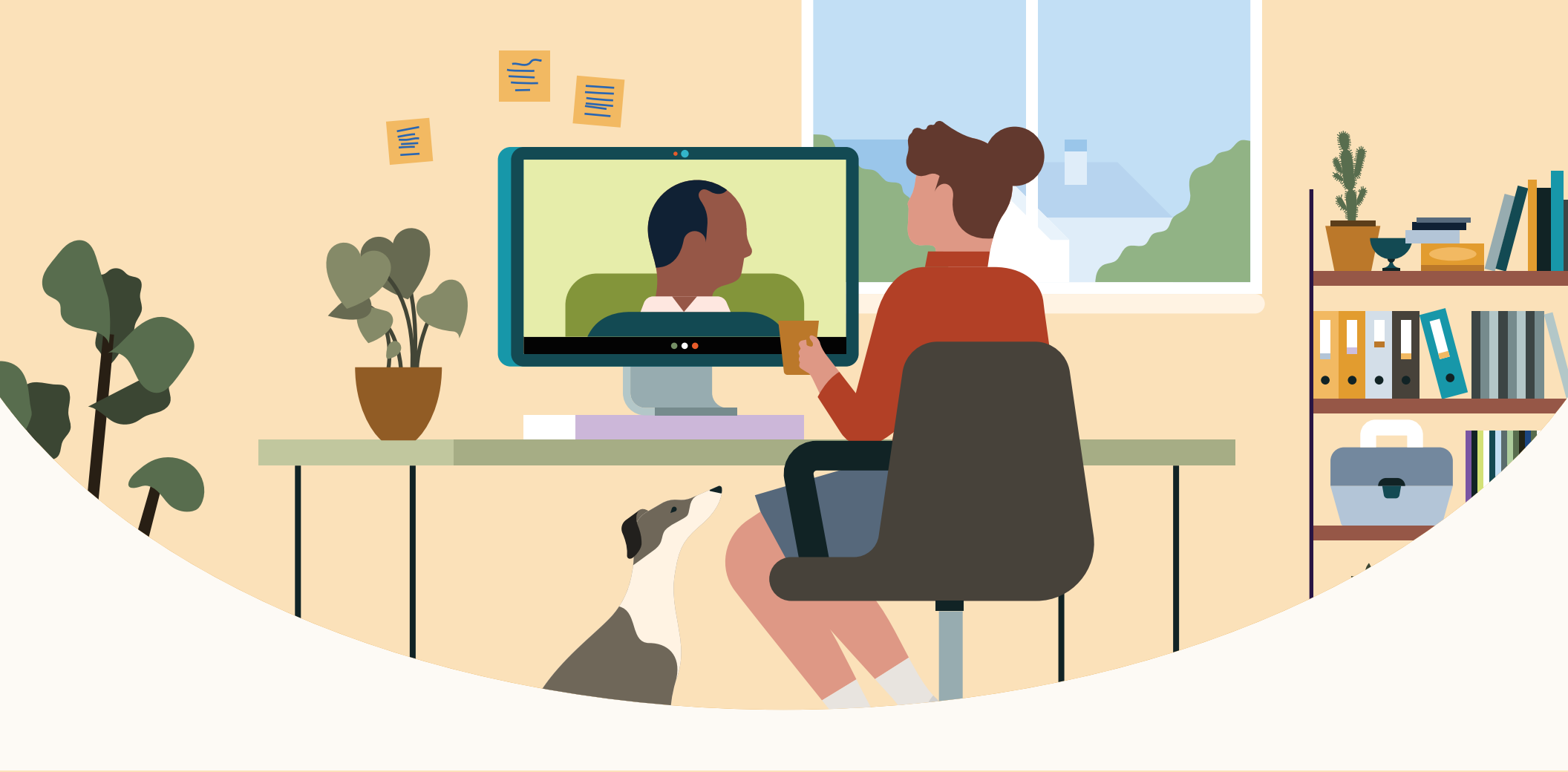

LinkedIn Learning

Leading with Learning:

