The Definitive Guide to Corporate Learning

Growth in the Flow of Work

the
joshbersin
company

A Global Industry Report

Contents

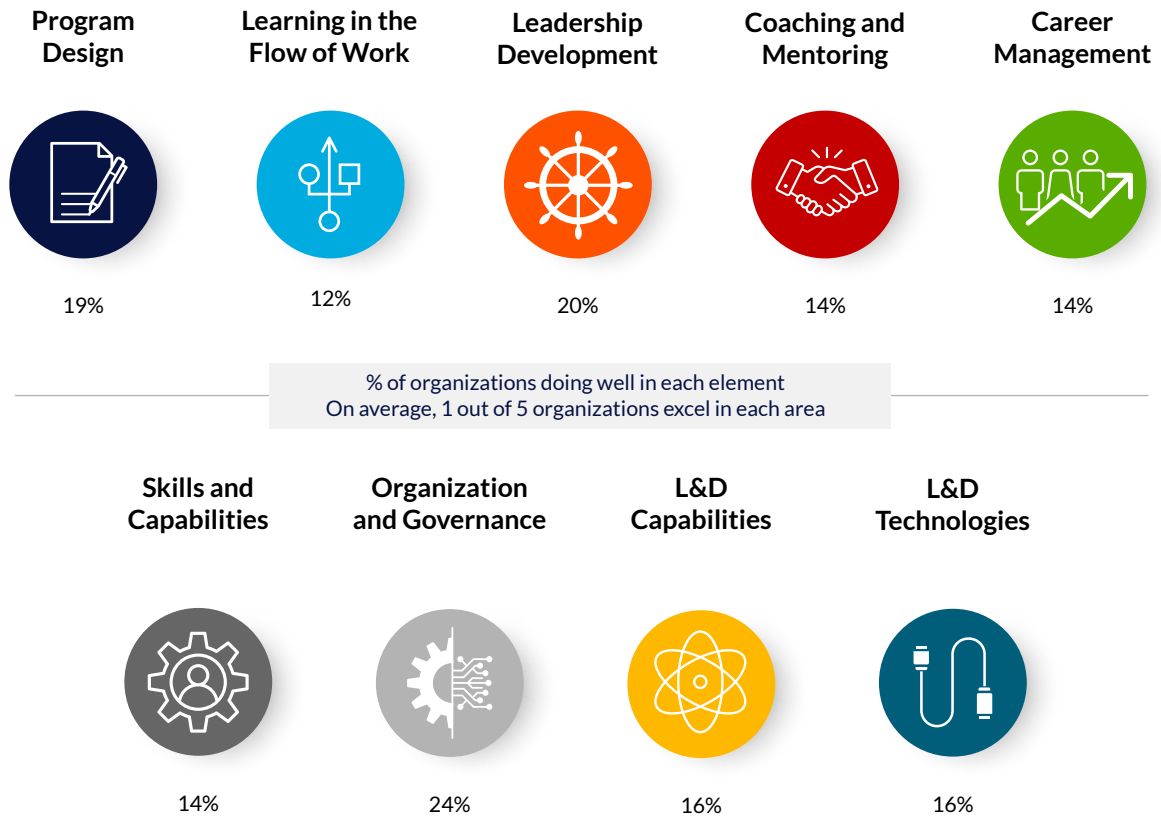All photography: Shutterstock

Introduction

For decades, organizations have tried to create the right experiences for workers through processes, policies, tools, technologies, snazzy work spaces, and innovative perks. At the same time, the goalposts keep moving. The work, the workforce, and the workplace have been evolving; economic, political, and societal changes have been at play; and employees' expectations have shifted. Every organization, big or small, across industries and geographies, has been on a constant journey of reinvention, responding to all these changes.

But one domain has leapfrogged ahead on the reinvention journey: corporate learning and development (L&D). Physical corporate universities that were established through millions of dollars of investment are being complemented with digital academies, online learning systems, and advanced media tools. L&D functions are trying new approaches, adapting to remote work, buying new tools, licensing new content, building skills taxonomies, experimenting with VR and AR programs, and exploring virtual cohort-based learning. People still need to be onboarded, managers need to be trained, and leaders need to be developed. At the same time, L&D is also having to learn to curate, publish, and enable learning in an omnichannel environment. L&D professionals have been charged with building capabilities across the organization, while building their own capabilities to respond to the numerous challenges brought about by constant change, the pandemic, and in what is now referred to as a BANI[1] world (characterized as brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and incomprehensible).

We studied 94 L&D practices in 9 broad areas of learning at more than 1,000 organizations around the globe. Commendably, one in five organizations knows what matters most for the work and their workforce today and are excelling in every area of L&D (see Figure 1). For the remaining 80% still on the journey of figuring it out, we've cracked the code on what is missing.

FIGURE 1

The Current State of L&D Effectiveness

Program Design	Learning in the Flow of Work	Leadership Development	Coaching and Mentoring	Career Management
19%	12%	20%	14%	14%

% of organizations doing well in each element
On average, 1 out of 5 organizations excel in each area

Skills and Capabilities	Organization and Governance	L&D Capabilities	L&D Technologies
14%	24%	16%	16%

Note: We surveyed more than 1,000 organizations to examine their level of effectiveness in L&D practices in each of these areas.
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022
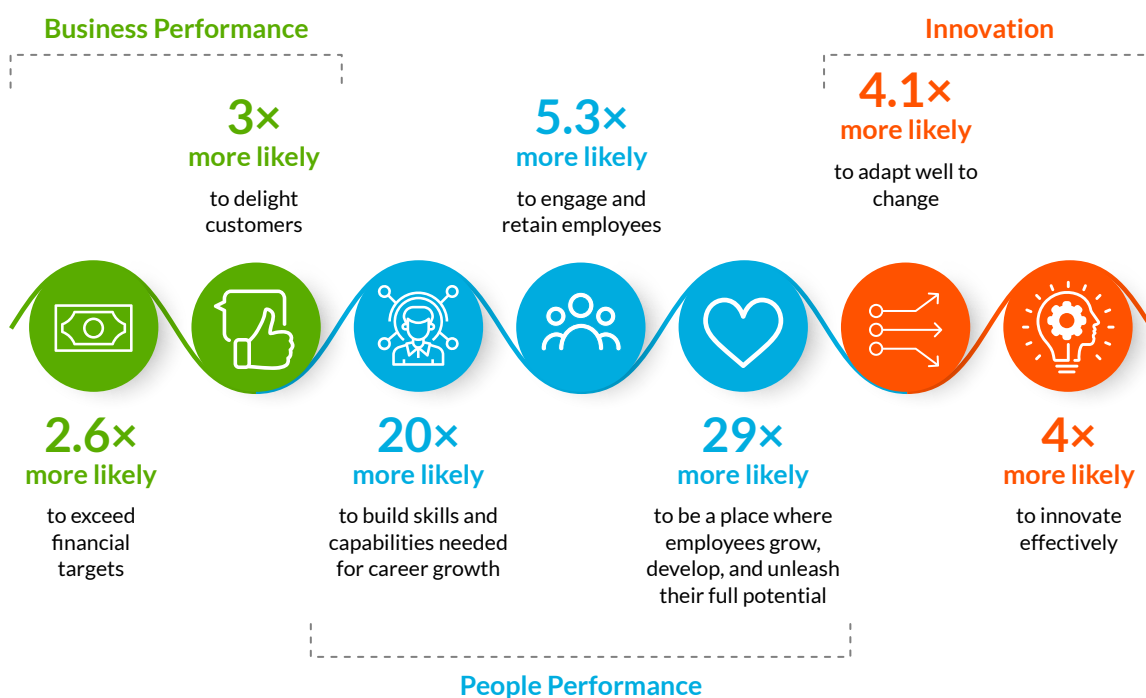
What Most Organizations Are Missing

Many organizations and HR technology vendors seem laser-focused on enabling learning in the flow of work—through practices and tools that allow learners to extract the information they need, when they need it, without having to interrupt their work processes. Learning in the flow is table stakes and critical for driving learning outcomes, but it isn't the end goal of learning.

Our research reveals the objective of learning is enabling growth, and that's where L&D organizations need to refocus and reprioritize their efforts. Organizations need to orchestrate the shift from a culture of learning to a culture of growth because employees want to grow—and learning can help them develop the capabilities they need to do so—but if you don't provide opportunities, they will find them elsewhere, outside your organization. In today's competitive labor market, a culture focused on collaboration and individual growth is essential for companies to thrive.

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 vital in the future. Companies that deploy practices to facilitate growth in the flow of work have significantly better business, people, and innovation outcomes (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Companies That Facilitate Growth in the Flow of Work Are:

Business Performance

Innovation

3×
more likely
to delight customers

5.3×
more likely
to engage and retain employees

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

This report reveals our new approach for transforming the L&D function to enable growth and the most powerful L&D practices. Here's what this report covers:

→ **Why Corporate Learning Matters Now**

→ **Where You Stand,** both within our Corporate Learning Maturity Model and in the context of the broader market

→ **Working Solutions,** including the key findings of our research and leading practices for action

→ **Examples of Excellence** showcasing real-world stories of organizations successfully transforming corporate learning and enabling growth

→ **Getting Started,** with actionable advice on how to advance through the levels of our Corporate Learning Maturity Model

→ **The Corporate Learning Lexicon,** providing essential terminology for L&D professionals

In the age of the Great Resignation, L&D professionals are more critical than ever for fostering business success. This report details how they can empower the workforce with new skills and new opportunities to grow and advance their careers, moving beyond a culture of learning to creating a culture of growth in the flow of work. ■

Why Corporate Learning Matters Now

Learning organizations help employees reach their potential, driving superior business outcomes. Our Corporate Learning Framework details not only what L&D functions need to deliver but also how they can equip themselves for success.

Every year, almost a third of the workforce is leaving legacy companies in search of better jobs and careers.[2] With more than 11 million jobs open today,[3] workers feel empowered and liberated. They are chasing 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.

If workers can build skills that amplify their career growth potential and find opportunities to apply those skills to grow their careers within an organization, they are less likely to leave. Yet it's not easy. Caring for people's careers starts with caring for their skill development. Learning organizations can help workers amplify their future growth potential by building the right learning experiences and developing critical skills for the future. At the same time, they can build critical talent for the organization's future needs by illuminating pathways that give workers the chance to use those newly acquired skills and experiences to grow within the organization. Learning is the linchpin—the most critical piece for developing skills, enabling growth, building future talent, and resolving today's talent crisis.

It is an exciting time for L&D but also a daunting one. Learning functions don't just want 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 data architecture teams—while synchronizing priorities with workforce management teams to not just enable learning but also facilitate growth in the flow of work.

Key Insights

- Learning is the linchpin—the piece most critical for developing skills, enabling growth, building future talent, and resolving today's talent crisis.

- Our Corporate Learning Framework comprises 9 elements and 36 dimensions that detail what L&D needs to deliver to the business and how it can prepare to do so.

- Organizations should identify and prioritize the elements that will drive the outcomes they need to advance in their L&D transformation journey.

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 deliver world-class learning experiences that support employee and business success. Our framework is based on myriad conversations with chief human resources officers (CHROs), chief learning officers (CLOs), business leaders, and heads of employee experience at companies around the world.

Our two-part Corporate Learning Framework comprises 9 major elements and 36 dimensions

(see Figure 3). 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 on that promise. The "what" and the "how" are both important for L&D functions and contribute in distinct and complementary ways to drive learning outcomes.

Part I: The What

The six elements discussed here—along with their corresponding dimensions—describe what L&D needs to deliver to the business to support the effectiveness of workforce learning.

Program Design

This element focuses on creating, curating, and organizing learning based on how people learn. It starts with identifying learning needs and encompasses a full spectrum of considerations from the starting point of identifying learning needs all the way to evaluating learning for effectiveness and applicability. Through program design, organizations need to meticulously define the content and activities best suited for meeting learners' needs. Within program design, organizations must consider the following dimensions.
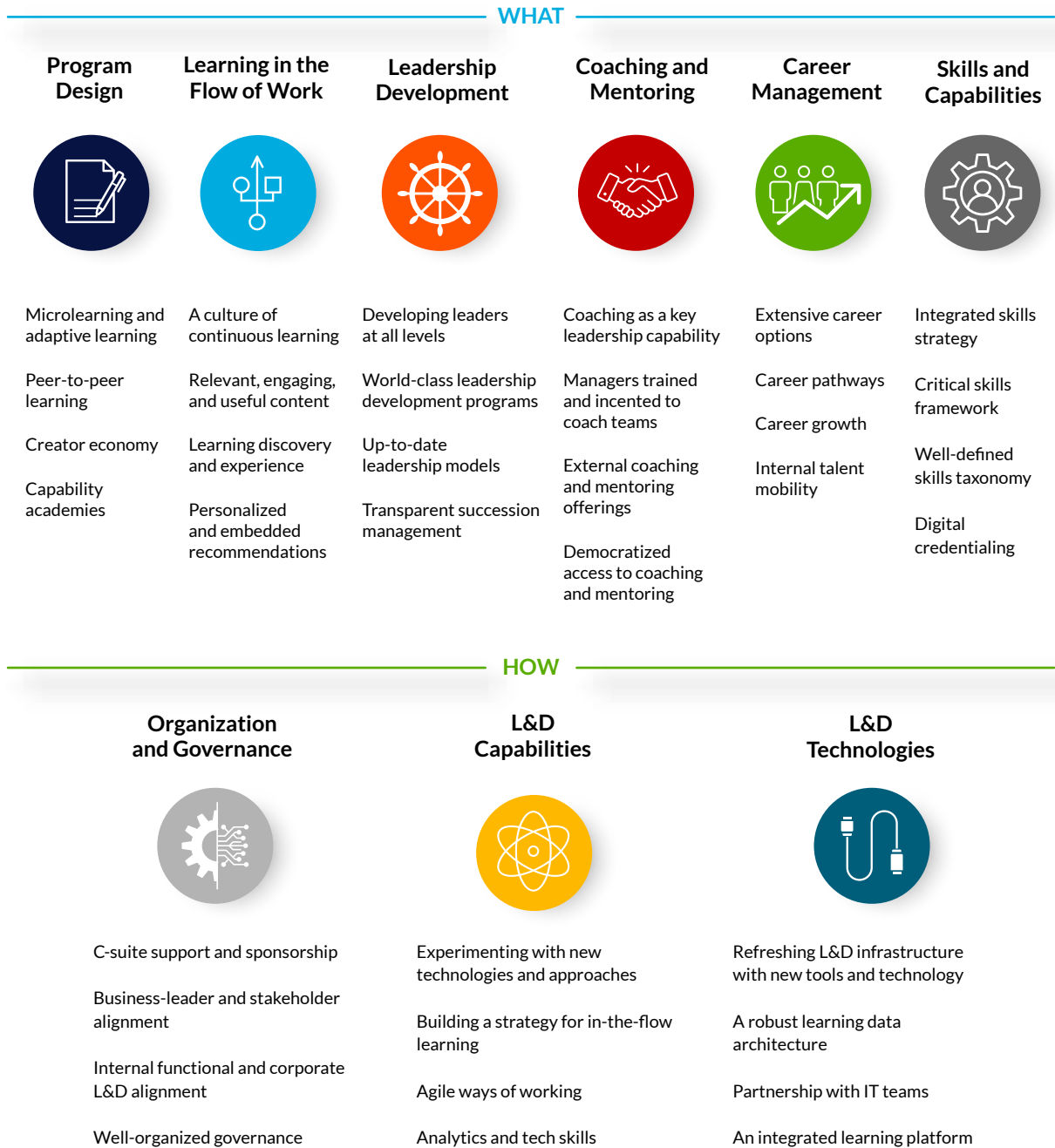
Microlearning and adaptive learning

Modern learners want to learn quickly through readily accessible information and just-in-time feedback. Microlearning content typically addresses a topic in two minutes or less through formats such as video, audio, and text, allowing learners to instantly find and apply the information they need in the flow of work.

"Adaptive learning" refers to a platform or company's ability to deliver and recommend learning in a flexible way. For example, as an individual completes a learning activity or takes a test, an adaptive learning system may skip unneeded modules and jump to more advanced topics. It may also recommend remedial topics or let an employee test out of a certain type of learning activity.

FIGURE 3

The Corporate Learning Framework

WHAT

Program Design

Microlearning and adaptive learning

Peer-to-peer learning

Creator economy

Capability academies

Learning in the Flow of Work

A culture of continuous learning

Relevant, engaging, and useful content

Learning discovery and experience

Personalized and embedded recommendations

Leadership Development

Developing leaders at all levels

World-class leadership development programs

Up-to-date leadership models

Transparent succession management

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching as a key leadership capability

Managers trained and incented to coach teams

External coaching and mentoring offerings

Democratized access to coaching and mentoring

Career Management

Extensive career options

Career pathways

Career growth

Internal talent mobility

Skills and Capabilities

Integrated skills strategy

Critical skills framework

Well-defined skills taxonomy

Digital credentialing

HOW

Organization and Governance

C-suite support and sponsorship

Business-leader and stakeholder alignment

Internal functional and corporate L&D alignment

Well-organized governance

L&D Capabilities

Experimenting with new technologies and approaches

Building a strategy for in-the-flow learning

Agile ways of working

Analytics and tech skills

L&D Technologies

Refreshing L&D infrastructure with new tools and technology

A robust learning data architecture

Partnership with IT teams

An integrated learning platform

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Peer-to-peer learning

Today's workforce operates in teams, and learning happens the same way. And because business-related expertise resides in the business rather than in L&D, learning needs to be designed in ways that can enable learning from peers and internal subject-matter experts. Program design needs to incorporate elements of interactivity and collaboration among peers. In particular, organizations that want to drive change, alignment, innovation, and relationships should consider designing their learning programs to incorporate group activity. Peers bring learning to life through the process of interacting, asking questions, providing advice, giving context, and explaining specific examples and solutions.

Creator economy

The term "creator economy"[4] refers to the vast market of content-creator platforms—such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Spotify, and Snapchat—that allow individuals without expertise in instructional design to author videos, articles, and other content. This trend is pivotal for modern learning given that 70% of all company training comes from internal business and functional experts, not external teachers or L&D.[5] Creator platforms (such as Udemy, 360Learning, Fuse Universal, Docebo, and many more) empower experts to author content and share their expertise with ease

and efficiency. Organizations can supercharge the training experience by "unlocking" these subject-matter experts and others to build content. For more on the creator economy in learning, see our study of this market, *The Creator Market for Corporate Learning: A Massive, Still Untapped Market*.[6]

Capability academies

Learning functions need to shift focus beyond content to experiences that can help cement learning. In the 19th century, psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus found that people forget 90% of what they learn when they aren't able to apply the learning in practice.[7] It's when learners can apply information, repeat its application over time, and answer questions about it that "memory pathways" are created, helping learners retain information longer. Forgotten learning represents a lost investment, so L&D functions need to organize learning in ways that enable recall, repetition, and retention. Capability academies are an important step in the right direction: they organize learning around critical capabilities and supplement it with developmental assignments, stretch opportunities, interactions, and experiences. L&D teams should design capability academies in collaboration with business leaders and internal experts to determine goals, success metrics, instructional content, and assignments specifically related to work at the company.

Learning in the Flow of Work

This element focuses on enabling learning that drives effectiveness and is ongoing, embedded, and always available. Learning in the flow of work combines an environment conducive to learning with mechanisms that embed learning in day-to-day work. This type of learning enhances productivity rather than disrupting it. We first socialized the concept of learning in the flow of work in 2018,[8] and it has since been accepted as the undisputed foundation of effective learning. Here are the dimensions that support learning in the flow of work.

A culture of continuous learning

Learning that adds to productivity must occur as part of work itself. Learning that uproots an individual from work often leads to lost productivity and has little recall value if learners aren't able to connect what they're learning with the work they do. Organizations need to shift the epicenter of L&D priorities from developing content and programs to fostering an overarching environment where learning happens organically, every day, in tandem with work. In a continuous learning culture, learners feel encouraged and empowered to learn and are recognized for their learning. Knowledge-sharing is a norm, and leaders cultivate safe spaces both to learn new skills and to fail, which is an essential part of learning. L&D functions need to consider their role in fostering this culture, inculcating a mindset of continuous learning and reinforcing it with tools, systems, and processes that reward individuals who help peers and teams learn in the flow.

Relevant, engaging, and useful content

Amid the chaos that can be caused by too many digital learning options, there is a growing need for organizations to optimize their learning-content strategies and move from more to less, from quantity to quality and relevance, and from catalog provision to delightful discovery. Organizations should invest in the most relevant high-quality content and cut back on the rest. Presenting "anytime, anywhere" access to the right content and opportunities rather than providing episodic and programmatic training is the shift this element warrants.

