident when offering an alternative view.</li><li>• Pick your battles; if it doesn't have business impact, let it go.</li></ul> |

Did you learn something new? Or did you recognize each myth for what it was?

Understanding what's myth and what's reality gives you a sharper lens for making strategic choices in your training function.

Looking ahead, as artificial intelligence (AI), cognitive science and workplace shifts accelerate, it will be essential to challenge these assumptions to design impactful learning for the future of work. Myth busting will increasingly depend on your ability to critically evaluate data sources, apply learning science and adapt strategies with agility.

# Additional Resources

## Keep Learning

Stay sharp with these resources designed for forward-thinking L&D professionals:

- [L&D Career Pathways](#)
- [2025 Trends Report](#)
- [Training Manager Competency Model™](#)
- [Course Catalog](#)
- [Upcoming Webinars](#)

## Test Your Skills as a Learning Leader

If you're looking for more ways to test your knowledge and ability as a learning leader, take the [Training Manager Competency Assessment](#)! You'll be able to identify your strengths and weaknesses and receive a personalized report on how to tackle each of the seven training manager competencies.

**TAKE THE ASSESSMENT**

# About This Research

Data were gathered from over 400 L&D professionals who completed Training Industry's L&D Myths Quiz. These professionals represent a diverse range of years of experience, levels of education and job roles.

- **Years in the Workforce**

- Range of less than one year to over 20 years

- **Level of Education**

- High school diploma, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree

- **Role Within the L&D Field**

- Other
- Training manager
- Content developer/instructional designer
- Facilitator/instructor
- Director of training
- Learning consultant
- Curriculum/portfolio architect
- Training administrator
- Project manager
- Training coordinator
- Learning technologist
- Chief learning officer (CLO)
- Learning analyst

