the joshbersin company

The Definitive Guide to Corporate Learning
Growth in the Flow of Work

Almost a third of the workforce is leaving legacy companies every year in search of better jobs and careers.[1] With over 11 million jobs open today[2], workers are empowered and liberated. They are chasing after what they really want—to be the best version of themselves and to live the best version of their lives. Jobs and careers are a means of getting people to where they want to be, and people are leaving in pursuit of unleashing their full growth potential.

But if workers can build skills that will amplify their career growth potential and find opportunities to apply those skills and grow their careers within the organization, they will be less likely to leave in search of those opportunities. But it isn't a magical fix or an easy solution.

What Leaders Need to Know

Caring for people's careers starts with caring for their skill development. By building the right learning experiences and developing critical future skills, learning organizations can help workers augment their future growth potential.

And, by illuminating pathways for workers to use those newly acquired skills and experiences to grow within the organization, they can help employees grow while also building critical talent for the company's future needs. Learning is the linchpin—the most critical piece for developing skills, enabling growth, building future talent, and resolving the talent crisis of today.

It is an exciting but also daunting time for L&D. Learning functions don't just need a seat at "the" table, they need a seat at "every" table. They need to forge deeper connections across functions—with HR, business, IT, and skills and

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1 "From The Great Resignation to The Great Migration," Josh Bersin/joshbersin.com, December 2021.

2 "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 1, 2022.
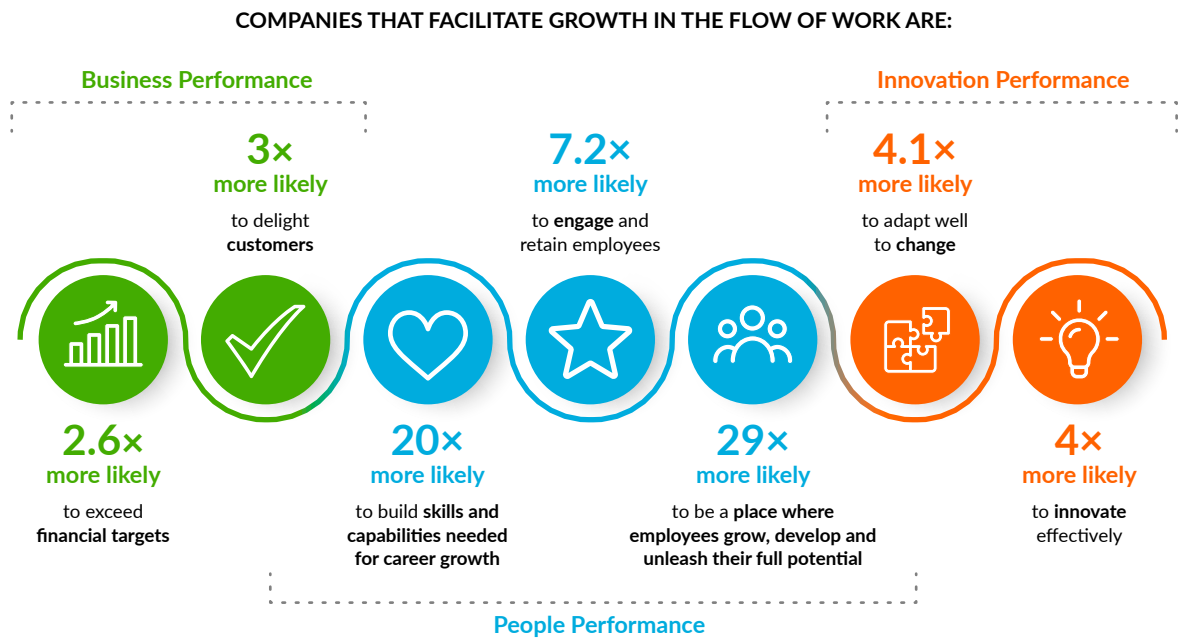
data architecture teams—while synchronizing priorities with workforce management teams to not just enable learning but also facilitate growth in the flow of work.

Our new Corporate Learning research will help organizations understand how to build the right learning experiences, cultivate critical business capabilities, and develop enduring skills that will be most critical in the future. Importantly, companies that deploy practices that facilitate growth in the flow of work have significantly higher business, people, and innovation performance outcomes (see Figure 1).

The Corporate Learning Framework

Learning organizations need to carefully design content, programs, and experiences to help learners focus on what matters most for their growth and for business success. Our Corporate Learning Framework unpacks all the elements organizations need to pull together to deliver world-class learning experiences that help employees and the business be successful. Our framework is based on myriad conversations with CHROs, CLOs, business leaders, and heads of employee experience at companies around the world.