Learning discovery and experience

L&D professionals should index all learning resources, making it easier for users to find the information they need. While most learning experience platforms (LXPs) are designed to solve the complex problem of discovery through skills-based content tagging, organizations need to first establish a well-defined skills taxonomy.

Personalized and embedded recommendations

Each employee has unique learning needs. Individuals want to learn when they want to and in the most natural way possible, and employers should design meaningful sets of programs to support both macro- and microlearning. Organizations need to integrate, display, and intelligently recommend content in "systems of productivity" like Office 365, Salesforce, ServiceNow, or Slack, providing learning where work happens. Learning today is about "flow," not "instruction," and it's about bringing learning to people throughout their digital experience.

Leadership Development

In this element, "leadership" refers to the ability to lead, but not to the people at the top of the pyramid or executives in an organization. Leadership development includes the following dimensions.

Developing leaders at all levels

L&D organizations need to develop leaders at all levels because leadership capabilities permeate all roles and levels, regardless of whether an individual has "people management" responsibilities.

World-class leadership-development programs

Learning functions need to enable continuous leadership development to support the skills and capabilities crucial for leading effectively in the context of the organization. This dimension encompasses a wide variety of developmental opportunities and experiential journeys—from broad-based online and blended learnings at scale to targeted coaching and mentoring to immersive and exclusive development programs offered to reward select employees who demonstrate the highest leadership potential.

Up-to-date leadership models

The starting point for leadership development is to create a common understanding of what good leadership looks like for the organization, articulate it through leadership models that are frequently updated for relevance, and define the skills and behaviors that leaders need to develop and demonstrate.

Transparent succession management

Within the scope of leadership development, L&D teams need to build a pipeline of future leaders and successors for critical positions, both in leadership and in critical individual contributor roles. Transparent succession management and a robust bench of future leaders are hallmarks of effective leadership development.

Transparent succession management and a robust bench of future leaders are hallmarks of effective leadership development.

Coaching and Mentoring

This element looks at coaching and mentoring in two ways: as capabilities that L&D must cultivate among leaders, and as developmental offerings that L&D can provide to learners.

Cultivating coaching and mentoring as capabilities includes two dimensions:

Coaching as a key leadership capability

Coaching is among the most successful ways to help people grow in their careers and unleash their potential.[9] As coaches, leaders shift gears from assessing performance to improving performance, and they help individuals accomplish short-term career goals. A related and highly valued leadership capability is mentoring. Mentors are not necessarily managers or leaders but anyone who can provide experience-based guidance to help an individual accomplish long-term career aspirations. Both coaching and mentoring are personalized and development-focused, and both help individuals pivot to a personal-best mindset from a competitive mindset.

Managers trained and incentivized to coach teams

L&D needs to cultivate coaching and mentoring capabilities across the organization to help individuals perform better, to help leaders become better coaches to amplify individual and business performance, and to maximize talent outcomes like engagement, retention, and the overall employee experience. To reinforce coaching and mentoring as desired capabilities, L&D must also consider instituting mechanisms to recognize and incent these behaviors across the organization.

Providing coaching and mentoring as developmental offerings includes two dimensions:

External coaching and mentoring offerings

Coaching and mentoring platforms provide companies with access to a network of coaches and mentors. Coaches are trained to help individuals find their own solutions rather than to offer their own advice or opinions, often using inquiry-based techniques to help clients find the right answers and work to accomplish short-term defined goals. Mentors provide experience-based learning and unique perspectives to help people navigate long-term career aspirations. These platforms—a proven and high-value investment for leadership development—bring in external coaches and mentors and facilitate pairings based on defined criteria and development needs, typically for a span of six months.

Democratized access to coaching and mentoring

The industry is exploding with a constantly expanding slate of vendors who make access to coaches and mentors more affordable and scalable. These vendors include BetterUp, Torch, CoachHub, Hone, and Sounding Board, among many others, and new entrants are constantly emerging. Organizations should consider strategically investing in vendors that provide the right mix of one-to-one coaching, group coaching, and external mentoring to democratize access to personalized leadership development, rather than limiting these opportunities to top executives.

Career Management

Career management is not solely owned by L&D but is vital to the success of a holistic learning strategy. Learning is about creating the right "flow," but it also needs to flow into the right outcomes for employees and the business. Learning needs to enable skills that will help people grow their careers and, in turn, grow the business. Career management needs to go hand in hand with learning.

Extensive career options

As individuals grow and expand their skills, organizations need to create opportunities for individuals to apply those skills to advance their careers. These opportunities should include linear as well as nonlinear career paths, allowing people to grow not only within their roles and job clusters but also in new jobs and roles.

Career pathways

A "career pathway" is a series of career steps, designed through skills adjacencies, that show an individual how to move to a more valued, in-demand career. These steps include education, certifications, degrees, learning programs, experiences, gigs, mentoring, and new roles that take individuals from their current role to a higher-demand, often higher-paying job. Career pathways are among the most important new initiatives in HR—and data on skills and jobs now makes them possible.

Career growth

L&D teams need to help people build long-term careers within an organization by weaving together career growth opportunities and learning opportunities. Losing focus on career growth can lead to losing talent, despite huge investments in upskilling and talent development.

Internal talent mobility

In this dimension, organizations must examine the tools, technologies, and cultural practices that support a robust and sustainable internal mobility program. L&D must match learning, skills, mentoring, and career coaching with internal job opportunities and foster a culture that is conducive to internal mobility.[10]

Skills and Capabilities

To be successful, businesses must build a workforce with critical and enduring skills. Yet in every company, regardless of size, leaders and managers struggle to identify which skills are important, hire for those skills, and continuously build them. This element focuses on the role of L&D in building enterprise skills and capabilities into the company's culture.

Integrated skills strategy

L&D needs to undertake the fraught but fruitful effort of building an enterprise skills strategy to serve as a common language across all talent processes. Like career management, this is not an area that L&D can own alone. It is an ongoing project that requires L&D to engage with designated business leaders or experts who will shepherd the process year after year.[11] L&D's role is to glean information from business leaders and external data sources to define critical skills, discern how these skills vary across levels and roles, and envision how these skills will evolve and what new skills will be needed in the future.

Critical skills framework

Organizations need to identify and align on the skills individuals need to thrive and then prioritize the development of those skills. We recommend adding a "capability framework" on top of these skills, in which capabilities are broad-based and refer to how critical skills are used for projects, strategies, and differentiating products and services that a company builds. In our Global HR Capability Project, we define more than 90 "business capabilities" for HR professionals, each of which requires many detailed skills.[12] The capability framework can be developed in a strategic way with capability networks or capability academies.

Well-defined skills taxonomy

A skills taxonomy is a constantly updated database of skills related to jobs, learning content, and people. Most companies do not have a well-defined skills model for their roles, but such a model is imperative for adopting a skills-based approach to learning—and for explicitly defining the skills needed to be successful in various jobs and roles.

Digital credentialing

As part of their strategy, L&D teams should also consider establishing processes to verify knowledge, skills, and abilities through digital credentials such as badges and certificates representing an individual's professional skills and competencies. Digital credentials validate an individual's skills by providing context for when and where those skills were acquired.

Part II: The How

The second part of our Corporate Learning Framework outlines how L&D functions can equip themselves to deliver effective learning to the business. While the first part focuses on driving the effectiveness of learning outcomes, this part focuses on driving the efficiency and efficacy of L&D functions that support the business. L&D organizations need to answer pertinent questions about three important elements.

Organization and Governance

How should L&D organize and structure itself to best support the learning needs of the business? Dimensions include *c-suite support and sponsorship*, *business-leader and stakeholder alignment*, *internal functional and corporate L&D alignment*, and *well-organized governance*.
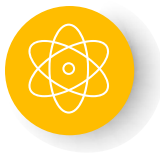
L&D Capabilities

What capabilities do L&D professionals need to support the development of critical business capabilities across the organization? Dimensions include *experimentation with new technologies and approaches, building a strategy for in-the-flow learning, agile ways of working,* and *analytics and tech skills*.
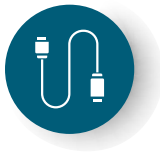
L&D Technologies

How will L&D create a simple, scalable, easy-to-use learning infrastructure, with a robust underlying data architecture, to understand and effectively deliver on learning needs? Dimensions include *refreshing the L&D infrastructure with new tools and technologies*, *a robust learning data architecture, partnership with IT teams,* and *an integrated learning platform*.

Conclusion

The nine elements of our Corporate Learning Framework form the backbone of a comprehensive L&D strategy. Each element is important and makes a unique contribution. However, rather than attempting to focus on everything at once, organizations should determine which elements have the highest impact on driving the specific outcomes they need to advance in their L&D transformation journey and prioritize their efforts accordingly. The next chapter describes our Corporate Learning Maturity Model, which can serve as the road map for navigating this journey. ■

2

Where You Stand

Where is your organization on the journey to L&D excellence? Our Corporate Learning Maturity Model holds the answer and provides a road map for advancement.

Let's begin with a bird's-eye view of where most organizations stand. When we asked more than 1,000 organizations about their L&D practices, 78% said L&D was one of their top C-level priorities. Most organizations consider learning in the flow of work the zenith of learning outcomes, yet only 12% say they do it effectively.

What's Missing?

"Learning in the flow of work" was a novel concept in 2018.[13] Today, it is table stakes for any learning organization, and many have been endeavoring to do it right. So why is there such a disconnect between ambition and outcome?

Learning in the flow is about how people learn—not about what people want from learning. What's missing is the connection between the two. Organizations have leaned heavily on content libraries, program design, tools, and systems to enable learning in the flow, but they may have lost sight of the big picture: learning is not the end goal but a vehicle to enable growth.

Learning in the flow needs to flow to the right outcomes: what employees want and what the business needs. It needs to enable growth. Employees want to learn, and they want learning to translate into career growth. Learning has the power to get them there, but we found most organizations haven't been able to create that connection (see Figure 4).

Key Insights

- While 78% of organizations regard L&D as a top C-suite priority, our research finds just 12% effectively deliver learning in the flow of work.

- Organizations are often unsuccessful at enabling learning in the flow of work, because learning is disconnected from the outcomes that people want from learning.

- Our Corporate Learning Maturity Model supports organizations in assessing their learning capabilities, identifying areas for improvement, and prioritizing practices to advance.

FIGURE 4

What's Missing? The Connection Between Learning and Growth

Qualitative Feedback from Survey Participants

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

The Corporate Learning Maturity Model

In basic terms, a maturity model helps a company assess the current effectiveness of its practices in a particular area. It shows a progression of capabilities and practices across four levels of maturity, with high maturity indicating an organization's ability to outperform other organizations in critical business and talent outcomes such as financial success, customer satisfaction, innovation, and employee engagement.

Our Corporate Learning Maturity Model describes the L&D practices of 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. Companies can use this model to determine their organization's current level, identify

areas of improvement, and prioritize practices that will help the company make progress.

Level 1: Programmatic Training (32%)

L&D organizations at this level operate as structured teaching functions. 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 1 organizations create and deliver a wide array of instructional content that is often mandatory and compliance-focused. Learning in these organizations means in-house training focused on workplace products, processes, and policies. Structures and processes take priority over strategy and purpose, and learning is disconnected from the business and talent strategy.

FIGURE 5

The Corporate Learning Maturity Model

% of surveyed companies

LEVEL 4

Facilitated Growth

Future-proof careers; enduring capabilities; leadership development at all levels; career pathways; regular realignment of L&D teams; refreshed leadership models; talent intelligence platforms and talent marketplaces

11%

LEVEL 3

Tailored Development

Learning as a priority; business-aligned learning in the flow; culture of learning and leadership development; focus on the "right" content and capability academies; integrated learning technology; personalization; career models for major roles

13%

Biggest gap

LEVEL 2

Self-Directed Learning

L&D success equated with building better programs and curating content for broader audiences; focus on vendor management, content libraries, and L&D spend; tech-enabled learning in the flow; learning discovery and experience gain importance

44%

LEVEL 1

Programmatic Training

Foundational L&D capabilities; focus on governance and program design; programmatic learning; operates in a silo; leadership development and career management considered out of scope; learning is a "check the box" activity and not a priority

32%

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

At this level, the training technology stack is simple but not always easy to use. For example, an organization may have an enterprisewide learning management system (LMS), but the system's primary purpose may be tracking training activities and mandatory course completion. The L&D function often operates in a silo, and HR and business leaders consider investments in L&D to be dispensable. Organizations at this level deliver point-in-time training rather than enduring learning.

Level 2: Self-Directed Learning (44%)

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 touch points in the talent management lifecycle, such as onboarding, leadership development, and performance management. They support employee development by curating a vast array of content developed internally and by vendors, and they also start being open to subject-matter expert (SME) authored content.

As organizations progress to this level of maturity, the shift starts to happen from training to learning. Investment in learning increases and is channeled toward expanding the scope of learning to broader topics and audiences. Rather than focusing solely on designing formal programs, companies license multiple content libraries and curate several learning resources. However, providing quantity takes precedence over relevance and discovery.

Level 2 organizations tend to shift the onus on employees to "own" their learning. They focus their energy on the learning experience platform (LXP), which makes learning a "self-discovery" process for employees. They find they need a skills taxonomy, an improved search function, and a process for curating, rating, evaluating, and organizing content. They also realize that they may need a learning record store (LRS) platform to analyze the use of all this content,[14] leading to a more comprehensive look at learning use and analytics.

Level 3: Tailored Development (13%)

As organizations further their corporate learning maturity, they build an L&D stack that includes core technologies as well as newer tools and platforms. They have a well-defined skills taxonomy and a data architecture to understand learning consumption patterns. Learning discovery is easy, learning content is embedded in systems of productivity, and a learning culture pervades the organization. Relevance and timeliness of learning experiences supersede quantity and quality of content. Level 3 is the turning point at which L&D shifts from a learning support function to a strategic enabler of critical skills development.

At Level 3, the organization takes the self-directed learning infrastructure to a deeper level. It curates, designs, and integrates the wide range of self-development assets into journeys, career paths, and specific skills-development solutions. One of the most common and powerful solutions is what we call "capability academies," which are hallmarks of Level 3 organizations. Similar to our Josh Bersin Academy for HR, a capability academy is an architected collection of programs, content, experiences, assignments, and credentials based on a functional area. For example, CEMEX has a safety academy, Capital One built a cloud engineering academy, and Intel is developing its own artificial intelligence (AI) academy. The academy structure lets the L&D team move beyond content to focus on specific capabilities for a given business or functional area. When done well, a capability academy has a capability leader from the business. This sponsor helps the L&D team make sure all topics, goals, and objectives are clear.

Learning at this level is tailored to support the development of critical business capabilities tied to various business roles and functions as well as the development of leadership capabilities at all levels. However, organizations focus more on development and less on how they can help employees navigate career growth using the new skills and capabilities they have acquired.

Level 4: Facilitated Growth (11%)

Level 4 organizations translate learning into career growth, focusing heavily on illuminating clear trajectories for people to move into new, future, or higher-level roles. In many ways this is the ultimate goal of L&D—not only to increase people's proficiency in their current jobs but also to help them advance to what's next. 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 while aligning employee aspirations with where the business needs them to be.

Organizations at this level make a pivotal shift from enabling a culture of learning to enabling a culture of growth. Organizations don't leave it at "you own your career" but facilitate career growth. L&D coaches and counsels employees to match them with the right education, upskilling, and opportunities to build a pipeline of critical talent. They develop career pathways to move people into a new profession, industry, or job family through education, upskilling, and developmental assignments. Internal mobility is no longer a mindset but a prevalent practice.

Customer experience platform company Sitel Group, for example, uses a behavioral assessment to identify employees who are potentially good fits for internal cross-functional job opportunities. The L&D team provides one-to-one counseling to help employees move into those roles. Rocket Central has a team called "Thrive" whose coaches offer personalized guidance and coaching to match team members' interests and aspirations with the right opportunities on its internal job portal, as well as pointing them to programs and resources they can leverage to develop the skills

they need to thrive in those jobs. Bon Secours Mercy Health has developed several pathways for entry-level associates—such as healthcare technicians or patient transport personnel—to move into highly skilled roles such as nurses or lab specialists through a combination of employer-paid education and experiences. Upon completion of the development requirements associated with a career pathway, employees are automatically placed in the destination roles.

Organizations at this level facilitate not only short-term career growth akin to promotions but also enduring, equitable career growth. They leverage systems of talent intelligence to identify critical future skills, and they help employees develop those skills so they can build long-term, future-proof careers within the organization. They expand the scope of education, upskilling, and career growth to frontline workers and associates to create equitable growth opportunities. Equitable career growth is also characteristic of the highest level of employee experience maturity.[15]

Corporate Learning Maturity at a Glance

Our maturity model shows the typical evolution of L&D organizations as they build their capabilities and expand their priorities and efforts to strategically support the holistic vision of HR and the business, as well as support the learning needs and career aspirations of employees. Each level is inevitable in the journey of every L&D function's evolution, and there are no shortcuts. Figure 6 summarizes the key attributes and L&D skills at each level of learning maturity.

FIGURE 6

Corporate Learning Maturity at a Glance

Level	Focus Areas	Technologies	Key Learning and Development (L&D) Skills
Level 1: Programmatic Training	Structured L&D programs Learning on products, policies, and processes	Core learning management system (LMS) and learning portal	Instructional design, content development, training delivery, performance consulting
Level 2: Self-Directed Learning	Learning programs integrated with talent touch points Broad and open learning portal Lots of content libraries and content offerings	Learning experience platform (LXP), learning discovery, and search engines	Curation, program design on broader topics, cohort-based learning, content authored by subject-matter experts, content aggregation, vendor management, new media
Level 3: Tailored Development	Functional capability academies Role-specific career paths and growth Continuous learning culture Leadership development at all levels	Learning record store (LRS) for content analytics Global or functional skills taxonomies Capability networks Coaching and mentoring platforms for leadership development	Learning in the flow of work, analytics, skills data, skills taxonomies, functional expertise, credentials, skills assessments, experimenting with new tools and technologies, advanced media
Level 4: Facilitated Growth	Internal mobility Formally designed career pathways Performance management tied to growth across roles	Talent marketplace tools and platforms Talent intelligence platforms Agile organization tools and analytics	Industry expertise; external data on jobs, roles, skills, adjacencies; workforce planning; working with third parties to build career pathways and new credentials; agile work processes; culture of growth and mobility

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Conclusion

Everyone learns every day, regardless of a company's effectiveness at delivering learning. What changes the game is the ability of an organization to tap into that learning to benefit the learner as well as the organization. Enabling growth is the winning recipe—organizations at the highest level of learning maturity facilitate growth for their workers. These organizations have significantly superior talent and business outcomes: they are seven times more likely to engage and retain employees, four times more likely to innovate effectively and adapt to change, and three times more likely to exceed financial targets. ■

3 Working Solutions

What are the most powerful dimensions—those that have an outsize effect on business outcomes? And what role can L&D play to maximize impact for the company, today and into the future?

At this point in the report, you know what world-class learning is, why it matters, what organizations believe they do and don't do well, and where your company stands in the Corporate Learning Maturity Model. While there are dozens of learning, HR, and business practices that contribute to success, we wanted to know: Do all of them matter? Which ones have the biggest impact on critical business outcomes?

The Relative Impact of Dimensions on Corporate Learning

We analyzed the impact of all 36 dimensions of our Corporate Learning Framework on business outcomes (financial performance and customer satisfaction), people outcomes (employee engagement and retention, skills development, and growth potential), and innovation outcomes (change adaptability and effective innovation).

The dimensions that have the strongest impact on driving critical learning outcomes are a culture of learning, leadership development at all levels, exposure to coaches, and extensive career options and pathways (see Figure 7). This tells us that people want "outcomes." They want an environment that supports continuous learning, and they seek developmental experiences and opportunities that will help them unleash their full growth potential—in their careers and/or as leaders. L&D functions need to enable not just learning in the flow but also leadership development and career growth in the flow. Learning in the flow is the "how," and it needs to come first, but enabling growth must be at the heart of everything L&D delivers.

Figure 7 also shows L&D capabilities are more important than ever, particularly the ability to experiment with new tools and technologies. L&D needs to drive learning outcomes in new ways by embracing innovation, new approaches, and agile ways of working.

Key Insights

- Not all dimensions are equal when it comes to driving learning efforts and their impact on business, people, and innovation outcomes.

- The dimensions with the biggest impact are extensive career-growth options and pathways, a culture of learning, leadership development at all levels, and exposure to coaches.

- Seven key findings from our research will help organizations determine what L&D functions need to do to catch up and ultimately develop competitive advantage.