Insights and Advice About the New State of L&D

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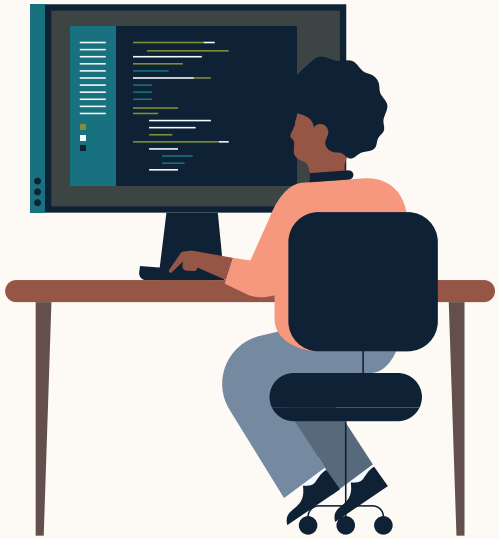

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Introduction

On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a global pandemic and the world as we knew it completely changed. While many businesses shut down and non-essential workers began working from home, nearly all organizations had to rapidly rethink how and where we work.

Right from the beginning of the crisis, two things happened: employees spent a lot more time learning and L&D professionals quickly mobilized to support employees as they moved through these changes.

From a learner perspective, there was an enormous spike—a 130%* increase—in the amount of time enterprise employees globally spent learning on the LinkedIn Learning platform. That's an additional 4.8M hours—or 454 years—of learning time as employees adjusted to working remotely, using new collaboration tools, and managing stress.

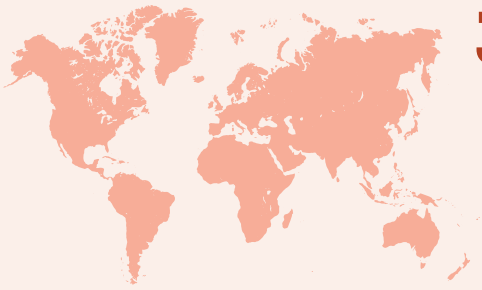
On the L&D side, learning leaders quickly pivoted their programs and budgets to give employees the resources that they needed—from content about how to stay productive at home to content on mental health and wellness. They went completely virtual, helped managers support their teams, and used collaboration technologies to make learning more social.

Executives took notice. We asked L&D pros if their CEOs are active champions of learning and 70% said yes; that's a 159% increase in CEO championship of learning and development in just seven months.

One thing is clear. Learning is more important now than ever before. This report explores how learning has finally earned a well-deserved seat at the table and how it is playing a central role as we enter the new world of work.

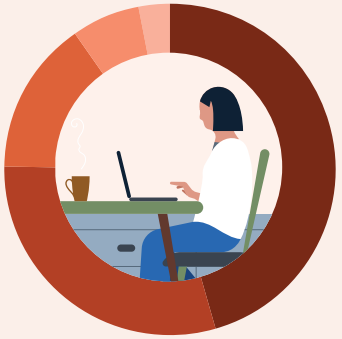
We surveyed both L&D pros and enterprise learners.

864 L&D pros in **21** countries



3,155 Workplace learners in **31** countries

The L&D pros we surveyed shared what percentage of their employees are now working remotely.



- **46%** Between 91% – 100%
- **30%** Between 51% – 90%
- **15%** Between 11% – 50%
- **7%** Less than 10%
- **3%** I don't know

*Source: LinkedIn Learning data from March/April compared to data from January/February, 2020

The New State of L&D

1 Learning cemented its strategic position—both functionally and culturally

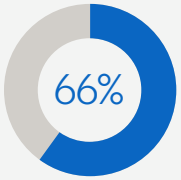
When most employees were still shell shocked by profound and rapid-fire changes, organizations—led by their L&D team—turned to learning to help employees adapt. In March, LinkedIn Learning admins shared highly-relevant learning content and employees spent an unprecedented amount of time learning. L&D's swift response, coupled with a big appetite for learning, propelled L&D into a much more strategic position within their organizations.

Advice from LinkedIn Learning

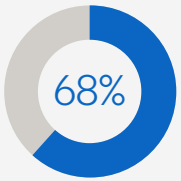
Now is the time to demonstrate the value of learning.

If your organization has seen a similar learning spike, then now is the time to package those statistics and share them with your executive leadership to underscore the value learning has brought during these challenging times. The continued rise of learning validates that 1) employees value learning now more than ever before, 2) they are building the learning habit to help them adapt and cope with change, and 3) L&D is successfully meeting employee needs with learning content, exactly when they need it.

L&D's strategic position was rapidly elevated in their organizations.



of L&D pros agree that their function has become a much more strategic part of their organizations.



of L&D pros said that the level of urgency around launching learning programs has risen significantly.