Figure 1: The Impact of Facilitating Growth In the Flow of Work

COMPANIES THAT FACILITATE GROWTH IN THE FLOW OF WORK ARE:

Business Performance

3× more likely to delight **customers**

7.2× more likely to **engage** and retain employees

Innovation Performance

4.1× more likely to adapt well to **change**

2.6× more likely to exceed **financial targets**

20× more likely to build **skills and capabilities needed for career growth**

29× more likely to be a **place where employees grow, develop and unleash their full potential**

4× more likely to **innovate** effectively

People Performance

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Our Corporate Learning Framework comprises nine major elements and 36 dimensions, each of which are presented in two parts (see Figure 2). The first part outlines "what" L&D needs to deliver to the business, and the second part defines "how" L&D teams can equip themselves to deliver what they need to deliver to the business. The "what" and the "how" are both important for L&D functions and contribute in distinct and complementary ways to drive learning outcomes.

Figure 2: The Corporate Learning Framework

WHAT

Program Design	Learning in the Flow of Work	Leadership Development	Coaching and Mentoring	Career Management	Skills and Capabilities

Microlearning and adaptive learning	A culture of continuous learning	Developing leaders at all levels	Coaching as a key leadership capability	Extensive career options	Integrated skills strategy
Peer-to-peer learning	Relevant, engaging, and useful content	World-class leadership development programs	Managers trained and incented to coach teams	Career pathways	Critical skills framework
Creator economy	Learning discovery and experience	Up-to-date leadership models	External coaching and mentoring offerings	Career growth	Well-defined skills taxonomy
Capability academies	Personalized and embedded recommendations	Transparent succession management	Democratized access to coaching and mentoring	Internal talent mobility	Digital credentialing

HOW

Organization and Governance	L&D Capabilities	L&D Technologies

C-suite support and sponsorship	Experimenting with new technologies and approaches	Refreshing L&D infrastructure with new tools and technology
Business-leader and stakeholder alignment	Building a strategy for in-the-flow learning	A robust learning data architecture
Internal functional and corporate L&D alignment	Agile ways of working	Partnership with IT teams
Well-organized governance	Analytics and tech skills	An integrated learning platform

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Key Messages

The Definitive Guide to Corporate Learning reveals seven key findings from our research. The following are brief excerpts from our full report.

1 Growth in the flow of work is L&D's new mission. Many organizations consider learning in the flow of work as the goal itself, but our research shows the objective is to facilitate growth, career development, and mobility for every employee. Growth should be an integral part of how both work and learning happen. This needs to start with ensuring individuals have development processes and plans that will help them build the skills they want (and that will benefit the company), and will also help them achieve their goals—and it needs to be an integral element of performance development conversations between managers and employees.

2 Career pathways, not just career paths, are essential to unlock growth. As jobs and roles change faster than ever, all employees want to know "where they can go next." The answer lies in creating "career pathways." Career paths move people within similar job clusters as they become better at their existing skills. Career pathways, on the other hand, support the development of new skills and help individuals transition into credentialed new jobs or roles that offer better pay, growth potential, and business impact. Employers need to unlock opportunities for employees, upskill them today for the careers they want tomorrow, provide guidance and support for where the jobs of the future are, and illuminate pathways to get there, including education, learning, assignments, and coaching.

Organizations need to envision the start and end points of a potential career pathway, the progression of roles, and the skills, credentialing, or academic requirements needed to enable the progression (see Figure 3).

3 Content development must first focus on relevance, then in-depth instruction Employees want content that is relevant and timely, and while they will dig into detailed education where needed, they first want a course or program that feels immediately useful and easy to consume. This means focusing a lot of

Figure 3: A Wireframe for Constructing Career Pathways

	Feeder Roles	Gateway Roles	Destination Roles	High-Skill Roles
Skill Level	Novice	Beginner	Intermediate	**Proficient**
Nature of Roles	Short-lived, declining, or dead-end jobs	Entry-level roles in a different, high-value career domain	Progressive career path in the same domain	Aspirational, high-value, high-demand roles
Sample Career Pathway → **Roles**	Laundry and Linen Services	Nursing Support	Bedside Nursing	Advanced Practice Nursing
Development Plan	Enroll in a training program to be a care companion	Enroll in a training program to be a patient care technician	Pursue nursing education to prepare for a career as a licensed registered nurse	Complete a master's or doctorate-level program

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022 (Developed in partnership with Guild Education and Bon Secours Mercy Health)

work on skills-based taxonomies, microlearning, case studies, and simulations, particularly with short videos and minicourses. L&D departments need to shift their focus from "content quality" or "instructional design" to delivering the right content that supports advancing the organization's strategic priorities.