FIGURE 7

The Dimensions That Matter for Corporate Learning Excellence

Strength of impact ● Exceptionally High ● Very High ● High ● Moderate ○ Important but Not Sufficient

——————————— What L&D Teams Need to Deliver to the Business ———————————

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

————————— How L&D Teams Can Prepare to Deliver —————————

Organization and Governance	L&D Capabilities	L&D Tools and Technologies
C-suite support and sponsorship	Experimenting with new learning tech and approaches	New tools and technology to refresh L&D infrastructure
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

Seven Key Findings

So far, we've discussed what world-class learning organizations look like, why these practices matter, and why embarking on a learning transformation journey is imperative for all organizations today. This next section is our "how-to guide for L&D professionals." We review seven key findings from our research and, with insights and examples, outline how L&D functions can catch up and ultimately get ahead of the curve.

1. Growth in the flow of work is L&D's new mission.

Learning in the flow of work is table stakes because that is how people learn. But what is the goal of learning? Many organizations consider learning in the flow of work to be 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 work and learning happen. The first step is to provide individuals with the development processes and plans that will help them build the skills they want (and that will benefit the company) and to demonstrate how this development will help them achieve their goals. Growth also needs to be an integral element of performance-development conversations between managers and employees.

To achieve these goals, organizations need to create shorter, more timely content that is available on-demand and in the flow of work. They also need to arrange all programs and experiences to fit into an employee's clearly defined goals or growth path. This finding entails the following actions for L&D professionals:

- **Build critical and enduring business capabilities.** L&D needs to put the right content and opportunities in front of the right people at the right time to build critical business capabilities. All of the information and training that L&D delivers must fit together into a bigger capability model that the organization should design. The L&D function needs to consider capabilities that can help its organization thrive today as well as in the future. But it's important to offer "learning in the flow of work" first because that is how people learn.

  To define future capabilities, L&D needs to cultivate a strong understanding of the strategy of the business and the work that needs to be delivered. It's not enough to just understand capabilities in the company. It's also important to see what skills are in the market. Talent intelligence solutions like Eightfold AI, Censia, Lightcast, and SkyHive provide access to trending skills collected directly from job postings. We call this near-real-time data on emerging skills "talent intelligence," and it's at the heart of any skills project or organization-design effort. These insights must also go deep into the company's industry to identify emerging job clusters so that new roles, structures, and career pathways can be defined and developed in support of future needs. Talent intelligence lets L&D see and prepare for what's next in your industry.

- **Provide clear opportunities for career growth.** Every L&D program, strategy, and offering should be timely and relevant to employees' needs and support their growth and career development. We studied several career-management practices to determine which have the most impact (see Figure 8), and creating extensive opportunities for career growth was number one.

- **Strengthen your internal talent-mobility strategy.** According to LinkedIn, employees at companies

with high internal mobility stay 41% longer.[16] Yet most organizations continue to struggle in this area. Only one in five companies actively prioritize internal hiring today, and almost none create incentives for employees and managers to move within the organization. For instance, practices like job-rotation programs and career advising are rare—and that's where L&D needs to step up.

When it comes to internal mobility, skills are crucial. Companies need to know what skills are in the workforce already, or who might be an unexpected fit for a new project or role. And employees need to know what skills may lead them to new opportunities. For example, IBM has embraced a "skills at the core" strategy[17]—constantly mapping skills to work and projects, providing the workforce with continuous signals about which skills are most critical, and updating employee skills profiles with new capabilities and expertise.

Establishing a robust internal talent mobility strategy requires L&D professionals to address four critical questions[18]:

- How do we help employees acquire skills for new roles?

- How do we align opportunities with employees' passions and career aspirations?

- How do we surface career opportunities to people?

- Do we have career ladders or journeys?

- **Democratize access to growth opportunities.** A natural next step after creating career opportunities is to democratize access to them. Some of the challenges related to internal talent
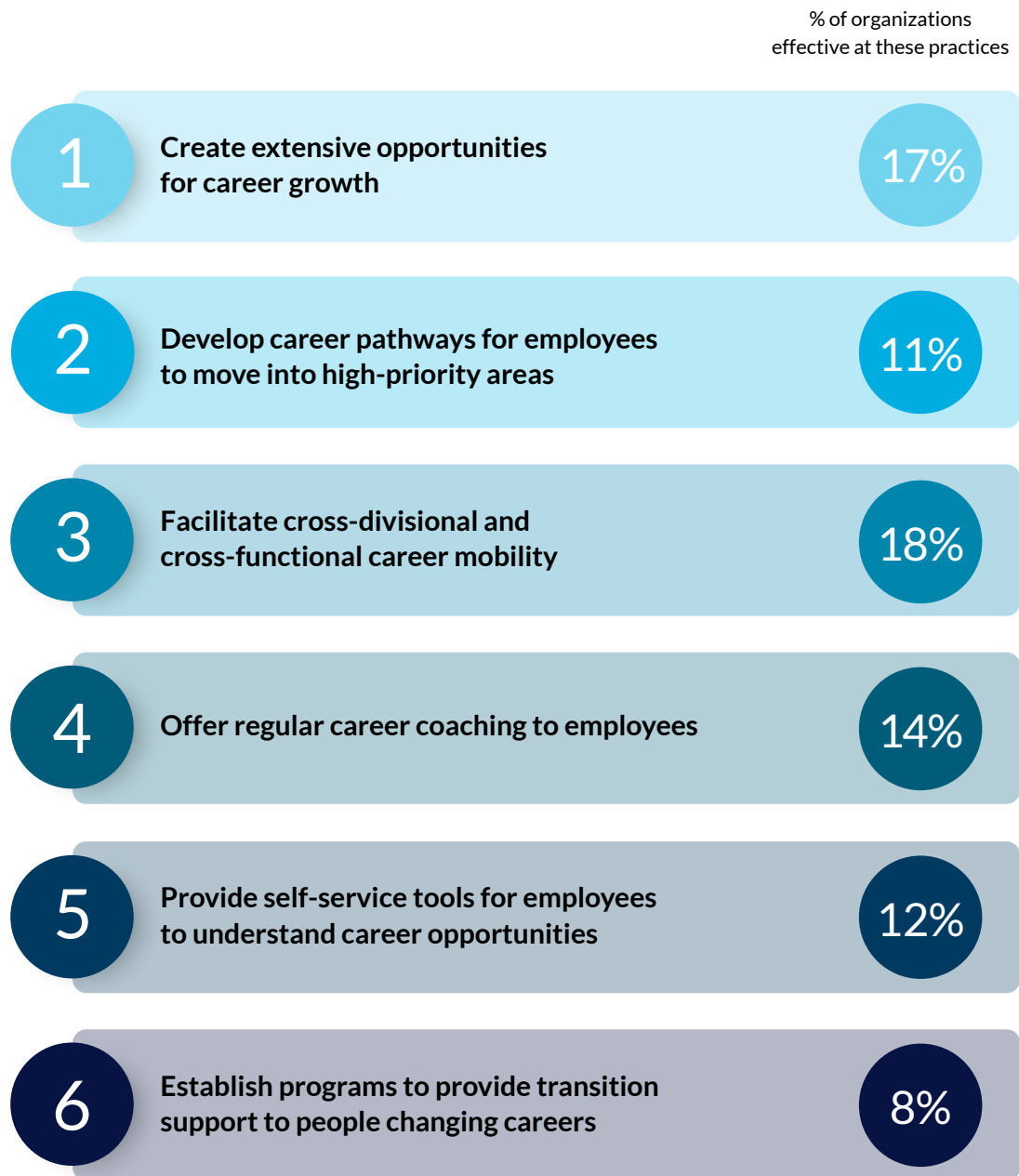
mobility may be linked to technology—just 20% of companies say they have a robust internal talent marketplace.[19] Talent marketplaces are a democratized way to manage a company by creating an open, employee-centered space where people can find opportunities that fulfill their aspirations. Talent marketplaces by vendors like Gloat, Phenom People, PeopleFluent, Eightfold AI, and Fuel50 match people with opportunities without having to go through hierarchical approvals.

For example, a work manager with a specific project need can go to a talent marketplace and find qualified people, discuss the project with them, and quickly deploy them. An employee can go to the talent marketplace to find learning opportunities, job opportunities, projects, gigs, or mentors aligned with the employee's areas of interest. Through internal talent marketplaces, employees can go beyond consuming content to experience a new domain and simultaneously build their network. L&D should make sure the talent marketplace has an underlying skills taxonomy and employees have access to opportunities aligned with their goals. Talent marketplaces can boost employee satisfaction and retention, with immediate adoption and no change management required.

This type of solution becomes the primary system for internal mobility and development, and it creates links between talent acquisition and L&D platforms and priorities (see Figure 9). Companies like Allstate, NetApp, and Schneider Electric see a talent marketplace as an entire system for employee growth. Others, like Nestlé, Bank of America, HSBC, Truist, and Seagate, use talent marketplaces to help their employees grow their skills and careers—and work in more agile ways.
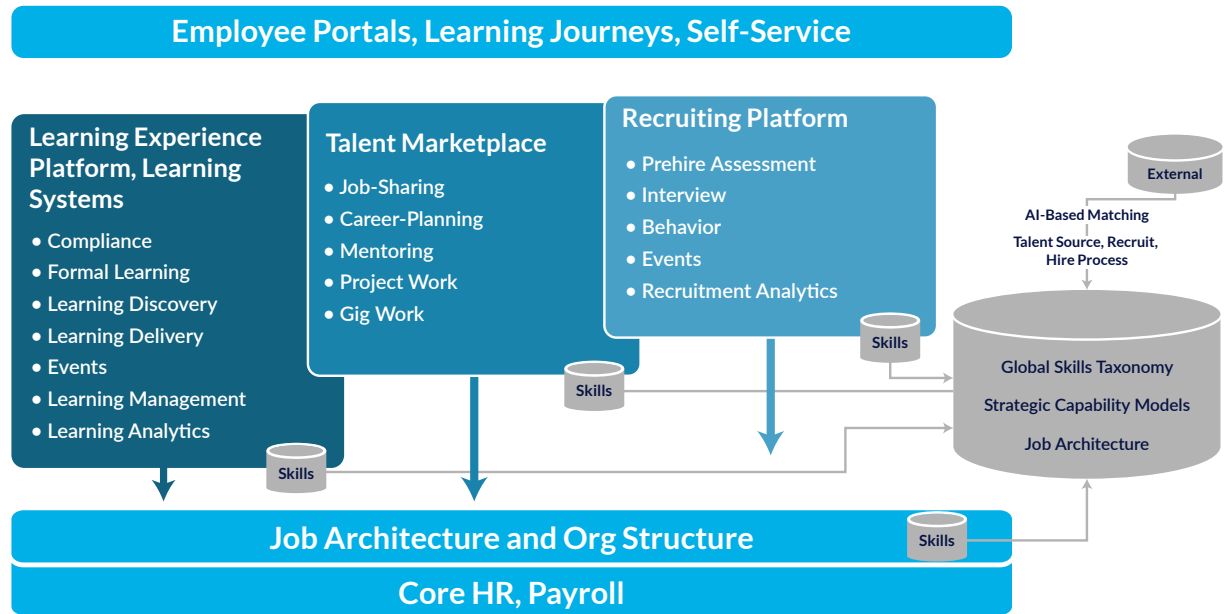
FIGURE 8

The Most Impactful Career Management Practices

% of organizations
effective at these practices

1	Create extensive opportunities for career growth	17%
2	Develop career pathways for employees to move into high-priority areas	11%
3	Facilitate cross-divisional and cross-functional career mobility	18%
4	Offer regular career coaching to employees	14%
5	Provide self-service tools for employees to understand career opportunities	12%
6	Establish programs to provide transition support to people changing careers	8%

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

FIGURE 9

Where the Talent Marketplace Fits in the HR Tech Stack

Employee Portals, Learning Journeys, Self-Service

Learning Experience Platform, Learning Systems
- Compliance
- Formal Learning
- Learning Discovery
- Learning Delivery
- Events
- Learning Management
- Learning Analytics

Talent Marketplace
- Job-Sharing
- Career-Planning
- Mentoring
- Project Work
- Gig Work

Recruiting Platform
- Prehire Assessment
- Interview
- Behavior
- Events
- Recruitment Analytics

External

AI-Based Matching

Talent Source, Recruit, Hire Process

Skills

Skills

Skills

Global Skills Taxonomy

Strategic Capability Models

Job Architecture

Skills

Job Architecture and Org Structure

Skills

Core HR, Payroll

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

- **Build leaders through experiential journeys.** L&D needs to help each employee grow as a whole person. This means growing capabilities and skill sets, helping people advance in their careers or navigate better careers, and building leaders at all levels. Leadership development is a critical enabler, and organizations should democratize access to it and provide it continuously through ongoing experiential journeys. For example, FICO, a leading applied-analytics company widely known for its FICO® score, offers a broad range of leadership development opportunities, including foundational and blended programs for all employees, mentoring for individual contributors, coaching for people managers, and an immersive in-person program for managers or leaders with the highest scores on team engagement. Coaching and mentoring experiences help bridge the gap between broad-based general learning and specialized in-person development programs, which are personalized but less scalable. In fact, research indicates that organizations that offer coaching and mentoring experience 20% lower turnover, have 46% higher leadership quality, and fill roles 23% more quickly.[20]

L&D also needs to expand opportunities for leaders to provide safe spaces for employees to develop difficult interpersonal skills and integrate hands-on practice. One example is the use of VR/AR-based solutions that allow people to practice difficult scenarios with avatars that provide real-time feedback. Dow, for example, provides all leaders

with immersive, VR-powered simulations of interactions between learners and avatars to help them practice and develop complex interpersonal skills. "Virtual-reality simulations give learners an opportunity and a safe space to practice what they have learned," said Tina Halphen, global performance and employee development leader at Dow. "They help build the confidence to address difficult topics without feeling a sense of judgment or fear of failing, which was an important success metric for us."

2. Career pathways, not just career paths, are key to unlocking 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 improve 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 in preparing for the jobs of the future, and illuminate pathways to get there, including education, learning, assignments, and coaching. To meet these needs, L&D professionals can take the following actions:

- **Develop career pathways for employees to move into high-priority areas.** Career pathways offer a much-needed approach to transforming how companies compete for, inspire, and invest in talent to fill the jobs of today and shape the workforce
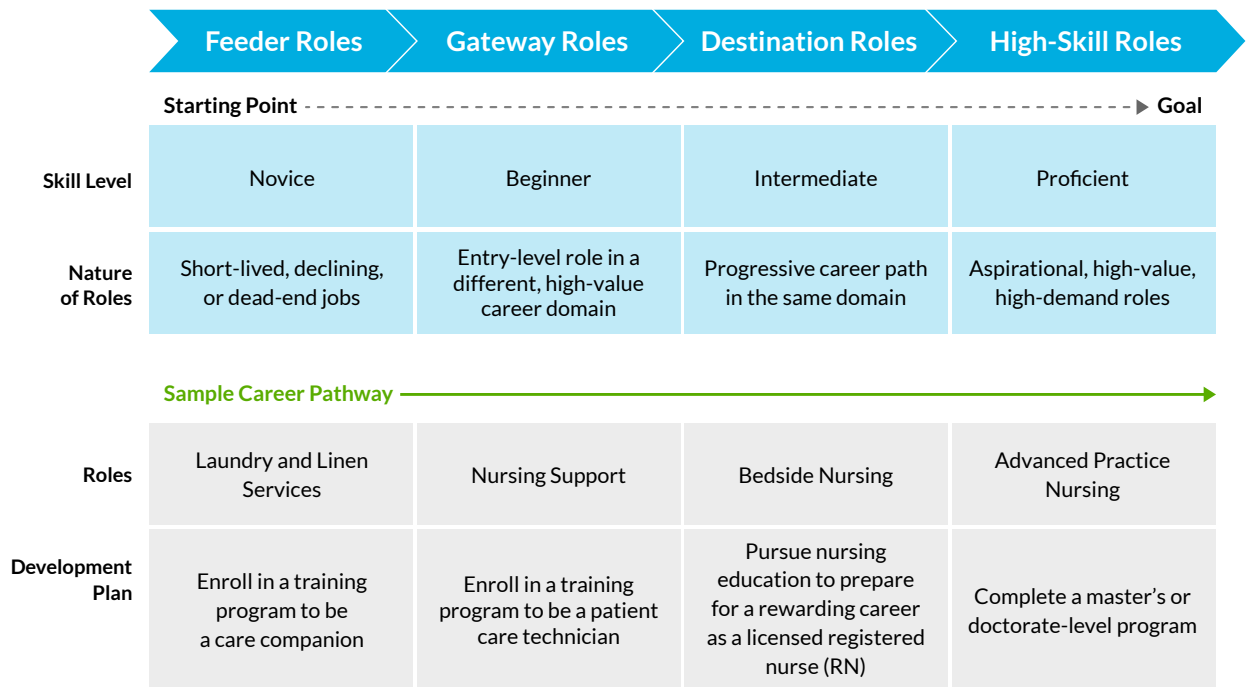
of tomorrow. Career pathways are clearly defined tracks that show a progression across different roles in different job groups and corresponding upskilling and educational milestones that employees need to accomplish to move to these roles. Organizations need to envision the starting and end points of a potential career pathway, the progression of roles, and the skills, credentials, or academic requirements needed to enable the progression (see Figure 10).

As seen in the wireframe in Figure 10, career pathways start with entry-level roles or feeder roles that serve as the starting point (for example, health screeners or technicians). These are roles that are declining in priority because of decreased demand for the activities performed, or because of automation and augmentation. Gateway roles provide a transition point toward developing skills and experiences for a different career in the long term. Destination roles are highly valued roles in which a person becomes a specialist in an area, and highly skilled roles allow employees to continue to grow their career beyond their destination role once they have reached the highest level of proficiency in the domain. For example, a laundry-service employee (feeder role) could become a nurse assistant (gateway role), continue to develop expertise and become a registered nurse (destination role), and, with deep expertise and experience, grow into the role of a nursing manager (highly skilled role). Bon Secours Mercy Health has created several such pathways for its workers.

Companies that offer pathways realize a return on investment in terms of increased employee engagement and retention, a sense of inclusion and belonging, trust in the organization, and a strong feeling among employees that they are supported in their growth and development. In addition to

FIGURE 10

A Wireframe for Constructing Career Pathways

	Feeder Roles	Gateway Roles	Destination Roles	High-Skill Roles
Starting Point - ▶ **Goal**				
Skill Level	Novice	Beginner	Intermediate	Proficient
Nature of Roles	Short-lived, declining, or dead-end jobs	Entry-level role in a different, high-value career domain	Progressive career path in the same domain	Aspirational, high-value, high-demand roles

Sample Career Pathway ⟶

	Feeder Roles	Gateway Roles	Destination Roles	High-Skill Roles
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 rewarding career as a licensed registered nurse (RN)	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

the impact on employees, these organizations are better able to meet customer demands, and they tend to perform better financially.[21]

- **Operationalize an educational benefit program.** Providing access to education through certifications and degrees plays a very important role in career pathways. By partnering with a strategic provider of education and upskilling solutions, organizations can forge relationships with academic institutions and leading universities to offer relevant degrees, certifications, and programs to help employees build the skills they need to move along a career pathway. Solutions like

Guild and EdAssist make this easy by connecting employers and education institutions at scale.

- **Adopt a cost model that offers tuition assistance, not reimbursement.** The way most organizations support employee education is through tuition reimbursement, but this model does not work. First, it's not strategically mapped to any career pathways, so employees are less motivated to use it. Part of the problem is that tuition reimbursement mostly sits in the benefits department and is not strategically owned by L&D. But the cost model of tuition reimbursement also contributes to its underuse and lack of impact.

In a reimbursement model, employees pay a lump sum to enroll in a course and then get reimbursed after completion. "One of the real challenges in America is access to education for underrepresented groups," said KimArie Yowell, chief learning officer at Rocket Central. "While tuition reimbursement programs may seem to offer a solution, they exclude people who do not have the ability to pay for the classes up front or wait until the end of the course to get reimbursed by their employer."

Recognizing that tuition reimbursement does not support their vision, some leading organizations—including Hilton, Disney, Target, Walmart, Rock Central, and Bon Secours Mercy Health—are adopting tuition "assistance" instead (see Figure 11). When Rocket Central switched its tuition benefit from reimbursement to an assistance model, program participation increased more than fivefold within 16 months.

- **Shift ownership to L&D.** The educational benefit

program needs to be owned by the L&D function and targeted to learning and upskilling needs. The L&D function should adopt a product mindset, focusing heavily on increasing program adoption by building awareness and designating champions across the organization. L&D should bring the CEO and CFO along on the mission of creating equitable and debt-free access to education.