LinkedIn Learning admins started sharing more learning content with employees.

126% ↑

in the creation of learning paths.*

346% ↑

in the number of course recommendations that LinkedIn Learning admins shared with employees.*

Enterprise learners were highly engaged in learning content.

130% ↑

in time spent learning by enterprise learners.*

It was the largest learning spike in the history of LinkedIn Learning.

3.8MIL ↑

in hours spent learning by enterprise learners.*

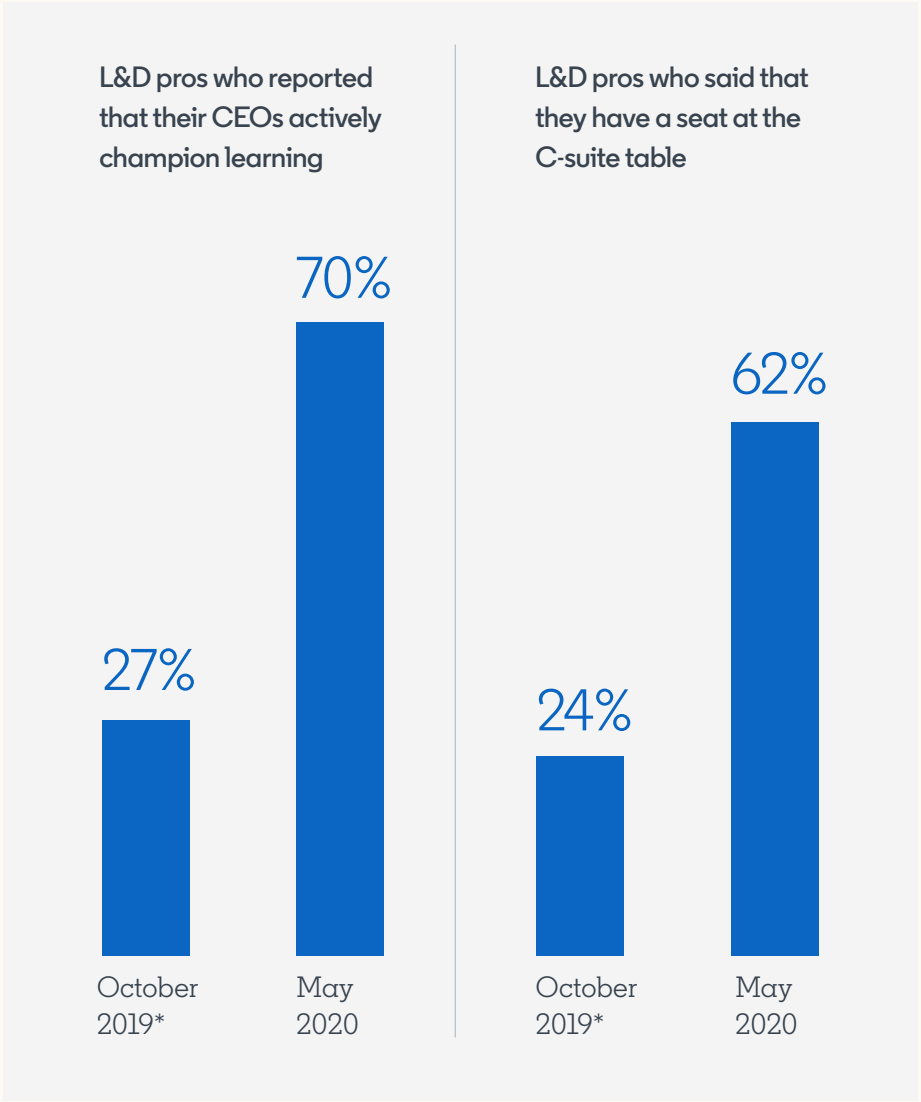
That equals 434 years.

*Source: LinkedIn Learning data from March/April compared to data from January/February, 2020.

2 Executives are prioritizing and actively championing learning

Executive leadership teams have truly recognized the value of learning. When we surveyed L&D pros globally for the LinkedIn Learning 2020 Workplace Learning Report in October 2019, 83% of L&D pros agreed that executive buy-in was not a challenge, but roughly only a quarter reported that their executives were actively championing learning in their organizations. We all know that there is a big gap between buy-in, or understanding the importance of learning, and proactively advocating for learning.