Organizing content around critical business capabilities can help organizations make learning relevant and timely for learners, and highly valuable for enabling business success.
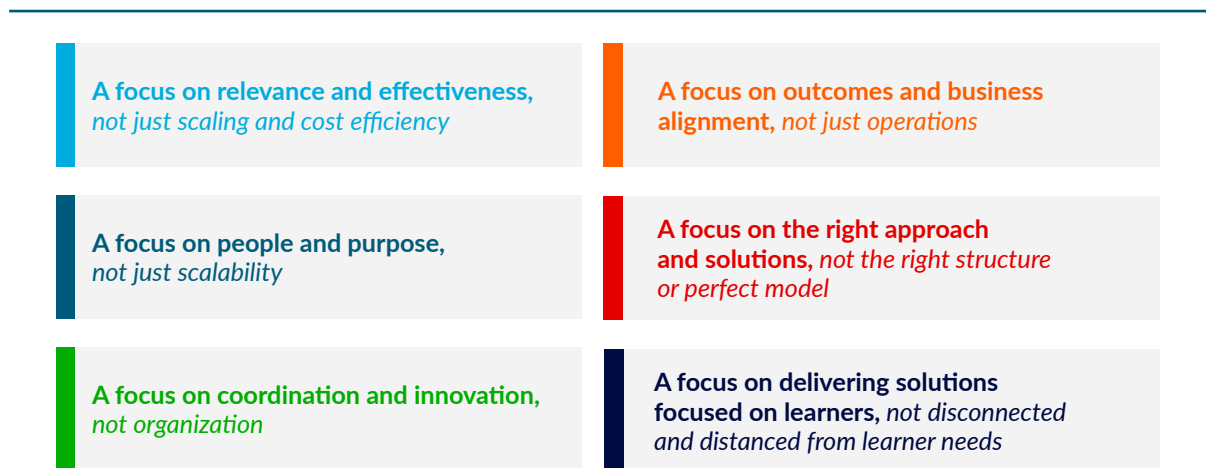
4 **Building a skills strategy requires focused and ongoing effort.** Building a skills strategy is not a temporary project but an important discipline all companies should be prepared to undertake on a regular basis. Companies that focus on a culture of growth build an integrated skills strategy across recruiting, mobility, and learning, and update it year over year. In our research, 70% of highly mature companies have an integrated enterprise skills strategy, compared with fewer than 2% of low-level maturity companies.

5 **L&D needs to develop a new set of skills and capabilities.** L&D has the responsibility and power to develop capabilities across the organization and, to do that, it needs to start with strengthening its own capabilities. It needs to focus on building the capabilities that are most important for driving learning outcomes, and the organization needs to develop a strategy for enabling learning in the flow for L&D professionals.

L&D teams need to practice agile, iterative design, and they need to understand business and stakeholder needs. Additionally, they need to understand what the data on learning is telling them about learners' needs. They must embrace new media and tools—such as VR, AR, and virtual environments—and cultivate a deep understanding of video, audio, and all advanced media types

6 **How L&D operates is more important than how L&D is organized.** The right operating model for your organization is unique to your learning environment (see Figure 4). It focuses

Figure 4: What Matters Most in the Learning Operating Model

A focus on relevance and effectiveness, *not just scaling and cost efficiency*	A focus on outcomes and business alignment, *not just operations*
A focus on people and purpose, *not just scalability*	A focus on the right approach and solutions, *not the right structure or perfect model*
A focus on coordination and innovation, *not organization*	A focus on delivering solutions focused on learners, *not disconnected and distanced from learner needs*

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

on enabling relevant and timely learning, while understanding how people learn and what their unique learning needs are. The model focuses on creating coordination and alignment between central L&D leadership, shared services, and the business. It is not focused on who makes decisions but on making decisions and delivering solutions that are close to learners' needs. It is ultimately about best fit for purpose.
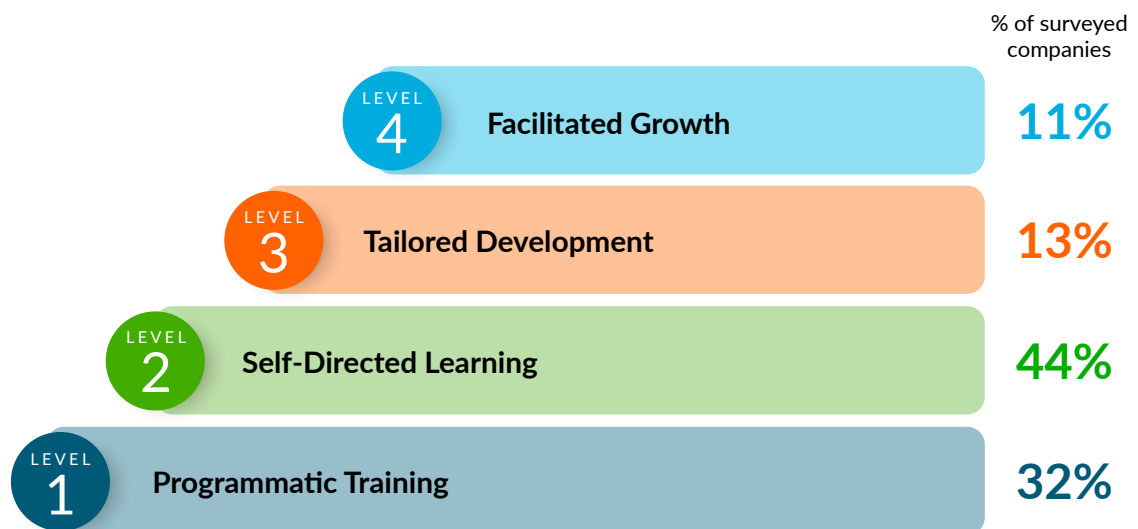
7 **Keeping pace with innovations in L&D technologies powers success.** Amid all this innovation and complexity, how can organizations create an L&D infrastructure that is simple and scalable? High-powered L&D teams innovate and