3. Content development must focus first on relevance and then on in-depth instruction.

We've been talking about content for decades, but what is more important is the "right" content. Employees want content that is relevant and timely, and while they will dig into detailed education when they need to, they want to start with a course or program that feels immediately useful and easy to consume. This means focusing a lot of work on skills-based taxonomies, microlearning, case studies, and simulations as well

FIGURE 11

Tuition Reimbursement vs. Assistance

Tuition Reimbursement	Tuition Assistance
Employee pays tuition out of pocket at the start of the program.	Employee incurs no up-front out-of-pocket expense.
Employee pays tuition directly to the academic institution.	Employer pays tuition directly to the educational institution.
Employer reimburses tuition upon completion of the program.	Tuition is free, already paid for by the employer.
Excludes people who do not have the ability to pay a lump-sum fee up front.	Employer pays tuition directly to the educational institution.
Adds to student-loan debt.	Provides debt-free access to education.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

as short videos and minicourses. L&D departments need to shift their focus from "content quality" or "instructional design" to identifying content that supports the organization's top priorities:

- **Organize content around critical capabilities.** For content to be relevant and timely, it must be organized around key capabilities and experiences that support the application of learning and knowledge-sharing through stretch roles, developmental assignments, communities, and capability academies.

  More important, a capability academy is a place where people can go to advance their job-related capabilities. Academies serve as digital-learning platforms that give employees access to content tied to job-specific capabilities, and they offer many forms of collaboration—people discuss topics, receive feedback, collaborate with peers, and complete assignments, often under the supervision of a mentor, coach, or facilitator. This type of experiential learning gives employees the chance to develop capabilities by practicing what they learn and applying it to real-world business problems. Ericsson, for example, has built a 5G Academy for its sales and engineering teams (see Figure 12 for additional examples). The role of L&D is to partner with business leaders and teams to understand needs and gaps and build capacity academies that are sponsored and led by the business.

- **Leverage data-driven insights to optimize the content strategy.** This finding also touches on the need for a data architecture to help L&D determine the right content based on what's being consumed. An LRS is one approach, though not in itself sufficient for resolving this need. Designed to integrate all learning activities and technologies throughout an organization, an LRS helps create a simplified data architecture for learning. It shows companies which content is highly used, which is

rarely if ever used, and which sections of courses, articles, and assets are highly valued. However, an LRS helps synthesize consumption data and generate insights after investments in those resources have already been made.

AI-based content intelligence solutions can now offer insights on relevance and applicability before organizations invest millions of dollars in content. These solutions can help organizations optimize their investments by assessing content for relevance, benchmarking against other libraries and free resources, and ranking them by degree of relevance to provide concrete data to support informed decision-making. Filtered, for example, is a content intelligence solution that uses AI and algorithms to analyze content libraries (see Figure 13). Astra Zeneca leverages content intelligence solutions to inform procurement decisions and identify which content libraries are most useful for its learners.

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. Our research indicates that 70% of Level 4 companies have an integrated enterprise skills strategy, compared with fewer than 2% of Level 1 companies. L&D professionals should take the following steps shown on page 37:

- **Designate a team to focus on the skills strategy.** Organizations should consider building a team to own the skills strategy and engage business leaders in the process. This team can be organized as a new center of excellence (COE) for skills and can

FIGURE 12

Examples of Capability Academies

CEMEX has established 7 functional academies around critical business priorities such as health and safety, operations, and sustainability. Learners are invited to attend these programs by senior leaders or the CEO to reinforce business relevance and their advocacy of the initiative.

Bank of America's Academy provides high-tech and personalized role-specific onboarding, training and development to approximately 80,000 employees in client-facing employees in Consumer & Small Business, Wealth Management and service centers.

Kraft Heinz's online corporate university called 'Ownerversity' is organized into academies focused on functional capabilities such as sales, marketing, R&D, and operations, as well as broad-based leadership and methodology academies that serve the whole population.

Novartis has established a series of academies focused on the company's model of curiosity called "Sailing the 7 C's of Curiosity" to teach employees how to imbibe curiosity as a power skill to unlock their potential.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Building a skills strategy is not a temporary project but an important discipline all companies should be prepared to undertake on a regular basis.

FIGURE 13

Data-Driven Insights to Determine Most Relevant Content Libraries

Note: Filtered Inc. provides a platform through which companies can use AI and algorithms to analyze content libraries.
Source: Filtered Inc., 2021

be called the Talent Intelligence COE. This group, which needs to function across recruiting, L&D, and internal mobility, can lead the effort to rationalize the skills taxonomy, focus on a specific job family or problem area, and set up capability networks or capability academies that bring businesspeople into the discussion. Over time, the COE will get to know the technology well, learn how much detail to address, and identify anticipated skills in each domain. One of the world's largest defense contractors, for example, has an annual weeklong senior strategy session to identify the critical military defense skills it needs to focus on. Its Talent Intelligence COE uses this information to identify gaps, rearrange capability networks, and build new

skills year after year.

● **Focus your skills strategy on critical business needs.** We recommend that, instead of conducting a multiyear project that focuses on the entire organization, organizations approach an enterprise skills strategy project in pieces, focusing on a few critical business needs at a time. Considering three focus areas can help to prioritize these efforts (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14

Three Focus Areas to Prioritize Your Skills Strategy

Focus Areas	Examples	Typical Time Investment
Underperforming Operation	Sales, customer service, or HR function that is not hitting its numbers Business function (engineering, product management, etc.) that is not "keeping up" Difficulty hiring people because brand is poor	6 months to 1 year
Current or Future Talent Gap	Steep hiring curve and need to recruit faster and more strategically Desire to expand talent pool with diverse or expanded talent profiles Need to improve career growth and internal mobility	2 to 3 years

Long-Term Transformation Needed	Massive new technology change in industry or business
	
	Competition threatens to disrupt entire business:
	
	    • New energy sources
	    • 5G
	    • Electric vehicles
	    • New insurance models
	    • Cloud business model
		Many years and ongoing

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

5. L&D needs to develop a new set of skills and capabilities.

The skills, knowledge, and depth of L&D teams are now critical. L&D has the responsibility and power to develop capabilities across the organization, and to do that, it needs to start building the capabilities most important for driving learning outcomes. The organization also needs to develop a strategy for enabling learning in the flow for L&D professionals. Meeting this priority means taking the following approaches:

- **Foster the right L&D capabilities to differentiate learning outcomes.** What are the most important L&D capabilities? L&D is now a "craft" that individuals learn by doing. Enabling learning in the flow is table stakes. L&D teams need to practice agile, iterative design; they need to understand business and stakeholder needs; and 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. In our research, we found that fewer than a quarter of L&D professionals use agile methodologies, experiment with new tools, or have excellent analytics skills. L&D professionals must learn these critical skills, which are now more important than ever.

  They must also understand technology. L&D tech is among the most complex and important tech stacks in business, so teams must understand how skills inference works and the role and limitations of AI-recommended content. They also must learn about xAPI,[22] LRS systems, LXP systems, creator platforms, development tools, capability models, assessments, credentials, and dozens of other important technologies. In fact, experimenting with new learning technologies surfaced in our research as the most impactful L&D capability. While traditional L&D capabilities like instructional design and vendor management are important, they don't differentiate outcomes on their own (see Figure 15).

- **Enable learning in the flow for L&D professionals.** L&D leaders need to create capacity and support the development of L&D professionals through activities such as rotations, coaching, mentoring, and capability academies for HR. The Josh Bersin Academy is an example of an HR academy, focusing on accelerating critical capabilities in HR and L&D professionals.

6. How L&D operates is more important than how L&D is organized.

Some companies have very centralized L&D teams, while others are highly distributed. No single operating model stands out as the best, and our research shows mature organizations balance the benefits of both centralized and decentralized models. They put strategy before structure, and they operate, make decisions, and deliver solutions closer to the business and learners. L&D functions can take the following lessons from mature organizations:

FIGURE 15

The Most Powerful L&D Capabilities

L&D Capabilities That Matter the Most

1. Experimenting with new learning tech and approaches

2. Building a strategy for in-the-flow learning

3. Adopting agile ways of working

4. Aligning business leaders and stakeholders

5. Honing analytics and tech skills

> Experimenting and innovating are the most powerful L&D capabilities.

L&D Capabilities That Do Not Differentiate Outcomes

"Our L&D team has excellent skills in design and content development."

"We manage training operations (scheduling, events, logistics) in an effective and efficient manner."

"Our L&D team knows how to work well with outsourced providers."

> Traditional L&D capabilities such as instructional design, vendor management, and training ops management are important, but on their own they don't differentiate outcomes.

Companies in which L&D teams experiment and innovate with new learning technologies and approaches are:

2.4× more likely to innovate as a business

1.4× more likely to exceed financial targets

1.6× more likely to delight customers

Organizations in which L&D teams have a robust strategy for learning in the flow of work for all employees are:

1.8× more likely to exceed financial targets

2.5× more likely to adapt well to change

1.3× more likely to innovate effectively

1.3× more likely to drive high levels of performance, engagement, and retention

*Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022*

- **Establish a federated, "fit-for-purpose" governance.** Leading companies are federated, and they match the L&D organization to the business organization. They set up capability academies and leadership programs along the strategic lines of the company's needs rather than copying other organizations. And they operate as an integrated unit. An L&D designer or consultant in one part of the business might learn from or consult with an L&D leader from another part of the business, and committees and cross-functional teams standardize tools and platforms. They share what's working and what isn't, directly supporting the most important issues in their local business organizations while working together on large programs like leadership development, onboarding, management

excellence, and wellbeing. And they then focus on local programs for sales, customer service, or manufacturing, using design thinking and standard tools to scale. The global chief learning officer (CLO) is the orchestrator and leader, assigning leadership to the most strategic functional or geographic L&D areas each year.

The federated model works so well because it creates a balance between the center and the business. Neither gets the upper hand. The model fosters ongoing communication, governance, negotiation, and adjustments that are important to delivering solutions closest to learner and business needs. Figure 16 shows what a federated governance model looks like.

FIGURE 16

Federated and Fit-for-Purpose Governance

	Decentralized	**Centralized**	**Federated and Fit for Purpose**
KEY DEFINITIONS	• One or more learning and development (L&D) functions that operate wholly within business units, without common or shared services, and with little control or coordination	• Overseen by one central group that controls budgets and resources and coordinates fulfillment of L&D needs	• Hybrid model that balances the benefits of centralized and decentralized models. Organization has a leadership team at the center that is accountable to the entire enterprise and manages shared learning services on behalf of the enterprise
BUSINESS BENEFITS	• Agile and responsive to business • Speed of execution • Alignment with business needs	• Efficient processes • Consistent experience and governance • Data, metrics, and costs	• Ability to scale across current and emerging needs and capabilities • Balances efficiency and effectiveness • Alignment with business needs
CHALLENGES	• Unable to scale into emerging needs • Lack of enterprise data and insights	• Disconnected from the business • Responsiveness and agility	• Adoption of cost sharing model • Governance on priorities and investment

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

- **Focus not on a perfect model but on the "right" model for your learning environment.** The right operating model for each organization is unique to its learning environment. It prioritizes what matters most for the organization's business and learning needs (see Figure 17), focusing on enabling relevant and timely learning while understanding how people learn and their unique learning needs. The model focuses on creating coordination and alignment among central L&D leadership, shared services, and the business. It focuses not 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.

Our research finds that all this innovation, which is hitting the L&D tech industry faster than ever before, has created a big blur for organizations. It is this whole puzzle that organizations need to demystify. Adding to the complexity, most learning solutions today seem to converge with regard to features and functionality. For instance, solutions like Eightfold AI, Degreed, Saba, LinkedIn Hub, Viva, and Lightcast may coexist in an organization in addition to a core HR system. It is very difficult for organizations to figure out which system serves as the master library for skills, which is the system of employee record, what data flows should look like, and how these systems relate to each other. Amid all this innovation and complexity, how can organizations create an L&D infrastructure that is simple and scalable? The following actions are a good place to start:

- **Embrace innovation, prioritize experience.** High-powered L&D teams innovate and experiment with technology, constantly refreshing their L&D infrastructure. They have a long-term platform road map and avoid buying too many tools and nonstandard offerings. They continually improve

FIGURE 17

The Learning Operating Model: What Matters the Most

There is no "perfect" operating model, but there is a "right" model for your learning environment

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

and iterate their tools and integrate them 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 which audiences or groups are developing best. These teams do not get overwhelmed by innovation or carried away by every shiny new tool but adopt solutions that tie in with their learning strategy and deliver the end-user experience that they need.

- **Build an end-to-end solution for your employees.** Navigating the complex L&D technology landscape is hard but essential. Our research shows the most important factor is building the right end-user (employee) experience. As seen in Figure 18, the steps include the following:

  1. **Clarify your goal(s).** Understand the business and talent problems you're trying to solve, building a priority list of the types of programs, audiences, and compliance and business rules you want to address.

  2. **Consider your current L&D tech stack.** Examine the technology you already have to see what serves a purpose and what doesn't, and let go of the latter. Then look for technologies that would integrate effectively with your current technology stack.

  3. **Carefully review your content strategy.** Where will your content come from? Do you want to buy content libraries? Do you need lots of custom programs? Will these be authored by your team or by external providers? What level of tracking, testing, and credentials do you need? Use the answers to inform the platform selection.

  4. **Focus on employee experience.** Many companies deliberately create a "learning destination" and put all their L&D technology behind that platform. Others want learning to be available to some employees right in the flow of work. Calibrate, decide, and create a clear understanding of the learner experience you want to deliver.

  5. **Discuss vendor criteria.** Get to know vendors before choosing one. Talk with their references. Ask to meet the CEO or head of product. These meetings will tell you about the vendors' mission, goals, culture, and way of doing business.

  6. **Establish a governance team.** Create a learning council or steering committee—including employees, customers, and channel partners—to get regular input from the stakeholders involved. Bring in the head of HR technology, your HR business partners, and your HR service center(s) or service delivery team.

  7. **Find a learning architect.** Designate an L&D technologist who has a deep understanding of these systems and can ensure you have the right level of integration among the LMS, other platforms, and various forms of content.

  8. **Implement and roll out.** Start with a pilot, see what's working in a particular user group, and then add more features and audiences. Consider using the same principles through a minimum-viable-product (MVP) approach when implementing an L&D tech solution. Change management, communication, and ongoing evaluation of effectiveness are key.

How to Navigate the L&D Tech Landscape

STEP 1
Clarify your goal(s).

STEP 2
Consider your current L&D tech stack.

STEP 3
Carefully review your content strategy.

STEP 4
Focus on employee experience.

STEP 5
Discuss vendor criteria.

STEP 6
Establish a governance team.

STEP 7
Find a learning architect.

STEP 8
Implement and roll out.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

The 15 Essential Practices

Unsure where to begin? In this section, we examine the L&D practices that have the greatest impact on business outcomes, including financial performance, innovation, and people metrics. Figure 19 shows the 15 most powerful practices in order of their amount of impact on outcomes. We call these "essential practices" because when they are done right, many typical investments in L&D will work well. But if the L&D function loses sight of them, it will struggle to drive impact—even if it does everything else exceptionally well.

The most powerful L&D practice is creating extensive career growth options. As noted earlier in this chapter, career management is one of the strongest dimensions. Not surprisingly, 5 of the 15 most impactful L&D practices center on it.

FIGURE 19

The 15 Essential Learning and Development Practices

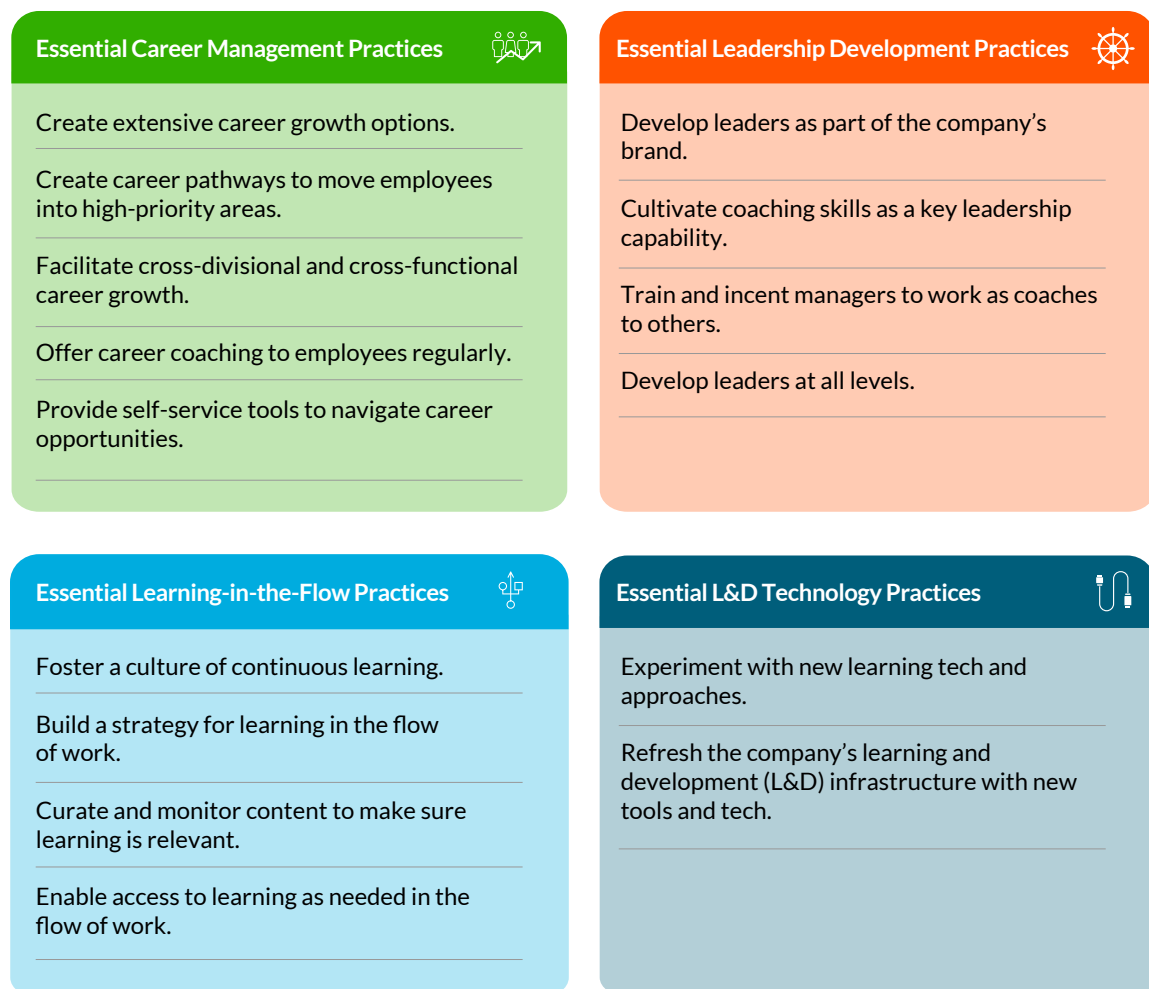|	Practice		Element	Relative Impact
1	Create extensive career growth options		Career Management	VERY HIGH
2	Develop leaders as part of the company's brand		Leadership Development	
3	Foster a culture of continuous learning		Learning in the Flow of Work	
4	Create career pathways to move employees into high-priority areas		Career Management	
5	Cultivate coaching skills as a key leadership capability		Coaching and Mentoring	
6	Facilitate cross-divisional and cross-functional career growth		Career Management	
7	Experiment with new learning tech and approaches		Learning and Development Capabilities	
8	Build a strategy for learning in the flow of work		Learning and Development Capabilities	
9	Refresh the company's learning and development (L&D) infrastructure with new tools and tech		Learning and Development Technologies	
10	Offer career coaching to employees regularly		Career Management	
11	Curate and monitor content to make sure learning is relevant		Learning in the Flow of Work	
12	Train and incent managers to work as coaches to others		Coaching and Mentoring	
13	Enable access to learning as needed in the flow of work		Learning in the Flow of Work	
14	Develop leaders at all levels		Leadership Development	
15	Provide self-service tools to navigate career opportunities		Career Management	MODERATE

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

In addition, four of the fifteen most powerful practices in L&D relate to leadership development and developing coaching and mentoring capabilities in leaders; four relate to learning in the flow of work; and two relate to experimenting with new L&D technologies and refreshing the L&D technology infrastructure. In summary, the most powerful practices fall within four of the key elements of L&D outlined in chapter 1:

1. Career management

2. Leadership development

3. Learning in the flow of work

4. Embracing and optimizing L&D technology

Figure 20 shows the practices that matter, grouped by these elements.