Today, nearly three quarters of L&D pros say that their CEOs are active learning champions, and nearly two-thirds have the proverbial seat at the table. This newfound attention from executives and functional leads will serve L&D well as we collectively move past this crisis and adjust to the new normal.



*Source: LinkedIn Learning 2020 Workplace Learning Report

2 Executives are prioritizing and actively championing learning

"The spotlight is on us like never before and it has brought new levels of attention at a senior level. We've always had support, but now we're getting more internal resources to help produce landing pages and learner testimonials; there's a real appetite at the senior level to push learning forward."

Jacqueline Gay
L&D Manager at TomTom
(Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Find out how Jacqueline is leading with learning.
Read more >

"We are fortunate because we had strong CEO support prior to COVID-19. Our executives immediately understood that we had an important role to play in this crisis—to help our 90,000 employees who were suddenly working from home learn how to work remotely, use the new communication tools, and manage their time effectively."

Simon Brown
Chief Learning Officer at Novartis
(Basel, Switzerland)

Advice from Simon Brown

Partner with departmental leaders to assess needs.

"Now that most CEOs are prioritizing learning, it's more important than ever to stay close to whoever is defining what the new normal looks like. It might be the commercial team, strategy, or HR. When the new ways of working are discussed, L&D needs to be part of those conversations and address the reskilling and upskilling needs that will inevitably come up. That is the way to not only keep L&D's seat at the table, but also continue to be a strategic partner shaping how work will happen in the future."

3 Learning program spend pivoted to digital on a dime

Unsurprisingly, L&D budgets are being spent much differently than they were last year to make learning more scalable, cost-effective, and completely virtual. A majority of L&D pros are shifting their ILT spend to VILT and online learning. Given that running in-person training is often the largest line item, more budget is now freed up to invest in world-class digital learning experiences that learners can engage with while at home.

Advice from LinkedIn Learning

Reskill your training coordinators into VILT producers.

In our conversations with customers, we found that many now have training coordinators or assistants who can no longer serve in their role because most ILT classroom training is on pause. Now is the time to upskill them into a new role: virtual live training producers who can manage technology platforms while instructors are teaching. It gives them the opportunity to learn and grow into a new role while helping trainers focus on what they do best—teaching.

61% ↓ of L&D pros expect to spend less on ILT than they did in 2019.

ILT — Instructor-Led Training (ILT) = in-person classroom training

66% ↑ of L&D pros expect to spend more on VILT than they did in 2019.

VILT — Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) = live online training delivered in a virtual environment

60% ↑ of L&D pros expect to spend more on online learning than they did in 2019.

Online Learning — Online Learning = recorded, on-demand learning content

L&D Goes Digital and Expands Role

4 VILT + online learning: blended online learning has arrived

Now that learning budgets are aligned to deliver learning virtually, the next challenge that L&D faces is how to do it successfully. The big opportunity for L&D professionals is in creating the right blend of live virtual experiences and online learning content, or blended online learning.

What pieces of content can employees engage with on their own such as videos and slide decks? When is learning more effective in groups like workshops, feedback sessions, onboarding, or role-playing sessions? The answers to these questions differ by audience and learning program goals.

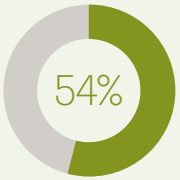
The big question is: Will learners return to the classroom once they return to work or is blended online learning here to stay?

Learning leaders globally have spoken. Over half of them expect to have a lot less ILT and a lot more VILT and online learning after the crisis passes.

Short-Term Plans

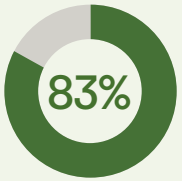
While in-person training remains largely impossible, blended online learning is the way L&D pros expect to deliver learning programs for the next three months.

ILT ↓



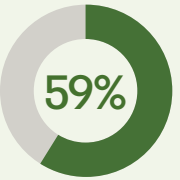
of L&D pros will reduce the amount of in-person training delivered.

VILT ↑



of L&D pros will increase the amount of live virtual training delivered.

Online Learning ↑



of L&D pros will increase the amount of online learning delivered.

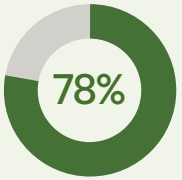
Long-Term Plans

Even when employees return to work, blended online learning will be the primary way that learning programs are delivered post COVID-19.

ILT ↓

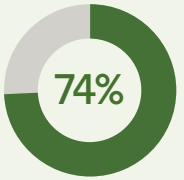
of L&D pros expect to deliver a lot less ILT.