experiment with technology, constantly refreshing their L&D infrastructure. They have a long-term platform roadmap and try to avoid buying too many tools and nonstandard offerings. They continually improve, iterate, and integrate their tools into systems of productivity; they focus on employee experience first and content second; and they focus on building a strong data architecture so they can measure what's working, what's not working, and what audiences or groups are developing best. They do not get overwhelmed by innovation or carried away by every shiny new tool but adopt what ties with their learning strategy and what delivers the end-user experience that they need.

The Corporate Learning Maturity Model

Our Corporate Learning Maturity Model describes L&D organizations at four levels of maturity (see Figure 5). Level 1 organizations have the least effective practices and outcomes; Level 4 have world class learning practices and superior talent and business outcomes. You can use this model to determine which level your organization is at, identify areas of improvement, and prioritize practices to help it progress.

Figure 5: The Corporate Learning Maturity Model

% of surveyed companies

LEVEL 4 Facilitated Growth — **11%**

LEVEL 3 Tailored Development — **13%**

LEVEL 2 Self-Directed Learning — **44%**

LEVEL 1 Programmatic Training — **32%**

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Through our work with hundreds of companies around the world, we look at the maturity of their practices, we evaluate their level of performance, and we statistically cluster the practices into four groups:

Level 1 companies: L&D organizations at this level operate as a structured teaching function. Their primary role is creating and delivering training programs and modules, and the core skill set of L&D professionals is instructional design and content development.

Level 2 companies: L&D organizations at this level move beyond formal training to operate as a support function. They build learning solutions to support the talent strategy through major touchpoints in the talent management lifecycle, such as onboarding, leadership development, and performance management. They invest in vendor libraries to make learning accessible to everyone at scale.

Level 3 companies: As organizations advance further on developing corporate learning maturity, they integrate the wide range of learning content and programs into journeys, career paths, and specific skills development solutions. Learning discovery is easy, learning content is embedded in systems of productivity, and a learning culture pervades the organization.

Level 4 companies: At this level, L&D functions empower workers to unleash their full growth potential. L&D serves as the navigation system to help employees move from where they are to where they aspire to be, also aligning employee aspirations with where the business needs them to be.

At Level 4 maturity, L&D functions empower workers to unleash their full growth potential.

Next Steps

The full Definitive Guide provides actionable insights for leaders who want to start implementing these practices to drive growth in the flow of work. Additionally, the full report provides:

- The full discussion of why growth in the flow of work matters, especially now

- The 9 elements and 36 dimensions of the Corporate Learning Framework

- The charactersitics of each of the four levels of the Corporate Learning Maturity Model

- A complete analysis of our research findings, as well as calls to actions to implement excellence.

- The 15 practices that matter most, as well as their impact on outcomes

- Step-by-step guidance on how to advance through the levels of the Corporate Learning Maturity Model

- A corporate learning lexicon

- Examples of exellence: **DCP Midstream, FICO, Rocket Central, Sitel,** and **Walmart.**

The Josh Bersin Company Membership

The Josh Bersin Company provides a wide range of research and advisory services to help HR leaders and professionals tackle the ever-evolving challenges and needs of today's workforce. We cover all topics in HR, talent, and L&D. The Josh Bersin Academy—built on our research and powered by Nomadic Learning—helps HR practitioners grow key foundational skills. Our corporate membership program provides HR teams and senior leaders with the skills, strategies, and insights to build cutting-edge HR and people strategies through a combination of research, assessments, professional development, exclusive events, and community. In 2022, The Josh Bersin Company introduced the Global Workforce Intelligence (GWI) Project to guide market-leading businesses and their leaders through the challenges of industry convergence while remaining future-focused.

For more details, contact us at info@bersinpartners.com.