The 15 Essential L&D Practices Grouped by Element

Essential Career Management Practices

Create extensive career growth options.

Create career pathways to move employees into high-priority areas.

Facilitate cross-divisional and cross-functional career growth.

Offer career coaching to employees regularly.

Provide self-service tools to navigate career opportunities.

Essential Leadership Development Practices

Develop leaders as part of the company's brand.

Cultivate coaching skills as a key leadership capability.

Train and incent managers to work as coaches to others.

Develop leaders at all levels.

Essential Learning-in-the-Flow Practices

Foster a culture of continuous learning.

Build a strategy for learning in the flow of work.

Curate and monitor content to make sure learning is relevant.

Enable access to learning as needed in the flow of work.

Essential L&D Technology Practices

Experiment with new learning tech and approaches.

Refresh the company's learning and development (L&D) infrastructure with new tools and tech.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

What's New in Career Management and Leadership Development?

While learning in the flow of work and incorporating pioneering technologies are relatively new priorities, most organizations have focused to some degree on career management and leadership development for decades. In many ways, however, career management and leadership development have become new disciplines requiring new approaches. This next section discusses what has changed and how to execute them well.

Don't "Manage" Careers; Facilitate Career Growth

In career management, the notion of "management" needs to change. "Management" is a static concept of controlling things or people,[23] and that ship has long sailed. People and careers today must be enabled, and in new ways. Traditional career management, in which one employee is matched to one career path and one manager is the sacrosanct owner of that person's success or failure, no longer works.

In today's world, career management should instead focus on experiences and growth (see Figure 21).

To shift L&D to this new notion of enabling career growth requires organizations to rethink talent mobility, career development, and progression.

L&D plays a critical role in giving employees access to learning opportunities that can enable mobility, as well as in matching learning, education, and upskilling to new jobs and vital future business needs. These are highly complex but much-needed shifts, so let's look at them in further detail.

From Rigid Career Ladders to Agile Mobility

Internal talent mobility is crucial, especially now that hiring talent externally is harder than ever and workers are leaving for better jobs and career opportunities. Many big companies are working hard to address this problem. The chief talent officer of Bertelsmann recently shared that the company had more than 10,000 open "digital specialist" roles. When the company looked beyond its walls to hire those people, it realized the task was impossible because

FIGURE 21

Career Management: Traditional vs. New

Traditional	New
Career development means linear and upward progression	Career development means growth through new experiences
Career management is reactive, focused on current talent needs	Career management is proactive and strategic, focused on future talent needs
Organizations create career paths that allow mobility within a cluster of jobs that use the same skills	Organizations create pathways to new jobs and help people develop new skills to move into those jobs
Organizations focus on evaluating whether an individual is a good fit for a new position	Organizations focus on developing individuals to qualify for new positions
Organizations encourage talent mobility and create visibility to open jobs	Organizations set up internal talent marketplaces to facilitate development and mobility
The manager facilitates growth	L&D, talent acquisition, HR, and business leaders synchronize efforts to facilitate growth
Employees own their careers	Organizations orchestrate growth, helping individuals unleash their full career potential
Organizations talk the talk	Organizations walk the talk

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

"there aren't enough people to hire." Bertelsmann then started building an internal digital skills academy, and people are now "volunteering" to take these new roles.

The concept of internal mobility is certainly not new, but forward-thinking companies like Schneider Electric, Delta, and Unilever are pursuing what we call agile internal mobility.[24] This kind of on-demand internal mobility touches on almost every people practice, from hiring to work design to learning to compensation (see Figure 22).[25]

Talent Marketplace: An Indispensable Internal Development Platform

Many organizations say the biggest barrier to internal talent mobility is not visibility into available internal roles or a lack of requisite skills but company culture and managers who are often talent hoarders. Also, when we speak with L&D professionals about careers and growth, we often see shoulders shrug and hear remarks to the effect of "We don't own career growth; managers do that." This dynamic needs to change, and it underscores precisely where the disciplines of

recruiting, succession management, and L&D need to be linked. One key to this strategy is the adoption of what we now call the talent marketplace.

Vendors like Gloat, Eightfold AI, Workday, Phenom People, Fuel50, Bridge, Hitch, and many others are leading the way for organizations via internal talent marketplaces that allow people to "try and buy" and match themselves with the right mentors, projects, jobs, and skills-development opportunities. These platforms link with human-capital management (HCM) systems, job portals, and the LMS to point people to what they need for developing a skill or embarking on a new job or

FIGURE 22

From Rigid Career Ladders to Agile Mobility

Planned	Facilitated	Agile
• Linear career paths • Planned and managed • Functional in nature	• Vertical and horizontal • Facilitated, not planned • Based on aspirations	• On-demand and need-based • Able to change quickly • Gig- and project-oriented

Pros and Cons

Planned	Facilitated	Agile
+ Easy to understand; modeled in job market	+ Supported by leaders; fits succession needs	+ Badly needed today; new model of work
− Long time to build; may become outdated	− Requires cultural shift; changes role of manager	− Demands new systems and new company culture

Processes Needed

Development Planning	Development Coaching	Transparent Workforce Plan
Self-assessment; clear career goals	Self-assessment; purpose and direction	Development need; current passions

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

career. The role of L&D is to identify and match the right skills with the right development opportunities, and the talent marketplace is critical for not just encouraging talent mobility but facilitating mobility and growth.

From Career Paths to Career Pathways

The final and most groundbreaking change in career management is the shift from career paths to career pathways (see Figure 23), which was also a key finding of our study. As discussed in Chapter 3, a career pathway is a nonlinear path that leads an employee to a new profession, a new industry, or a new role family.

For example, a retail salesperson becomes a marketing manager, a marketing manager becomes a finance executive, a software engineer becomes a senior data scientist or AI specialist, or an operations staff person becomes a nurse or clinical technician.

These career pathways, which we identified in our Global Workforce Intelligence Project,[26] are the new future of L&D. They must be designed based on adjacent skills, an understanding of regulations and certification standards, and a set of developmental assignments and stretch roles. They should be focused on where the company needs new talent and incorporate each individual's interests and aspirations.

FIGURE 23

Career Path vs. Career Pathways

CAREER PATH	CAREER PATHWAYS
is a smaller group of jobs within a career cluster that uses similar skills	**require development of new skills through education to transition into high-value careers**

A career pathway is:

A job or career path that improves pay, growth potential, and business impact	A credentialed new career that carries value in the outside marketplace	A company-directed path that drives retention, engagement, and employment brand	A very high-ROI solution to organizational change and business transformation	A complex problem that cannot be solved by standalone solutions

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Leadership Development: Not Just for Leaders but for Everyone

As companies become flatter and more dynamic, professionals and line workers are often thrust into leadership positions, whether as supervisors, managers, or simply project leaders. The definition of "leader" has also expanded to pretty much everyone in the organization, regardless of whether they have people-management responsibilities. Traditional leadership-development models are not enough to support the development of this new breed of leaders. This section explains what is new in leadership development.

Traditional Leadership Development Models No Longer Make the Cut

Much of the original thinking around leadership strategies comes from Ram Charan's book *The Leadership Pipeline*, which posits that leaders go through six stages of slow, steady, and upward-sloping development over time (see Figure 24). In this model, an individual takes decades to ascend the ladder, learning new things at each stage. For example, when you move from individual to supervisor, you learn how to manage and coach people. When you become a manager of managers, you learn how to budget and select leaders. As a functional or business manager, you learn how to budget, drive value, and increase profit. And as an enterprise manager, you learn how to operate a multifunctional enterprise. This architecture of leadership is based on linear hierarchical organizational structures, which is not how businesses operate today.

Everyone Is a Leader. Leadership Development Is for Everyone.

Traditional models assume that growth takes the path of leadership or management, but not every employee chooses that path. For example, many engineers, production specialists, operations people, and sales executives may never want to go into "management." Yet these individuals have an impact on how their peers and teams perform, serving as leaders in their own capacity and with their own contributions. More than 80% of businesses today operate as smaller, flatter, highly interconnected, and empowered networks of teams, which expands the definition of leaders to include everyone in the organization, not just leaders designated by spans of control.

Some forward-thinking companies are embracing this shift. For example, FICO defines a leader as "anyone who inspires excellence," and the company invests in building leaders at all levels of the organization through experiential journeys. Another example is toy maker Lego, which defines leadership as the act of creating a safe space, like a playground, where everybody feels energized every day, making leadership a capability for everyone in the organization, not just leaders.

The Most Important Leadership Skills Have Changed

Traditional leadership models typically encompass skills like customer-centricity, innovation, execution, accountability, and teamwork. These are all important, but they don't clearly articulate how leaders need to act to be good leaders. Before the pandemic, we met with the head of the Greater Good Science Center

FIGURE 24

Traditional Leadership Development Model

The Leadership Pipeline Model

Source: Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel, The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership Powered Company (Hoboken: Jossey-Bass, 2011)

at the University of California, Berkeley, which studies happiness and has defined characteristics and words that create happiness. In conversations with hundreds of HR and business leaders and in studying their leadership models, we found these words rarely surface in mission statements, leadership assessments, models, or job descriptions.

If leaders are to truly inspire excellence, build trust, and catalyze a positive employee experience, they need to

create "happiness" in the workplace. The skills required are the most important a leader can possess, and they are not soft skills but what we call the "PowerSkills" of growth (see Figure 25). Organizations need to reinforce these skills in every way possible, recognize and reward people who have these skills, and make them a core element of the culture.

FIGURE 25

PowerSkills for Leaders
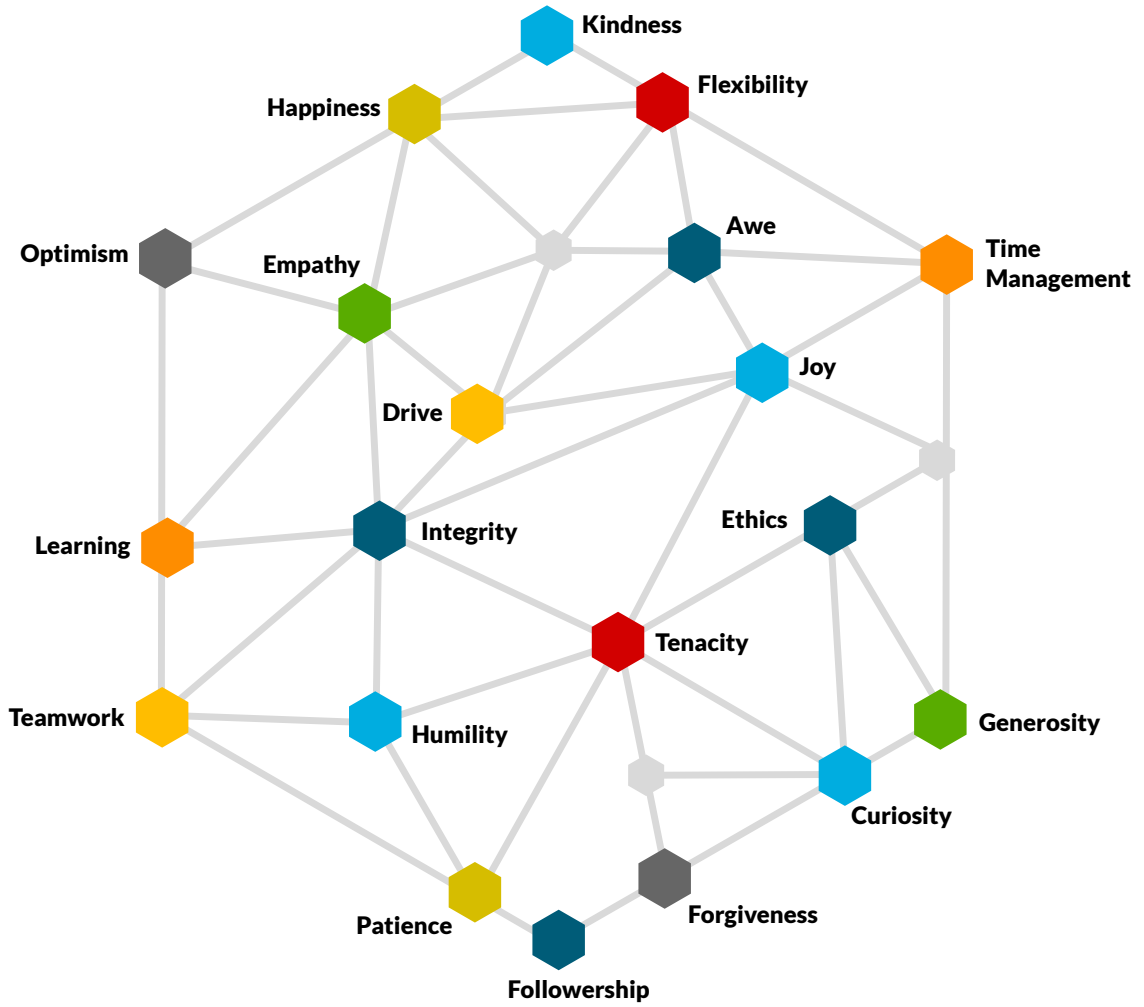
Source: IBM, Greater Good Science Center, Pymetrics, The Josh Bersin Company

"Development Programs" and "Scheduled Experiences" Are No Longer Sufficient

Leadership development is neither an episodic nor one-off program. The idea that a leadership pipeline can be built through development programs or a well-defined schedule of experiences is no longer tenable: companies need to provide mentoring, coaching, and lots of external and internal exposure. Think of leadership development as an end-to-end continuum and make the shift to continuous and ongoing experiential journeys. The leadership curriculum is about as diverse and blended as anything could possibly be in training, with a range of opportunities that can be mixed and matched (see Figure 26).

FIGURE 26

The Continuum of Leadership Development

Traditional		Coach-Based		Self-Study		In the Flow	
Classroom Executive Education	Formal Leadership Coaching and Feedback	Open Enrollment Classroom	Mentoring and Cohort Learning	VR- or Avatar-Based Skills Development	Self-Study E-Learning	Microlearning Adaptive Delivery	Nudges in the Flow
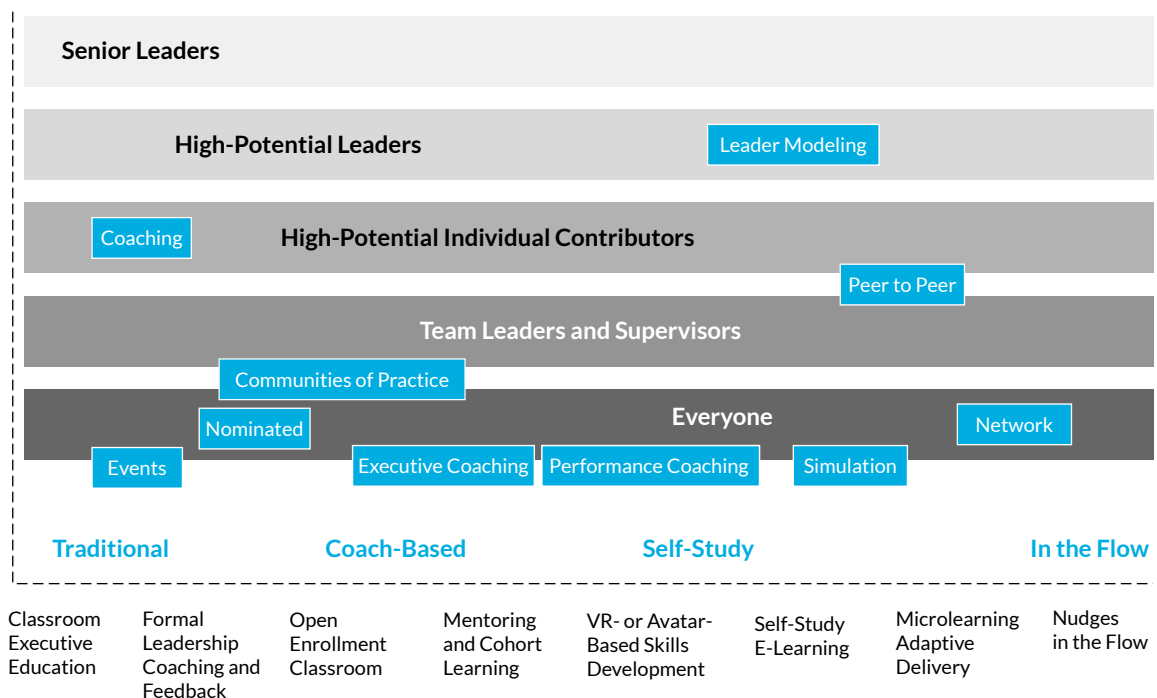
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Ultimately, traditional leadership development following a step-by-step, architected process no longer works (see Figure 29). Leadership development is a critical enabler of successful L&D outcomes, and L&D needs to enable growth by building leadership capabilities for everyone in the organization.

A New Approach: The Six Es of Leadership Development

Learning to lead is a long journey, and organizations must facilitate it in a strategic, mission-aligned way. Figure 27 shows a holistic approach to leadership development. This model underscores continuous development, the need to make leadership development efforts relevant for an organization, and the importance of L&D in continuously empowering and supporting leaders to cement learnings and be effective in their roles (see Figure 28 for definitions of the elements of the journey).

A New and Holistic Approach to Leadership Development

Define Leadership   **Drive Effectiveness**

| Envision | Develop Leaders | Empower |

| Education | Experience | Exposure | Evaluation |
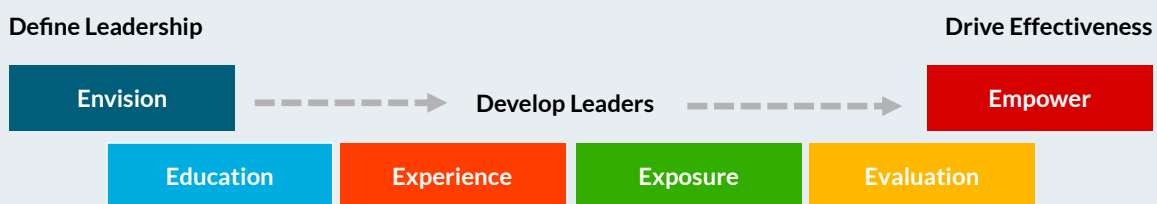
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

FIGURE 28

Elements of a Holistic Approach to Leadership Development

Define Leadership	**Envision:** What is the North Star, or vision for good leadership, in your organization? Leadership models are unique to every organization and should mirror the culture, mission, and values it stands for. Setting the context and making sure your leadership models are current are paramount for the success of leadership development efforts.
Develop Leaders	**Education:** Everyone in business needs to be educated on the business itself, business-specific processes of setting goals and developing people, and the product, service, and operational rhythms of the company. Organizations need to invest in formal training and programs to ensure all leaders know how to get things done as well as how to lead people.
	Experience: People don't become leaders by attending programs but by leading. You need to think about job rotations, developmental assignments, stretch assignments, and international jobs. Even so-called born leaders need to learn over time, through experience and by doing it.
	Exposure: The best lessons in leadership come from observing, talking with, and getting feedback from others. Organizations need to create access to coaches and mentors and exposure to outside companies and executives. In a large company, just being able to spend time with an executive is a tremendous leadership development opportunity.
	Evaluation: All leaders need feedback tools, and many also need psychological or other forms of assessments to identify their blind spots. Coaches and mentors can help leaders self-reflect and understand where their rough edges are. Evaluation is important for creating alignment between the perception and the reality of a leader's effectiveness.
Drive Effectiveness	**Empower:** What comes after you've created a common language and understanding about what good leadership means for your organization and you've given the leaders the development opportunities they need to build those skills? You need to create the capacity for them to use their capabilities. You need to empower leaders with tools and technologies that will make giving and receiving feedback easier, provide access to real-time metrics on the health of the team, and offer productivity tools that will empower people to be effective leaders.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

FIGURE 29

Leadership Development: What Has Changed Today

Traditional	New
Spans of control define leaders	Spans of influence, connections, and contributions define leaders
Leadership development is for leaders or people managers	Leadership development is for everyone
Based on the idea of linear hierarchical organizational structures	Based on the idea of smaller, flatter, and empowered networks of teams
Programmatic, episodic training	Contextual, continuous, and experiential development
Limited to skills like customer centricity, innovation, execution, and accountability	Includes power skills that build trust, inspire excellence, and create happiness
Leaders trained to control teams and manage performance	Leaders developed to empower teams and unleash performance

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Conclusion

Ideally, a company's learning strategy would encompass all 9 elements, 36 dimensions, and 94 practices and programs in our Corporate Learning Framework. But prioritizing the 15 essential practices we've identified delivers a disproportionately large impact on business, people, and innovation outcomes. So how are leading companies bringing these critical learning practices to life? What results are they seeing? The next chapter highlights examples of excellence from some of the world's leading companies. ◼

4

Examples of Excellence

World-class learning organizations have superior people, innovation, and business outcomes. The case studies in this chapter demonstrate how five companies are differentiating outcomes through the L&D practices they deploy.