VILT ↑



of L&D pros expect to have a lot more VILT.

Online Learning ↑



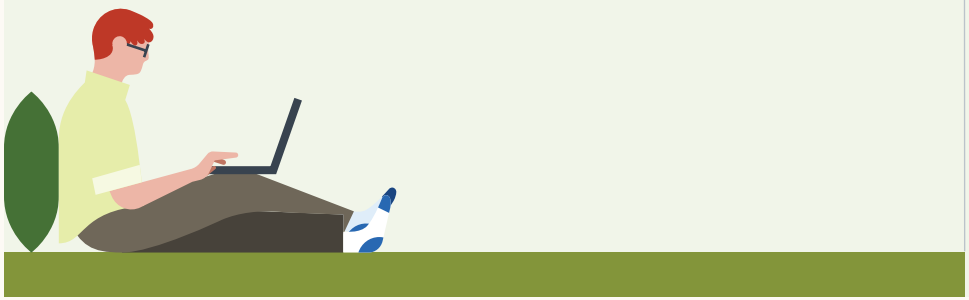
of L&D pros expect to have a lot more online learning.

4 VILT + online learning: blended online learning has arrived

"An easily avoidable mistake is to just convert in-person training into a video conference environment and that is that. In this environment, less is more. Someone wise once said that your mind can only absorb what your butt can endure."

Kevin Delaney
VP of L&D, LinkedIn
(Sunnyvale, California)

Find out how Kevin Delaney is leading with learning.
Read more >



Advice from Kevin Delaney

Let your guiding principles lead the way.

"We have four guiding principles that have sustained us through this transition:

1) great content
2) great delivery of that content
3) operational excellence
4) delivery of a great learning experience

If you nail all four, regardless of whether people are in a virtual or in-person setting, then the learning will stick."

Pick one for live learning: either online or in-person.

"When approaching live virtual training, here's a piece of advice that I deeply believe in: employees need to be either completely in-person or completely online when they are in a live learning experience. The learning modalities are very different and don't mix."

5 In response to social distancing, social learning is here to stay

We all crave human connection and in a world where social distancing is making people feel more isolated, social learning—learning together in virtual environments—is booming. Based on L&D survey responses and LinkedIn Learning platform data, we're seeing a step-change in how learners are interacting with their peers online, as they seek a sense of community.

When learning gets more social, it helps make learning more "sticky" and drives up learner engagement. It also enables more subject-matter experts in the organization to participate in learning experiences, creating an opportunity for teams to find hidden learning leaders who can talk to topics of most interest to employees.

Advice from Daniel Brigham

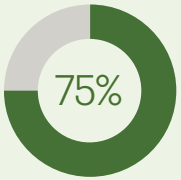
Make social learning fun

Daniel Brigham, a seasoned L&D pro, shared a great tip in his new LinkedIn Learning course, "Converting Face-to-Face Training into Digital Learning." Ask employees to share best practices or new learnings in a short, casual, mobile phone video. When they post these videos on a Microsoft Teams or Slack chat, the fun share can spark engagement, conversation, and—more importantly—learning.

Daniel Brigham
Senior instructional designer specializing in e-learning and digital learning solutions (Denver, Colorado)

Find out how Daniel Brigham is leading with learning.
View course >

Social learning will be a big part of learning programs going forward.



of L&D pros expect an increase in social learning, such as online learning groups and Q&A.

More people are learning together, connecting with instructors, and finding community.

301% ↑ in professionals joining learning groups.*

153% ↑ in courses shared.*

111% ↑ in contributions to LinkedIn Learning Q&A available in courses.*

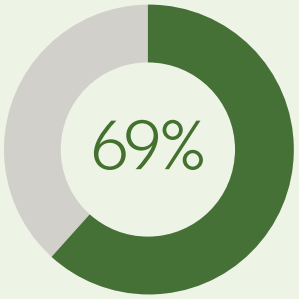
*Source: LinkedIn Learning data from March/April compared to data from January/February, 2020.

6 New responsibilities: employee mental health and wellbeing

The role of L&D has expanded in a new and meaningful way. In addition to being responsible for developing employees' hard and soft skills, L&D's purview now includes employee wellbeing and mental health. Dealing with this level of change is challenging for anyone. Every employee has their unique set of challenges and different coping mechanisms.

As stress and anxiety mount, L&D has stepped up to supply employees with learning resources on mindfulness, resilience, and adapting to change. We've seen the number of enterprise learners actively searching for these resources rise dramatically over the last few months. We've also seen unprecedented levels of engagement with unlocked courses on these topics. Both behaviors tell us that learners are hungry for this content and that L&D is well positioned to immediately deliver resources to help them adapt.

L&D pros are the new "Chief Mental Health Officers" within their organizations.



of L&D pros said that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of employees is a new part of their role since COVID-19.

Enterprise learners are actively engaging with mindfulness and stress management content.

10X

as many learners watched courses on mindfulness and stress management on LinkedIn Learning in April compared to February.

LinkedIn Learning can help.

We have a pre-built learning path to help support employee mental health and wellbeing. To learn more, visit our blog.

6 New responsibilities: employee mental health and wellbeing

"I've focused on becoming a Chief Connection Officer. As humans, when we have a lot of uncertainty, we crave connection. So, I've been focusing on how I can connect teams and leaders with each other in meaningful ways during "moments of truth" when they can be real with each other even in larger team meetings or town halls. Those moments combined with creating and curating relevant learning content on topics like self awareness, coping with change, and managing anxiety, are making an impact and helping us all get through this together."

Naphtali Bryant
Learning & Development Manager,
Finance & Operations, Netflix (Los Angeles, California)

Advice from Naphtali Bryant

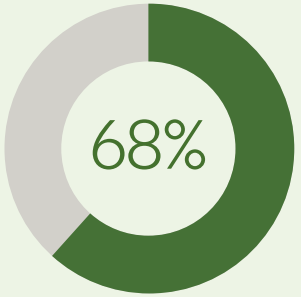
Kick off meetings with a personal question of the day.

"One of the ways I have been able to help teams and leaders at Netflix is through the power of questions. I have modeled and encouraged them to go deeper, and grow closer by doing a simple task—to just ask great questions. This can be starting a meeting off with a great open-ended question to drive connection and foster a great team dynamic, or asking a question during a 1:1 to encourage people to reflect on their humanity. My challenge to you this week is to just ask a question. We make our workplaces and lives more meaningful by the vulnerability and courage of the questions we ask. Asking powerful questions creates the moments of connection and strength we all need right now."

7 Managers are stepping up and L&D is helping them do it

In the LinkedIn Learning 2020 Workplace Learning Report, the #1 challenge that L&D pros globally identified was getting managers to make learning a priority for their teams. We have always known the pivotal role that managers play in creating a culture of learning and now there is good news to report. Over two-thirds of learning leaders said that managers are promoting more learning to their teams than they did prior to this crisis.

In addition to executives, managers are now active champions of learning.



of L&D pros said that managers are actively promoting more learning resources to their teams than before COVID-19.

Managers are leading by example by spending more time learning.

2X

the amount of time managers spent learning on LinkedIn Learning in March/April compared to January/February, 2020.

7 Managers are stepping up and L&D is helping them do it

"We recently completed a COVID-19 pulse survey to better understand the experience of our employees throughout this pandemic, which has meant many are now working from home and they have experienced a disruption to normal work activities. Many people highlighted how they had made a conscious effort to block out time to do more online courses, which they had really enjoyed and found valuable in learning new skills in technology applications and remote customer relations."

Kirsten Dale
HR Director, Global Talent and Capability, Treasury Wine Estates (Melbourne, Australia)

Find out how Kirsten is leading with learning.
Read more >

Advice from Kirsten Dale

Encourage managers to inspire their team to learn more.

"For teams now working apart, having a regular routine of learning together on a weekly basis provided a great way to stay connected and keep focused on building capability, despite the fact they had to put on hold their face to face training sessions. Functional learning academies moved their courses to be delivered online and we used the learning pathways feature to provide direction on what to learn. Managers have played a big part in encouraging their teams to learn more and this has proven to be really popular–long may it continue!"

Learning Will Help Prepare for the New World of Work

8 L&D is driving company culture by cultivating resilience and adaptability

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said that "The only constant in life is change." The impact of COVID-19, technological change, and the economic downturn are sure to usher in a period of rapid workplace changes for months—if not years—to come. The organizations that will rise from the chaos will be the ones that understand how to become more resilient amidst this change—and even find ways to thrive in the workplace of the future.

Top five learning challenges for L&D pros in the next three months, in rank order.