DCP Midstream: Rewarding for Upskilling

DCP Midstream is a Fortune 500 natural-gas processing and transmission company headquartered in Denver, Colorado. With a focus on meeting consumers' energy needs, the company undertook an operational transformation effort driven by the desire to create clear accountabilities and rewards for results. The goal was to drive the efficiency of "human power"—helping individuals in different jobs develop the skills needed to better serve customers and drive business success. DCP Midstream introduced a rewards system tied to accountability, agility, and change enablement: it paid hourly employees a standard premium when they stepped outside their current level of expertise to learn the discipline of another technical role.

"Our business is very distributed," said Tamara Bray, the CHRO of DCP Midstream. "We have lots of small plants with five to seven hourly employees who work in classification-based technical operations roles. For example, when a mechanic runs into an issue that requires an electrician's intervention, an associate from a different plant would have to travel sometimes 60 miles to support the issue. It was just lost productivity."

A Shift to Remote Control of Operations

As a first step toward driving efficiencies, the company empowered local operators and remotely monitored and supported operations from a central location. "By centralizing the control room, we were able to bring in all kinds of financial, commercial, and commodity-price data streams that were not previously used in the decision-making process about how each plant was run," said Bray. It also presented an opportunity for people in different technical roles to collaborate with employees in adjacent roles.

A Program to Develop Multiskilled Workers

When the CEO of DCP Midstream said, "I would gladly pay more money for fewer people with better skills," the HR team literally put its money where it wanted to see behavior change. The team launched a skilling program that would enable and incentivize people to "multiskill"—to learn to perform not just one classified job, but multiple related jobs.

- The multiskilling program started with a job task analysis. Twenty-five subject-matter experts from across the company came together to build a competency model defining skills for each job and task. The exercise ultimately led to a catalog of 200 skills across 15 key capability areas.

- The HR team then worked with business unit leaders to identify multiskilled roles—roles using related or complementary skills—and started mapping the skills available within each business unit to support those roles.

- The team then nominated 75 subject-matter experts—referred to as gatekeepers—to assess the

skill proficiency of 750 DCP Midstream employees in their respective business units and to identify targeted skill-development needs.

The company launched a series of upskilling programs across the identified adjacent skills for technical roles. "We want employees to build skills in any adjacent technical areas where it would make it easier for us to serve our customers better and more efficiently," said Bray. As part of the program, employees and supervisors sit together to define the most relevant skills for each individual depending on their role, their proficiency, and the anticipated future demand for specific skills.

A New Rewards Program

To boost uptake of the upskilling programs, the HR team instituted a system in which each skill is associated with points based on its level of complexity. For every 50 points earned, employees receive a $1.25 increase in their hourly pay according to the following formula:

Total Pay = Base Pay + Skills Premium

- **Base Pay:** a baseline pay rate set to be above the typical market entry rate for a person entering the hourly workforce without any technical skills

- **Skills Premium:** a standard premium for technical skills acquired by individuals either in the role (as assessed by the gatekeepers) or for new skills learned or acquired through the upskilling program

Through rapid upskilling and by earning points, employees can increase their base pay rate in six months by an amount that would typically occur in more than a year. And because this new rewards system allows workers to earn more by investing in their own skills development, it creates rewards for the desired outcome.

The skills program was rolled out in the spring of 2020. There is excitement among workers to learn new skills and increase their pay, particularly among those in junior roles. The compensation team is implementing base pay–rate changes every quarter, which is evidence that employees are leveraging the upskilling program. The transformation—powered by upskilling, enabled by accountability, and rewarding for desired outcomes—has helped DCP Midstream develop efficiencies, serve customers better, and advance the company's larger vision of becoming a technical innovator.

"Our workers get more pay, and if a machine breaks down, we don't have to wait for hours to get it fixed. The local worker can do it themself," said Bray. "So, our customers are happy because they get things faster. It's a win-win." ■

FICO: Developing Leaders at All Levels through Experiential Journeys

FICO is a leading applied-analytics company that was founded in 1956 on the premise that data, used intelligently, can improve business decisions. Today, FICO's software and the widely used FICO® score operationalize analytics, enabling thousands of businesses in more than 120 countries to uncover new opportunities, make timely decisions that matter, and execute them at scale. FICO has approximately 4,000 employees in 30 countries.

Engaging a Globally Dispersed and Highly Specialized Workforce

FICO's core business offerings lean heavily on highly specialized technical experts such as software engineers and data scientists who use Big Data and mathematical algorithms to predict consumer behaviors. "FICO is a talent business that thrives on the intellectual capital and expertise of our people," said Richard Deal, chief HR officer at FICO. "Engaging our people to create innovative solutions to solve complex customer problems is what differentiates our business from our competitors."

Attracting, developing, and retaining such talent in an extremely competitive labor market requires a workplace in which employees can continuously learn, build critical skills, advance their careers, and have a great employee experience. FICO's globally dispersed workforce makes this a critical challenge for the company's learning and HR organization.

Building Leaders Who Inspire Excellence, Growth, and Emotional Commitment

FICO believes leaders are the linchpin for engaging employees and harnessing their true potential. The company's vision of an effective leader is an individual who inspires excellence, regardless of whether he or she has people-management responsibilities. Such leaders inspire employees to bring their best selves to work and generate energy and emotional commitment to the success of the business. As a vehicle for attracting, developing, and engaging its workforce, FICO invests heavily in helping its people acquire and develop leadership skills and become inspirational leaders.

Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, FICO has designed its leadership-development offerings to fit the different goals, aspirations, and skills of its employees. The company takes a holistic approach built on the power of relationships and learning on the job, from and with others, at all levels.

FICO's Leadership Development Programs

FICO offers four leadership-development programs based on experience level and role within the organization:

- **Foundational (broad-based): Blended learning programs for all people managers.**

Blended leadership-development programs include facilitator-based and e-learning content supported by HR leaders and FICO's Learning Center, an integrated skills management and learning experience platform. These programs provide foundational and broad-based learning to all managers globally.

- **Advanced (career-focused): Mentoring journeys for high-potential leaders.** FICO offers an external mentoring program powered by Torch to high-potential leaders who are not in people-management roles. These are six-month guided mentoring relationships with accomplished and tenured business leaders from other companies offering virtual, high-touch experiences.

- **Advanced (people-leader oriented): Coaching journeys for high-potential people leaders.** FICO also partners with Torch to get access to top-tier coaches who provide virtual and high-touch leadership development to high-potential people managers. These six-month experiences are customized in line with data collected through feedback surveys.

- **Proficient (for a select few): Great Manager Program.** Twenty managers with the highest engagement scores across the organization are invited to gather for two to three days every year to attend a specialized immersive learning experience. FICO also sponsors several programs that specifically target the development of high-potential women leaders.

A Closer Look at FICO's Coaching and Mentoring

FICO invests in high-quality coaching and mentoring relationships to provide customized growth and learning experiences based on data and feedback collected throughout the year. FICO uses a coaching solution for its high-potential people managers and a mentoring solution for its high- potential individual contributors (see Figure 30).

The Coaching/Mentoring Lifecycle

While every coaching and mentoring relationship is unique, the six-month engagements follow the same process lifecycle (see Figure 31), driven by the HR team in partnership with Torch.

FICO sponsors several programs that specifically target the development of high-potential women leaders.

FIGURE 30

Distinction between Coaching and Mentoring Offerings

	Coaching	Mentoring
Career Trajectories and Horizons	• Aimed at employees on the people-manager career path • For senior-level employees looking at the next big career progression, which is typically nearer term	• Aimed at employees on the individual-contributor career path • For midlevel employees looking to navigate their career and accomplish long-term aspirational goals
Coach and Mentor Profiles	• Professional certified coaches • Provide coaching as a profession • Provide certified training content, support, and resources • Typically have 15–20 years of professional coaching experience	• Experienced operating leaders • Provide mentoring as a passion • Provide experience-based learnings and unique perspective • Typically two or more career levels above the matched mentee
Focal Points	• Focuses on 360-degree feedback to identify strengths and opportunities and to determine what to accomplish • Focuses on immediate goals • Focuses on performance	• Focuses on understanding career goals and expectations to determine what to accomplish • Focuses on long-term goals • Focuses on aspirations

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Measuring Leadership Effectiveness

Many companies struggle to objectively assess leadership effectiveness and often base these judgments solely on manager assessments. In contrast, FICO uses a combination of data sources, including manager insights, individuals' self-reported observations, and reflections from peers and team members. The company then maps that data to its leadership model, using it to understand a particular leader's effectiveness. Specifically, this data includes:
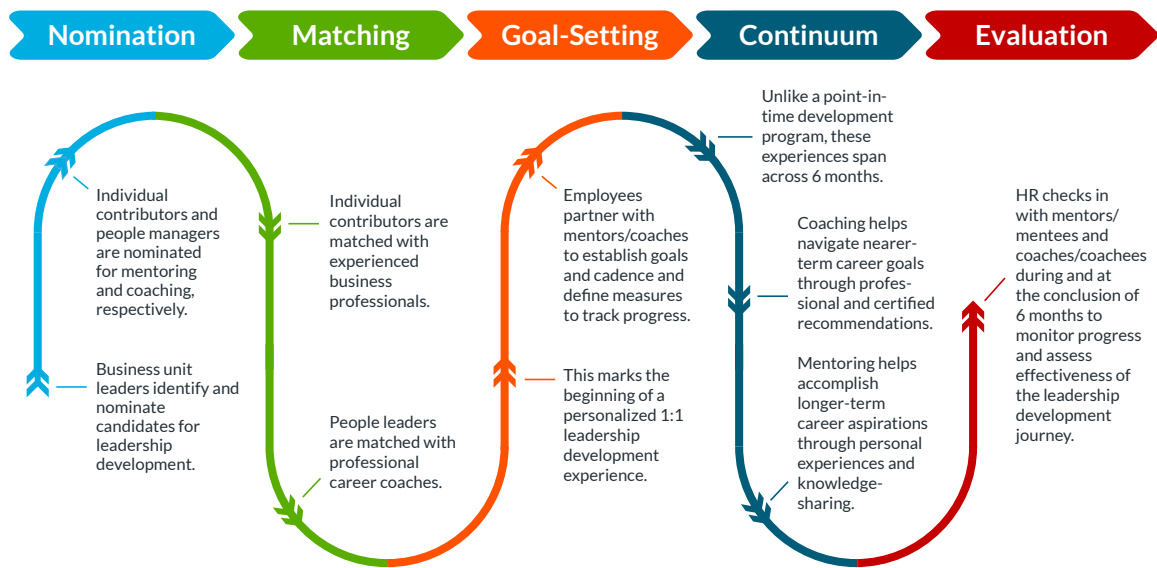
- **Quarterly engagement data.** FICO leverages data from quarterly engagement surveys to determine team engagement levels by individual manager level (e.g., team leader, first-level manager, leader of leaders), analyze gaps, and help build action plans to strengthen leadership capabilities. This survey data also provides insights on individual leaders' effectiveness.

- **Performance assessment metrics.** An individual's ability to role model leadership behaviors is considered an important performance metric at FICO. The 360-degree feedback is merged with self-evaluations and manager assessments to determine overall performance and to identify individuals who are, or have the potential to be, great leaders.

FIGURE 31

Key Touch Points in FICO's Development Journey

Nomination · Matching · Goal-Setting · Continuum · Evaluation

Individual contributors and people managers are nominated for mentoring and coaching, respectively.

Business unit leaders identify and nominate candidates for leadership development.

Individual contributors are matched with experienced business professionals.

People leaders are matched with professional career coaches.

Employees partner with mentors/coaches to establish goals and cadence and define measures to track progress.

This marks the beginning of a personalized 1:1 leadership development experience.

Unlike a point-in-time development program, these experiences span across 6 months.

Coaching helps navigate nearer-term career goals through professional and certified recommendations.

Mentoring helps accomplish longer-term career aspirations through personal experiences and knowledge-sharing.

HR checks in with mentors/mentees and coaches/coachees during and at the conclusion of 6 months to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of the leadership development journey.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

- **Business success metrics.** P&L, sales targets, and data on new product development help paint a more comprehensive picture of the performance and contributions of each leader.

Coaching and mentoring experiences bridge the gap between broad-based general learning and the Great Manager Program and women-focused development programs, which are personalized but less scalable.

Rather than being a one-point-in-time or one-and-done approach, these experiential journeys facilitate ongoing and continuous leadership development. Through its leadership development approach, FICO can reach hundreds of people each year with personalized, ongoing, and high-touch leadership-development experiences at scale. ■

Rocket Central: Enabling Equitable Career Growth through Education

Rocket Central is a Detroit-based professional services company. Part of Rocket Companies, which comprises nearly 100 separate businesses spanning fintech, sports, entertainment, real estate, and more, Rocket Central provides services (across human resources, technology, accounting, marketing, and legal services, to name just a few) to support the diverse needs of each company under the Rocket Companies umbrella. Rocket Central acts as the central pillar supporting its partners with innovative and effective solutions to achieve and exceed their strategic priorities. One of its primary goals is to empower its team members[27] nationwide to unleash maximum potential with world-class career growth and development.

Tuition Reimbursement: An Unused Benefit

Rocket Central intended to use its tuition reimbursement program as one way to develop team members' critical skills for advancing their careers. The company had long offered a tuition reimbursement program linked to U.S. universities and colleges, but participation was extremely low. When the learning team took a closer look, it uncovered deep-rooted issues.

First, the process of signing up for the program was manual and tedious. But a bigger issue surfaced: the tuition reimbursement programs did not address financial barriers to education. "One of the real challenges in America is access to education for underrepresented groups, and while tuition reimbursement programs may seem to offer a solution, the programs exclude people who do not have the ability to pay for the classes up front or wait until the end of the course to get reimbursed by their employer," said KimArie Yowell, chief learning officer at Rocket Central.

Addressing Barriers and Enabling Growth

Triggered by what started as an effort to drive participation in the tuition reimbursement program and streamline the process, the company undertook a larger strategic initiative aimed at providing equitable growth opportunities for all team members while supporting the strategic priorities and upskilling needs of the business. Objectives included the following:

- Provide greater opportunity and access to education

- Develop knowledge, skills, and abilities aligned with business objectives

- Empower team members to own and navigate their careers in the way they see fit

These objectives led the organization to an ongoing, multiyear journey aimed at addressing and removing barriers to education and opening new avenues for career mobility and growth. Rocket Central developed three distinct programs that advance these objectives in multiple ways: Rock Academy, DevBuild, and THRIVE coaches.

1. Rock Academy: Facilitating Educational Goals and Career Pathways

In 2019, Rocket Central launched Rock Academy in partnership with Guild Education to streamline the tuition process and remove the financial barrier of team members having to pay for classes up front. The program provides 100% tuition assistance for more than 200 educational courses leading to certificates and master's degrees, opening the door to new career pathways (see Figure 32). This approach provides access to education for frontline workers and underrepresented groups, for whom a degree may have been a far-fetched dream. Rock Academy is also partnering with business leaders across functions and portfolio businesses to develop career pathways in multiple areas such as marketing, technology, product strategy, and sales.

2. DevBuild: A Software Engineering Career Pathway

Based on feedback from the business, Rocket Central realized software engineering roles were critical, and the need for these roles would only increase as the business grows. To meet this need while also creating career opportunities for team members, Rocket Central developed and launched DevBuild. This program specifically targets team members who are interested in becoming software engineers but do not have the requisite skills or qualifications. DevBuild is a 20-week, full-time technology training program that teaches the skills needed to become a full-stack software engineer. Upon program completion, team members can apply for software engineering positions within the organization.

FIGURE 32

Rock Academy

Source: Rocket Central, 2022

3. THRIVE: Personalized and Assisted Career Navigation

Rocket Central also designated a team of career coaches to help team members navigate career opportunities within Rocket Companies. The THRIVE Program sits within Rocket Central's Talent Strategy and Solutions Team, which offers personalized guidance and coaching to match team members' interests and aspirations with the right opportunities on the internal job portal, as well as pointing them to programs and resources they can leverage to develop the skills they need to thrive in those jobs. To drive awareness and participation, the chief learning officer (CLO) and senior business leaders champion the programs across the organization.

Transforming Careers and Lives

By removing barriers to education and enabling equitable career growth, these programs are playing a significant role in transforming people's careers and their lives. Although the programs are still in the early stages, the results have been outstanding so far:

- Participation in Rocket Central's tuition assistance program went from 1.0% to 5.5% in the 16 months after Rock Academy's launch.

- More than 1,000 team members have been accepted into a variety of courses within the first year of Rock Academy's launch. Eight team members have completed their courses already.

- More than 60 DevBuild participants are now working as software engineers at Rocket Companies. The placement rate within the organization is 95%.

While these statistics are impressive, the real testimony to the programs' success and impact comes from participant feedback (see Figure 33). Team members feel empowered to own their careers and navigate opportunities they previously did not have the skills or abilities to pursue.

The real testimony to the programs' success and impact comes from participant feedback.

FIGURE 33

Feedback from Rock Academy and DevBuild Participants

Rock Academy

"Rock Academy will allow me to have that sense of pride in myself by getting my degree. I also want to show my sons that their mom was able to do it! I plan on making use of my degree to further my career with my company."

"Thank you for this opportunity. I never thought I would be able to go back to school. My son is now able to see me going back to school. And it's showing him that anything is possible. And that's my legacy."

"We have a lot of meetings about organization design to talk about it."

DevBuild

"DevBuild changed my career path by opening doors and giving me an opportunity to learn a completely new set of skills."

"You're literally being paid to learn, so use that time to learn. I always used to think the dream scenario would be to get paid to learn—how amazing would that be? And now they are doing just that. It's invaluable what that actually means in people's lives."

"This is something I knew I wanted to do, but since I didn't go to school for technology, I needed a window in. DevBuild has given me the opportunity to transition my career. This is such an incredible opportunity and showed me that it's never too late to find a new path."

Source: Rocket Central and The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Sitel Group: Enabling Internal Talent Mobility with a Behavioral Assessment

Sitel Group® is one of the largest global providers of customer experience (CX) products and solutions, empowering brands to build stronger relationships with their customers by creating meaningful connections that boost brand value. With 160,000 people around the globe—working from home or from one of its CX hubs—Sitel Group securely connects best-loved brands with customers more than 8 million times every day in more than 50 languages.

Streamlining People Processes and Optimizing Development

With a rapidly growing global business in a constantly changing and volatile business environment, the Sitel Group's HR team recognized the need to streamline processes, systems, and tools across company locations. At the same time, the company believes the employee experience is as important as the customer experience and regards investing in and developing its people as a core business priority.

Sitel Group sought to establish a common language and data set around its talent needs, potential, and competencies, as well as to support the development of its people through diverse experiences, exposure, coaching, and career opportunities. The company sought to establish the following people priorities:

- Launch a centralized, consistent, and mature talent process globally

- Support progression and development through career management

- Enable talent mobility and hiring from within

- Build bench strength and a succession pipeline

- Increase engagement and retention

Internal Talent Mobility

With the goal of helping its people grow, upskill, and navigate career opportunities within the company, Sitel Group's HR team needed credible data that could enable talent mobility and demonstrate to employees and the organization how the right opportunities could align with employees' skills and interests. This alignment would empower people with not only opportunities but also autonomy over their careers, improving engagement and retention.

A robust talent marketplace would also help fill open positions at a faster speed and lower cost. As a starting point, Sitel Group needed to create a data set that provided insight into the following questions:

- What behavioral and technical skills are needed in each job?

- What behavioral and technical skills are available in the company's workforce?

- What criteria should Sitel Group use to determine the right people for the right jobs?

- Who are the company's key talent and best performers?

Approach: Matching the Right People with the Right Opportunities

Sitel Group adopted a meticulous approach to unpack the answers to each of these questions. The team focused on streamlining information about people and jobs, identifying high performers and high potentials, and identifying the best career opportunities for employees based on the alignment of skills and interests. The following steps outline this approach:

1. Identify Best Performers: Optimize Performance Management
Sitel Group moved from an annual performance-management model to a biannual continuous-feedback approach. The new approach focuses on one-to-one interactions and development conversations to enable tailored developmental coaching for all employees, and it helps managers identify their best performers.

2. Identify Key Talent: Establish a Talent Review Cadence
Following the performance cycle, Sitel Group set a cadence for talent reviews to identify future leaders at the company. In these sessions, performance-review feedback is integrated with 360-degree feedback from peers and managers about each person's potential and calibrated across groups to determine key talent.

3. Capture Talent Profiles: Deploy Discovery Surveys
Sitel Group partnered with Plum—a talent assessment platform—to create a data set from the talent profiles of the company's best performers. Employees complete a discovery survey centered on 10 critical behavioral skills (see Figure 34) and then instantly receive a talent guide summarizing their "drainers" and "drivers" as well as personalized career insights. Drainers refer to activities that take more energy and are more taxing, whereas drivers refer to activities that energize individuals.

The company believes the employee experience is as important as the customer experience.

FIGURE 34

Talent Model: 10 Key Behavioral Skills

Plum Talent Model

Adaptation

Communication

Conflict Resolution

Decision Making

Embracing Diversity

Execution

Innovation

Managing Others

Persuasion

Teamwork
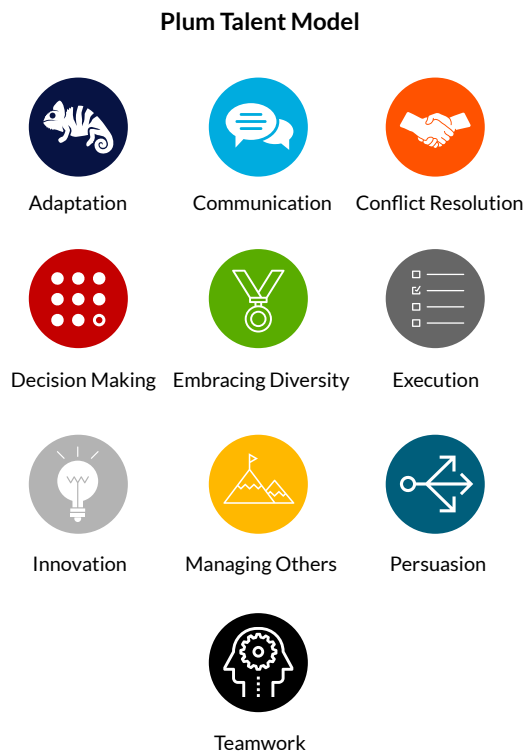
Source: Sitel Group

Drivers and Drainers

Drivers energize the individual, provide a strong sense of self-worth, and result in performance at an exceptional level, day in and day out. When employees lean into their driving talents, the sky is the limit on what they can achieve.

Drainers take more energy and are more taxing on the individual. Employees can mitigate the negative impact that their drainers might have on their performance by developing compensatory strategies to manage them.

4. Create Job Profiles: Determine Match Criteria

Business subject-matter experts (SMEs) and HR teams worked together to define job profiles for 60 roles across the company, identifying critical behavioral skills based on psychometrics assessed in the platform (see Figure 35). These job profiles serve as criteria for matching the behavioral skills needed to succeed in a job with individuals who not only have those skills but are interested in those roles, based on their responses to the discovery survey.

5. Determine Matches: Identify Behavioral Skill Matches

This assessment-based approach helps Sitel Group create a robust database of employees' behavioral skills and the behavioral requirements of various roles within the company. The organization can then match skills needed in various roles with employees who have those skills and are interested in certain roles. This information is augmented with input on technical or hard skills from technical experts and business leaders. Based on this collective intelligence about

FIGURE 35

Match Criteria: Job Analysis Identifying Key Behavioral Skills Needed for Success in Each Role

Source: Sitel Group, 2021

holistic skills, interests, and job openings, employees and business leaders have access to the right insights for identifying and then placing the right people into the right roles at the right time.

Implementation and Rollout

Sitel Group deployed the approach across 26 countries, with a focus on best performers and key talent. The goal was to use a simple, best-in-class solution for identifying the key behavioral skills required for each job profile and then using that data to facilitate internal talent mobility. "Our ultimate objective is to develop a robust internal talent market within our company, and we need to involve three groups to enable a seamless flow of information,"

said Carole Benavente, VP, Talent Management at Sitel Group. "Every time we have a new opening, recruiters channel it into the job portal. We then look inside the needs of the job through talent managers, and we develop the right people for these roles through L&D."

As part of the rollout, L&D team members provide one-to-one development coaching and create customized development plans to connect top talent with pertinent training resources and career development opportunities. Sitel's approach is a great example of enabling internal mobility through skills matching and leveraging L&D as a strategic partner in facilitating mobility for the right people to the right roles. ■

Walmart: Paving the Way from Jobs to Lifelong Careers

Walmart Inc. is an American multinational retail corporation that operates more than 10,000 stores worldwide. The company was founded in 1962 as a small discount retailer in Rogers, Arkansas, with a mission of helping people save money and live better. Today, Walmart is the world's largest private employer, ranking number one on the Fortune 500 list of the largest US corporations for 10 years in a row.[28] The company employs 2.3 million associates around the world, with nearly 1.6 million in the United States alone.

Better Careers for a Better Life

As an extension of the company's mission to make lives better for everyone, Walmart invests in training and upskilling associates to enable them to have better careers. The leadership team is committed to exploring new ways to amplify growth opportunities within Walmart so that associates can envision a long-term future with the company. What started as an ambitious dream of enabling better careers for everyone in the organization was the beginning of a groundbreaking expedition to develop people in their current roles and prepare them for roles they will have tomorrow and beyond.

Access to Education: The Key to Unlocking Better Careers

To upskill and reskill associates in different areas of the business, Walmart needed to design a series of development steps including certifications, degrees, learning programs, and experiences. The starting point was to create access to education. Guided by a core value of driving equity, Walmart began with a focus on making education accessible to hourly frontline associates. In June 2018, Walmart launched Live Better U (LBU), an education program designed to serve as a launching pad for hourly associates to acquire the skills and experience needed to help grow their careers at Walmart.

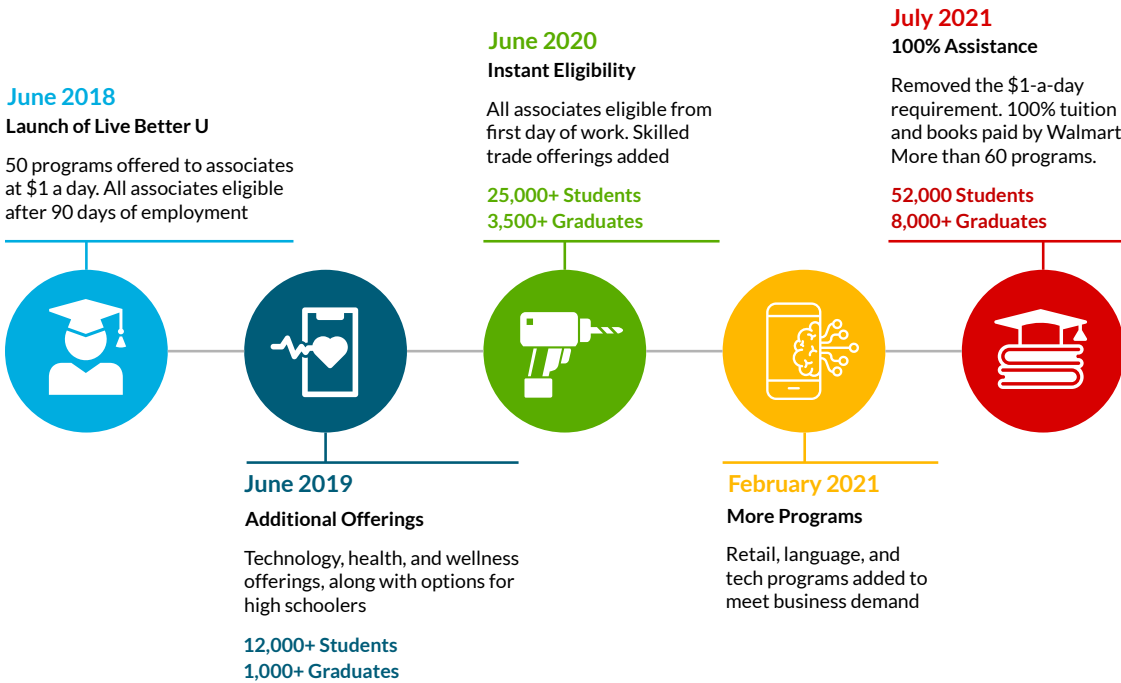## Live Better U: A Launching Pad for Career Growth

Through LBU, Walmart associates can earn key skills and degrees that help them grow their careers in the company. Associates can earn a high school diploma, prepare to go to college, enroll in online university classes or career development programs, earn college degrees in growing industries, or earn career diplomas in a variety of specialized trades.

Live Better U Is Free Education, Not a Tuition Reimbursement Program

As Walmart explored different cost models for the program, it became clear that tuition reimbursement was not the best approach. Tuition reimbursement requires associates to pay for their education up front and then get reimbursed at the completion of the program—presenting a barrier for most hourly and frontline workers who may not be able to afford to pay the lump sum fee up front.

Evolution of Live Better U: Key Milestones

June 2018
Launch of Live Better U

50 programs offered to associates at $1 a day. All associates eligible after 90 days of employment

June 2020
Instant Eligibility

All associates eligible from first day of work. Skilled trade offerings added

25,000+ Students
3,500+ Graduates

July 2021
100% Assistance

Removed the $1-a-day requirement. 100% tuition and books paid by Walmart. More than 60 programs.

52,000 Students
8,000+ Graduates

June 2019
Additional Offerings

Technology, health, and wellness offerings, along with options for high schoolers

12,000+ Students
1,000+ Graduates

February 2021
More Programs

Retail, language, and tech programs added to meet business demand

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022 Pathways: The Path Forward for LBU

To address this barrier, LBU was designed not as a tuition reimbursement program but rather as a tuition assistance program. Associates are not required to pay any up-front tuition to enroll in a program. Walmart covers the cost of tuition, books, and fees, eliminating student loan debt and addressing one of the biggest hurdles that keep people from accessing education. By eliminating the need for associates to pay out of pocket for tuition, the program enables more equitable access to education.

LBU has been a huge success with strong advocacy and sponsorship from shareholders and executives, particularly the CEO, Doug McMillon, who started his career as an hourly associate. As of July 2021,

more than 52,000 associates had enrolled in various programs and more than 8,000 associates had graduated with new skills and educational credentials—including many who are the first in their family to graduate from college—fulfilling the program's mission of helping associates to live better.

Since LBU's inception in 2018, Walmart has built out a variety of certificate programs, diploma courses, and foundational programs with a focus on what associates need to be successful in their careers at Walmart and what the business needs for future growth. To do this, the LBU team worked with associates to understand their requirements—and also with business leaders across the company to identify future capability gaps.

Next Up: Career Pathways, Internships, Talent Marketplace

Walmart is committed to providing a path for all of its associates to thrive in their careers, and LBU is a key enabler of this vision. In addition to growing LBU from an educational standpoint, Walmart is expanding the purview of the program to create career pathways for every associate while mapping out career opportunities they can access through their newly acquired education and skills. This entails understanding skills adjacencies to define the paths between current and potential future roles across different areas in the company.

The company will continue to invest in skilling and career mobility by cultivating a deeper understanding of skills of the future that associates can start building today. "Our goal is to ensure that associates don't have to leave Walmart to have a different career. You might not have all of the knowledge and skills of today, but if you have the capacity and the intention, Walmart will invest in you and show you the way," said Live Better U Director Beth Williams-Moore.

Walmart recognizes that education is one element of creating pathways to long-term careers. Another equally important piece is experience and exposure. Alongside ongoing efforts to create more awareness of education opportunities among associates, LBU is working with business leaders to create internships and fellowships for its graduates to test their skills and enhance their learnings in a sandbox environment within Walmart. On the horizon is a talent marketplace that will showcase associates' skills, experiences, and aspirations while providing greater access to learning and growth opportunities.

Creating Not Just Jobs but Long-Term Careers

Through career pathways, Walmart helps frontline workers build the skills for future jobs while simultaneously nurturing a diverse pipeline of talent to meet the company's future talent needs. By helping associates save money on education, Walmart is helping them have better careers and better lives—truly living up to its mission, "Save Money. Live Better."

This program encourages associates to invest in themselves and helps Walmart retain top talent, develop skills and capabilities for future jobs, and open new doors to attract great candidates into the company's recruiting pools. LBU serves as a catalyst for driving equity and inclusiveness, increasing retention and promotability of associates, and shifting the firm toward skills-based hiring—all while filling critical roles internally. With this program, Walmart is taking a leap forward toward creating not just jobs but also long-term careers. ■

5

Getting Started

Companies at the highest level of corporate learning maturity dramatically outperform others on financial, people, and innovation metrics. Here's how to move from one level of maturity to the next, build internal capabilities, and operationalize your L&D strategy.

With change happening faster than ever before, the role of L&D has also evolved significantly—from teaching and creating content to stewarding growth.

It's clear from our research that transforming the L&D function into a growth function is well worth the effort, because organizations with greater learning maturity dramatically outperform their peers (see Figure 37). We've developed practical and action-oriented recommendations to help advance your L&D efforts.

Key Insights

- Three-quarters of organizations are in the bottom two of the four levels of our Corporate Learning Maturity Model.

- One in three organizations is on the cusp between Levels 2 and 3, where dramatic performance improvements are possible by moving from self-directed learning to tailored development.

- The biggest shift every learning organization needs to embrace is moving beyond a culture of learning to create a culture of growth in the flow of work.

FIGURE 37

The More Mature the Organization, the Better the Outcomes

% of organizations at that level that accomplish excellent outcomes

		Business Outcomes	People Outcomes	Innovation Outcomes
LEVEL 4	Facilitated Growth	88%	83%	87%
LEVEL 3	Tailored Development	57%	37%	50%
LEVEL 2	Self-Directed Learning	54%	29%	39%
LEVEL 1	Programmatic Training	32%	6%	22%
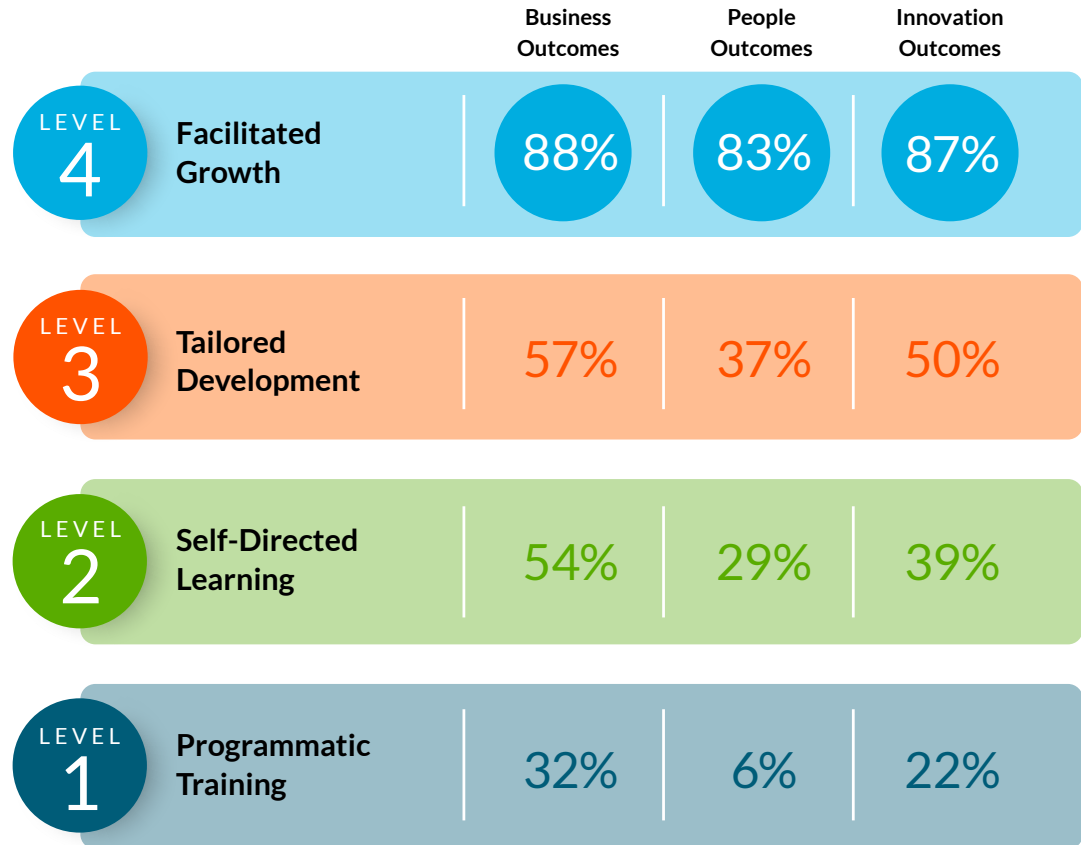
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Advancing through the Corporate Learning Maturity Model

Think about your organization's level of L&D maturity today (see Figure 38). How will it progress up the maturity ladder? What are the steps it needs to take to advance? In this chapter, we share the actions that define each upward leap and provide tactical ways to help companies accelerate their learning outcomes.

Advancing from Level 1 to Level 2: Focus on Relevance and Discovery

L&D teams operating at Level 1 are covering the basic learning needs of the organization as and when they surface. Learning is typically mandatory and compliance-focused, with the L&D team working independently on accomplishing goals that may be disconnected from the goals of broader HR and the business. You might assume that small companies without a formalized learning function would account for the bulk of this group. Yet our research shows

FIGURE 38

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

this is not the case: more than a third of companies with 1,000 to 10,000 employees fall into Level 1, and nearly a quarter of enterprises with more than 10,000 employees do as well.

Moving to Level 2 requires a concerted focus on integrating learning efforts with the talent and business strategy (see Figure 39). L&D needs to shift from delivering training to amplifying the organization's ability to absorb information and gain new knowledge. At Level 2, L&D designs programs and curates content with a focus on relevance and discovery.

The biggest change between Level 1 and 2 is that the L&D function commits to making learning easily accessible to everyone, regardless of role.

FIGURE 39

Moving from Level 1 to Level 2: Focus on Relevance and Discovery

	What Organizations Can Do Now
Democratize access to learning	• Leverage vendor content libraries to offer anytime, anywhere learning to everyone in the organization. • Deploy creator platforms at scale to allow all learners to author, share, and interact with content.
Optimize learning discovery	• Index and integrate all training content (courses, articles, podcasts, books, documents, videos, and even events) into the learning experience platform to make it easier to find. • Partner with business leaders to establish and maintain an up-to-date skills taxonomy to allow skills-based content tagging and relevant learning recommendations.
Establish strong, fit-for-purpose, and federated governance	• Establish a leadership team that manages shared learning services on behalf of the organization and is accountable to the entire enterprise. • Designate the global chief learning officer as the orchestrator and leader, assigning leadership to the most strategic functional or geographic L&D areas.
Collaborate with HR and the business	• Support the broader vision and goals of HR by building programs and content to support all talent initiatives and priorities. • Understand and align on critical skill-development needs for the business.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

At Level 2, L&D starts leaning heavily on vendor libraries offering off-the-shelf content that is broadly relevant as well as investing in creator platforms that allow SMEs to author content that is more tailored and applicable to business needs. Organizations at Level 2 are twice as likely as those at Level 1 to include collaborative learning elements (such as peer-to-peer interactions) in learning programs to allow learners and SMEs to interact and learn from one another. These organizations empower people to direct their learning while the company starts to hone its learning and capabilities by experimenting with new approaches, technologies, and advanced media for content development.

Expanding learning to broader audiences while focusing on relevance and discovery pays off in several ways. Level 2 companies see significant improvement from Level 1 in both financial and innovation metrics, as well as a massive improvement in people outcomes: they are nearly five times more likely than their Level 1 peers to drive critical talent outcomes such as engagement, retention, skill development, and growth.

Advancing from Level 2 to Level 3: Design Tailored Development Experiences

Our research reveals that 75% of organizations are at the first two levels of maturity. The progression from Level 2 to Level 3—from self-directed learning to tailored development—is the hardest, which is why it has the biggest gap among maturity progressions. One in three organizations is on the cusp between Levels 2 and 3, on the journey of transitioning from offering broad-based and employee-directed learning to facilitating tailored development and experiences.

The difference between "learning" and "development" is that learning refers to gaining new knowledge, and development refers to increased growth potential. The fundamental shift that happens as L&D matures from Level 2 to Level 3 is a sharper focus on increasing every employee's growth potential (see Figure 40).

Level 3 organizations are four times more likely than their Level 2 peers to foster a culture that encourages people to learn every week. L&D at Level 3 is closely aligned with business and HR needs, and the function transitions from supporting learning to strategically enabling the development of critical skills. It starts to organize learning into journeys, career paths, and specific skill-development solutions, and it builds capability academies to develop critical capabilities for the business as well as for HR.