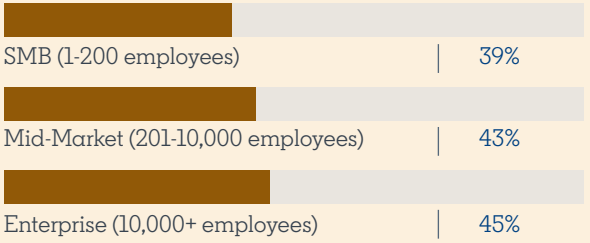
1. Helping managers lead through change
2. Keeping employees motivated and productive
3. Transitioning in-person trainers into virtual trainers
4. Meeting the emotional and psychological needs of employees
5. Activating managers to support their teams

Five learning paths from LinkedIn Learning that can help your employees lead through change.

- Manage Change and Develop Your Adaptability
- Leading During Times of Change
- Developing Resilience and Grit
- Succeeding in Sales During Times of Volatility
- Staying Positive and Productive During Uncertainty

Learning how to lead in times of change is important, particularly for those in larger organizations.

% who want to learn how to lead in times of change



8 L&D is driving company culture by cultivating resilience and adaptability

Advice from Gemma Leigh Roberts

Adopt a growth mindset to "bounce forward.

Gemma Leigh Roberts, a LinkedIn Learning instructor who spoke in a recent webcast on resilience, made a powerful point. We traditionally think of resilience as the ability to get back on track once something has happened to knock us off course. However, "the current situation is inviting different thinking", explained Gemma during our webcast. In the midst of the sea changes that we're experiencing, bouncing back to where we were doesn't feel like an option. The opportunity is to "bounce forward" by applying a growth mindset to the new ways of working and living that we experience.

"We can take the information that we get from learning how to get through the process to get better in the future," she says. "We can take things from the situation we're now in to be happier, healthier, more productive, and more high-performance."

Gemma Leigh Roberts
Founder at The Resilience Edge, CEO at Career Compass Club (London, United Kingdom)

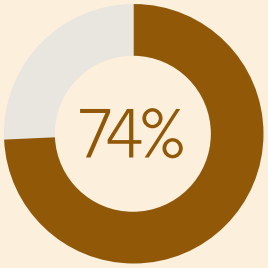
View Gemma's course on **"Building Resilience as a Leader"**

9 What's next? The age of upskilling, reskilling, and internal mobility

Earlier this year, we saw in the LinkedIn Learning 2020 Workplace Learning Report that L&D had begun taking the strategic long view, as learning leaders started thinking ahead about what their organizations will need in the face of digital transformation and automation. What was true then is even more true now. Learning leaders are even more focused on developing the skills within their organizations that will carry them to the next phase of growth in the new world of work.

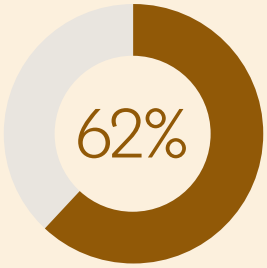
Keeping high-value and high-performing employees is paramount, as is moving them into positions that will deliver the most value, especially when hiring for those skills is more difficult in a budget-constrained world. That's why internal mobility—an employee moving internally from one job to another—will be important for some time. Building the skills to help employees make those shifts will be even more critical.

Building skills is the most critical part of rebuilding organizations for what's ahead.



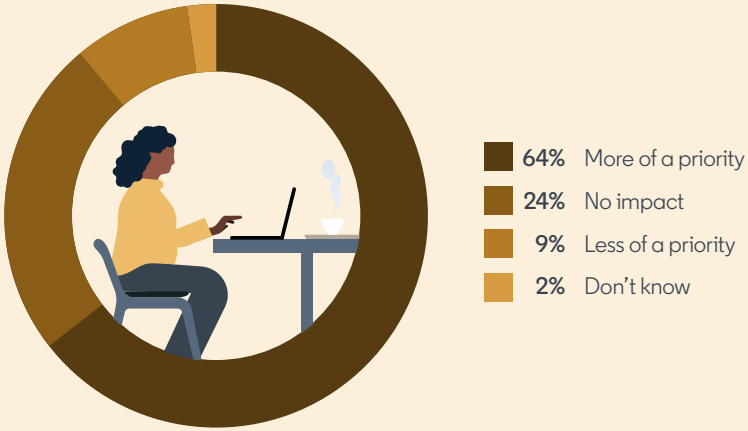
of L&D pros say their focus is on rebuilding or reshaping their organizations for a post-COVID-19 world.

L&D pros are actively helping employees build the skills they need to stay within the organization.



of L&D pros say internal mobility is a priority for them.

% of L&D pros who said that reskilling the current workforce to fill skills gaps is a priority now



9 What's next? The age of upskilling, reskilling, and internal mobility

"As we temporarily closed stores in response to COVID-19, many of our retail employees applied their talents to other areas of the business. We focused on providing the tools and training needed to redeploy them to effectively work from home and contribute in roles like customer service and telesales. The best part is that they are happy because they are still doing what they love—helping customers."

Lou Tedrick
VP, Global Learning & Development, Verizon
(Basking Ridge, New Jersey)

Advice from Lou Tedrick

Upskill and reskill by offering choices and only train on the skills gaps.

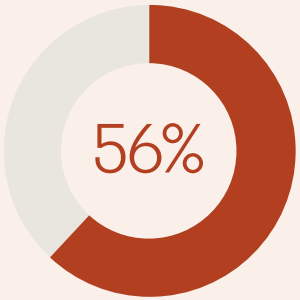
"When a large group of employees needs to be deployed into new roles, first evaluate their knowledge, capabilities, and skills. If possible, give them options that are both a good fit for their skill sets and what best serves the business. Once they choose a career path, then focus learning programs on closing the skills gaps required for the new role. Lastly, evaluate the effectiveness of that training and their performance to ensure a successful transition."

Parting Thoughts

A Stronger Culture of Learning Emerges

As we enter the new world of work, the role of learning is transitioning from a "nice to have" to a "must have" to ensure employees and organizations thrive. Executives are now active champions of learning, managers are learning how to lead virtually, and employees are making more time to learn. These trends combine to create an even stronger culture of learning.

By creating blended online learning experiences that are impactful, delivering highly relevant, applicable learning content, and staying close to the go-forward business strategy, L&D is in a unique position to influence organizational culture and make an even bigger impact on their organizations. By focusing on building more resilient organizations, we can collectively adapt to whatever is on the road ahead.



of L&D pros agree that their culture of learning is stronger now than before COVID-19.

A Stronger Culture of Learning Emerges

"A strong culture of learning is our north star. It means that every employee has access to content to help them build new skills and the importance of learning is articulated through our values and cultural practices. It happens when leaders model learning, when managers recommend learning, and when learning is recognized and rewarded. Those things are even more important now as we learn how to operate in this new environment."

Thor Flosason
Senior Director of Global Learning & Development,
Kellogg's (Battle Creek, Michigan)

Advice from Thor Flosason

Embrace the moment and help create the new world of work.

"My advice to my peers is to embrace the opportunity in front of us today. We can truly redefine who we are as L&D leaders and how we infuse learning into how people work today and in the future. We have an important role to play to create a new, and even stronger culture of learning. We don't have all the answers, but we're all on this journey together."

Interested in connecting with your peers to discuss these trends?

Join the L&D Connect group on LinkedIn to continue the conversation.

Join Group >

Methodology

Global L&D Survey
For the Leading with Learning Report, we surveyed in May 2020:

We surveyed 864 L&D professionals globally in May 2020. We define L&D professionals as L&D and HR professionals with L&D responsibilities who have some influence on budget decisions at organizations over 200 employees.

The countries we surveyed include:

North America
United States
Canada

Asia-Pacific
India
Singapore
Australia
New Zealand
Hong Kong

Europe
United Kingdom
Ireland
Germany
France
Belgium
Netherlands
Luxembourg
Austria
Sweden
Norway
Finland
Denmark
Iceland
Switzerland

Global Learner Survey
We also surveyed 3,155 learners in 31 countries.

LinkedIn Learning Insights Data
The platform data included in this report is from enterprise learner activity on LinkedIn from the "pre-COVID" period of January and February compared to "the COVID-19 starting point" period of March and April. (WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. We use March as COVID-19 starting point for simplicity.)

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About LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn Learning is a leading online learning platform that helps professionals learn relevant skills and achieve their goals. It combines a library of 16,000+ up-to-date courses in 7 different languages with an engaging, intuitive, and personalized learner experience. LinkedIn Learning also includes real-time skills insights that help learning leaders identify skills gaps. For more information, visit http://learning.linkedin.com.

Ready to explore how LinkedIn Learning can help your employees during this time of change?

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