Organizations at this level also accelerate their focus on leadership development and are three times more likely to make developing leaders a critical component of their employment brand. They support the development of leaders through job rotations, stretch assignments, tailored coaching, and mentoring experiences. They encourage leaders to coach and develop their teams, aid employee growth, and hire internally. While gains in business outcomes from reaching Level 3 are modest, gains in terms of innovation and adaptability to change are drastic.

Advancing from Level 3 to Level 4: Facilitate Enduring and Equitable Career Growth

Level 4 is where learning translates into career growth and all employees have equitable access to growth opportunities. Only 11% of organizations are at this level, but these organizations are future-ready and

equipped to navigate the shortages of talent and heightened talent crises that may be imminent.

At Level 3, organizations help learners increase their growth potential; Level 4 organizations play an active role in helping learners materialize this increased potential. Our research shows this shift toward facilitating growth is well worth the effort.

Almost all companies in this elite group are market leaders, disruptors, and irresistible places to work. Employees in Level 4 companies are 29 times more likely to grow, develop, and unleash their full growth potential, and they are 7 times more likely to stay with the organization—an important metric at a time when a third of employees are leaving their companies each year.

FIGURE 40

Moving from Level 2 to Level 3: Design Tailored Development Experiences

	What Companies Can Do Now
Establish capability academies	• Liaise with business leaders and teams to understand where there are needs and gaps, and establish functional capability academies and networks to address those needs. • Establish a strategy for learning in the flow for HR and L&D professionals, and build capability academies focused internally on HR.
Hone analytics and technology skills within L&D	• Strengthen skills to effectively analyze utilization data and design tailored learning experiences. • Refresh the L&D infrastructure with new tools and technologies.
Accelerate leadership development	• Develop leaders at all levels. • Consider offering exposure to coaches and mentors to enable personalized leadership development.
Enable career growth	• Encourage internal talent mobility. • Create extensive opportunities for career growth.
Build an enterprise skills strategy	• Build a well-defined enterprise skills strategy to serve as a common language across all talent processes. • Establish processes to verify knowledge, skills, and abilities through digital credentialing as part of the strategy.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Level 4 organizations design formal career pathways for employees to move into high-priority areas (see Figure 41). They provide equitable career growth opportunities to underserved populations, including frontline workers and hourly employees. The shift from Level 3 to Level 4 denotes a remarkable mindset shift from "managing careers" to "facilitating growth." L&D goes beyond the confines of traditional career paths—moving people within the same job clusters that require similar skills—to move people into new jobs, roles, and

industries by developing new skills. While organizations at Level 3 encourage internal talent mobility, Level 4 organizations facilitate mobility by setting up flexible internal talent marketplaces and career pathways.

Advancing to Level 4 requires organizations to widen their aperture of learning and skills development to focus on future skills gaps, not just current ones. They need to identify skills that will be critical in the future by using systems of talent intelligence and

Moving from Level 3 to Level 4: Facilitate Enduring and Equitable Career Growth

	What Organizations Can Do Now
Formally design career pathways	• Develop clearly defined career pathways for employees to move into high-priority areas. • Partner with strategic providers of education and upskilling solutions to forge relationships with academic institutions. • Adopt a cost model that offers tuition assistance rather than reimbursement.
Democratize career growth	• Set up a flexible internal talent marketplace to match people with learning, mentoring, projects, and growth opportunities without the need to go through hierarchical approvals. • Play an active role in identifying and developing employees for future roles and expand career growth opportunities to include frontline and hourly associates.
Build critical future capabilities	• Cultivate a strong understanding of the strategy of the business and the work that needs to be delivered. • Leverage systems of talent intelligence to understand and prioritize critical skills and capabilities that exist in the external market and the skills that will be critical in the industry in the future.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

external skills data. Then they need to develop those skills and build talent for their future. By doing so, these organizations can leverage learning to empower employees and businesses to grow and thrive.

Conclusion

This research led us to a heartening revelation of how hard L&D professionals have been working in the past few years, and how important they are to the success of a business. L&D functions play a weighty role in helping organizations evolve, adapt, and respond to change. With change happening faster than ever before, the role of L&D has also evolved significantly—from teaching and creating content to stewarding growth. L&D professionals must focus learning on relevance over quality, prioritize learning experiences over quantity, and empower workers with new skills and new opportunities to grow and advance their careers. In essence, the biggest shift that every learning organization needs to embrace today is moving beyond a culture of learning to create a culture of growth in the flow of work. ■

6

The Corporate Learning Lexicon

The Corporate Learning Lexicon

Terms	Definition
Adaptive Learning	"Adaptive learning" refers to a platform or company's ability to deliver and recommend learning in an adaptive way. For example, as an individual completes a learning activity or takes a test, an adaptive learning system could skip modules the individual doesn't need and jump to more advanced topics, recommend remedial topics, or let an employee test out of particular types of learning activities.
Agile HR	"Agile HR" refers to the use of agile methodology practices in the HR function. It includes managing projects in small cross-functional teams, using ideas like "sprints" and "stories" to design and prototype solutions, working directly with business users with "beta" releases, and managing projects in small stages.
Application Programming Interface	An "application programming interface" (API) is a set of programming code that enables data transmission among different software products. APIs provide all the information that developers in an organization need to integrate different systems with one another. The number of APIs and integrations that a software provider already has available is an important consideration when selecting HR technology for your organization.
Blended Learning	"Blended learning" refers to a mix of online learning (which can be self-study, live, or cohort-based) and face-to-face learning in a classroom. Today, most high-fidelity programs use e-learning as a prerequisite and then provide face-to-face experiences, which are followed by self-study, reflection, and the ongoing provision of resources.
Capabilities	We define "capabilities" as the business-oriented competencies that group skills into meaningful terms that are well recognized as criteria for success in a job or role. For example, a sales capability may be "lead generation," which may require many granular skills (such as customer relationship management systems, email composition, or customer segmentation). Capabilities are bigger or more comprehensive than skills, as they are developed through experience, real-world projects, and peer interactions.
Capability Academy	A "capability academy" is an architected collection of programs, content, experiences, assignments, and credentials based on a functional area. The Josh Bersin Academy is an example of an HR academy that focuses on accelerating critical capabilities in HR. The role of L&D is to be the architect of capability academies, not just focused on the business but also on HR—liaising with teams to understand where there are needs and gaps, and providing relevant opportunities to address those needs.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Career Pathways	A "career pathway" is a series of career steps, designed through skills adjacencies, that show an individual how to move to a more valued, in-demand career. These steps include education, certifications, degrees, learning programs, experiences, gigs, mentoring, and new roles that take individuals from their current roles (which may not be highly in demand) to higher-demand, often higher-paying jobs. This is one of the most important new initiatives in HR—and skills and job data now make it possible.
Centralized and Decentralized Governance	A "centralized organizational model" means governing most decisions from the center of the company (e.g., headquarters or corporate groups). In this model, decisions are usually made from the top of the hierarchy. A "decentralized model" is the opposite, with most decisions made from lower levels of the company, in local units or at the front line. There are benefits to each model. Centralization generally yields better control and greater efficiency, but leaders at the top may lack operational day-to-day insights into the impact of their decisions. High-maturity companies balance the benefits of centralized and decentralized governance and adopt federated governance models. Federated governance models refer to a combination of centralized and decentralized, in which some decisions (e.g., those concerning a specific budget amount) are taken at the top and others are localized.
Coaching	"Coaching" refers to a development-focused relationship with a trained professional coach who helps clients accomplish short-term defined goals. Coaches help individuals find their own solutions rather than offering advice or opinions. They often use inquiry-based techniques to help clients find the right answers and reach their full potential.
Collaborative Learning	"Collaborative learning" refers to peer-driven learning. It leans on the notion that learning and retention are improved when learners study together, interact with one another, ask questions about the content, and apply it in day-to-day work. Conceptualizing, recalling, and using information creates "memory pathways" that help the learning stick in a learner's mind.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Competency Modeling	"Competency modeling" is a process that establishes groupings of operational, technical, and leadership skills and capabilities into competencies. While competency modeling can be applied to any of these skills and capabilities, most often they are developed for leadership competencies. In theory, these models are useful for managers and leaders, but often, they are too complicated and hard to maintain, so they get documented and then collect dust on shelves.
Content Intelligence	"Content intelligence" refers to the use of AI and algorithms to analyze the subject matter of learning content—to assess its quality, relevance, and alignment with a company's needed skills and capabilities as well as its philosophy and approach in those areas. Content intelligence solutions can help organizations optimize their learning content strategy by investing in the most relevant high-quality content and trimming back the rest.
Creator Platform	"Creator platforms" are a new category of learning solutions that allow anyone in an organization to create and share content with ease and efficiency, without the need for instructional design experience. These platforms are designed specifically for end users, not instructional designers, and offer an integrated learning experience. These platforms help organizations advance group-based learning and create content that is more company- and team-specific than generic purchased content.
Culture	"Culture" is "what people do when nobody is looking." Culture is a CEO-level topic, and it represents all the values, behaviors, artifacts, implicit reward systems, and embedded practices that make a company work. You can "feel" the culture in an organization because it is often evident in people's behavior and enthusiasm, and in the space itself. In today's network-oriented organizations, culture is what drives alignment and teamwork.
Digital Credentialing	"Digital credentials" refers to verifiable credentials such as badges and certificates that represent an individual's professional skills and competencies. Digital credentials validate an individual's skills by providing context around when and where those skills were acquired. Organizations can partner with various platforms to create, issue, and manage digital credentials and create a repository of employees' skills. This can help organizations expand the scope of hiring to individuals who may not have specific educational qualifications but possess the skills needed to succeed in certain jobs.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Leadership	"Leadership" is the combination of practices and behaviors that enable an individual to lead a group or team toward the realization of shared goals. We endorse "human-centered" leadership as the kind of leadership that inspires excellence and helps leaders lead in a way that people willingly follow. Human-centered leaders prioritize the needs of employees over the needs of the business and lead the way to more sustainable business success.
Leadership Development	"Leadership development" covers all the programs, tools, and investments that develop managers, supervisors, leaders, and executives. This often includes first- and second-line management development, senior leadership development, and executive development. Practitioners in this area study leadership competency models, succession planning models, and many aspects of executive development, coaching, and training.
Learning Content Management System	"Learning content management systems" (LCMS) were created as a software category in 2002 to solve the problem of unmanageably huge amounts of digital learning content in every organization, big and small. An LCMS is a content management, development, and delivery system, whereas a learning management system (LMS) is a learning administration and reporting system. LCMS platforms integrate authoring, delivery, publishing, and analysis of digital learning content. They give content managers a way to manage their content and to collaborate in one centralized location.
Learning Culture	"Learning culture" refers to an organization's ability and willingness to embrace individual and organizational learning as a strategic part of its business strategy. It refers to an environment where individuals can continuously develop, grow, and adapt to meet changing market conditions. In learning cultures, failures are considered an essential and inevitable part of learning. Learners feel encouraged to experiment and try new things without the fear of failure.
Learning in the Flow of Work	"Learning in the flow of work" recognizes that for learning to happen, it must fit around and align itself to how work happens. The concept encompasses practices and tools that allow learners to extract information they need, when they need it, without having to interrupt their work processes. This involves learning on the job—where learners can learn and apply a skill without disrupting their flow of work—and microlearning, which allows people to learn in two minutes or less through short formats such as video or bite-size articles, helping them find answers in real time.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Learning Management System	"Learning management systems" (LMS) are the core administrative platforms that manage, track, schedule, and administer all forms of training. They are considered a mandatory part of a company's L&D technology stack and typically include resource management (scheduling events, reserving rooms, ordering books), curriculum management (prerequisites, pathways), management approval, e-commerce (for education sold to customers or partners), content management (reuse of content, videos, assets), assessment (testing, scores), credentials (badges, other forms of certification), and integration with many forms of content.
Learning Program Platforms	"Learning program platforms" are integrated learning systems built by content companies to support their clients with more features and customization. They are often used for leadership development, professional education, or highly technical topics that require learners to practice, submit exercises, or collaborate on projects. Examples of learning program platforms include Torch, NovoEd, Nomadic, Intrepid, and Training Orchestra.
Learning Record Store	The "learning record store" (LRS) is a technology designed to integrate all the learning activities and technologies throughout an organization, helping create a simplified data architecture for learning. An LRS shows companies which content is highly used, which content is rarely if ever used, and which courses, articles, and assets are highly valued. The LRS can become the single source of utilization data, eliminating the need to search for data in the LMS, learning experience platform, and other content systems—which can be tremendously valuable as a company's content investment grows.
Learning Experience Platform	"Learning experience platforms" (LXPs) are content delivery systems that make modern content easy to find and consume. An LXP is a user-centric platform that serves as an interface to help learners discover content housed on the LMS. LXPs offer features that help people find, arrange, publish, recommend, and comment on learning.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Mentoring	A "mentor" is a person who provides experience-based learnings and unique perspectives to help people navigate long-term career aspirations. Mentors are experienced and tenured business professionals, typically a couple of levels above a mentee, and may be from inside or outside the organization. Mentors build trusted relationships with their mentees and offer wisdom and guidance based on their own experience and expertise to help mentees navigate their career and to support their growth and development.
Metaverse	A "metaverse" is a digital space inhabited by digital representations of people, places, and things. In other words, it's a "digital world" with real people represented by digital objects, where consumers can hop from one digital experience to the next. It is not an alternate universe but a parallel extended universe. It can be used to bring people together in a fully immersive experience for meetings, onboarding, or trainings.
Microlearning	"Microlearning" refers to bite-size learning that allows learners to find and apply their learning, instantly and in the flow of work. Microlearning content can typically be consumed in two minutes or less through formats such as video, audio, and text.
PowerSkills	"PowerSkills," sometimes called soft skills or behavioral skills, are the people and managerial skills required to do work. These may include less technical skills such as communication or collaboration but also include behaviors that affect the way work is done, such as agility or resilience. Organizations often find that hard or technical skills are easier to build or train, while PowerSkills are much more difficult to acquire.
Skills Taxonomy	A "skills taxonomy" is a constantly updated database of skills related to jobs, learning content, and people. Most companies do not have a well-defined skills model for their jobs, but it is imperative for adopting a skills-based approach to learning, and explicitly defining the skills needed to be successful in various jobs and roles.

The Corporate Learning Lexicon (continued)

Terms	Definition
Talent Marketplace	"Talent marketplaces" are a democratized way of matching people to opportunities in an organization. A talent marketplace is a platform that allows people to promote their skills and aspirations. It gives people tools to find mentors and learning, recommends projects and assignments of interest, and manages the processes of searching, hiring, onboarding, and moving people from role to role. In the past few years, talent marketplaces—by vendors like Gloat, Phenom People, PeopleFluent, Eightfold AI, and Fuel50—have matched people with opportunities without having to go through hierarchical approvals.
Tuition Assistance	"Tuition assistance" is an employee benefit aimed at supporting employees to obtain degrees or certificates to help them further their career. Tuition assistance differs from tuition reimbursement in the way that the education is paid for: while in tuition reimbursement, the employee first pays for their education and then gets reimbursed by the company, tuition assistance allows more employees to benefit because the company pays for the education directly. Employees do not need to pay out of pocket for the benefit, making access to education more equitable.
Virtual Reality/ Augmented Reality	"Virtual reality" (VR) and "augmented reality" (AR) are technologies that allow organizations to simulate the real world of work. These technologies are increasingly being used in corporate training to enable consistent, scalable, immersive, and collaborative experiences and to allow individuals to learn, develop skills, and make mistakes in a safe space. These tools are part of a marketplace called "immersive learning" that is transforming content development, learning experiences, gaming, and other forms of simulation.

About the Authors

Josh Bersin

Josh founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. He expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership and became a recognized expert in the talent market. Josh sold the company to Deloitte in 2012 and was a partner in Bersin by Deloitte until 2018.

In 2019, Josh founded the Josh Bersin Academy, a professional development academy that has become the "home for HR." In 2020, he put together a team of analysts and advisers who now work with him to support and guide HR organizations from around the world under the umbrella of The Josh Bersin Company. He is frequently featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *Harvard Business Review*, *HR Executive*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CLO Magazine*. He is a popular blogger and has more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.

Nehal Nangia

Nehal is the learning and leadership research leader at The Josh Bersin Company. In this role, Nehal drives empirical research on key workforce-related topics and the development of actionable insights and powerful stories for today's talent executives. Nehal has nearly 15 years of professional experience in human capital, with a focus on performance management; employment value proposition; workforce transformation; and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Prior to joining The Josh Bersin Company, Nehal was a global advisor for clients at Deloitte and published several studies on pertinent topics such as DEI, performance management, and bias. Nehal lives and works in India and has a master's degree in psychology. Nehal has also led deployments of benchmarking and diagnostic products at Gartner for clients across EMEA, APAC, and ANZ.

Appendix:
Study
Methodology

Study Methodology

Over six months, we held conversations with HR, learning, and talent leaders from around the world. We explored the traditional and next-generation learning practices they are deploying and where they have seen the biggest organizational challenges, successes, and mistakes. These discussions helped inform the questions and topics studied in this research. We also developed a survey instrument and validated it with numerous HR and Learning leaders from large companies. The survey launched in winter 2021 via our technical survey partner, Perceptyx, and was in the market for six weeks. More than 1,000 organizations participated; respondents came from multiple industries, geographies, and company sizes. Survey demographics can be found in this appendix.

As we analyzed responses, we did descriptive analysis, comparing favorability across various topics and practices and by different demographics to determine the current state of effectiveness across 94 learning practices. We also conducted a linear regression of the 94 practices against business outcomes (financial performance and customer satisfaction), people outcomes (growth and development, skills and capabilities, engagement, and retention) and innovation outcomes (change adaptability and effective innovation).

We uncovered 15 practices that matter most. Next, we clustered organizations into four groups based on their performance on the 15 practices to determine the four maturity levels. To determine the likelihood of outcomes (for example, excellent organizations are X times more likely than low-performing organizations to meet or exceed financial targets), we identified the percentage of excellent organizations that actually accomplished a specific outcome (top two box responses) and divided that by the percentage of low-performing organizations that accomplished a specific outcome (top two box responses). We also conducted several validation and case-study interviews to ensure that the practices we identified through statistical research resonated with leaders and practitioners.

Based on all the input gathered, we prepared this report. To solicit input and feedback, we presented draft study findings to our Big Reset working groups, to our large community of chief learning officers (CLOs), and in L&D webinars and conference sessions.
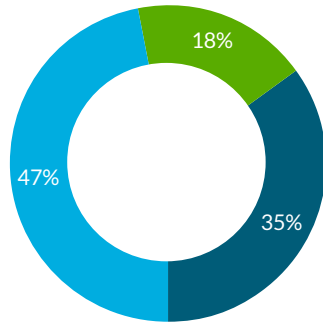
In summary, this report represents a unified consensus of experts on the current state of learning and where corporate learning is headed, as an outcome of a broad-based, global industry study conducted in five major steps:

- Big Reset discussions
- Excellence survey
- Statistical and descriptive analysis
- Exploratory, validation, and case study interviews
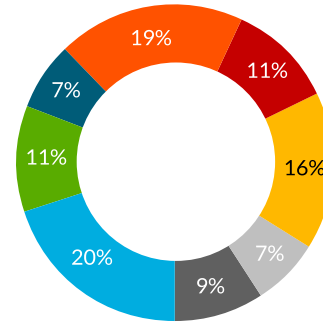- Report preparation

Respondent Demographics
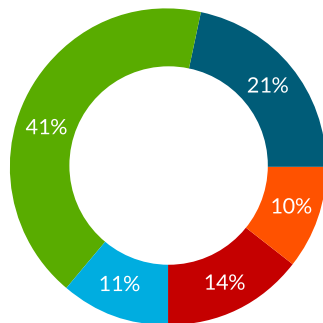
Participants by Industry, Geography, Size, and Roles

By Region

- Americas — 47%
- Asia-Pacific — 18%
- Europe, the Middle East, and Africa — 35%

By Organization Size

- <100 — 20%
- 100–499 — 11%
- 500–999 — 7%
- 1,000–4,999 — 19%
- 5,000–10,000 — 11%
- 10,001–50,000 — 16%
- 50,001–100,000 — 7%
- >100,000 — 9%

By Role

- HR Executive (Chief Human Resource Officer or HR Leadership Team) — 11%
- HR/Talent/Learning and Development Leader/Manager — 41%
- HR/Talent/Learning and Development Professional — 21%
- Business Leader — 10%
- Other — 14%

By Industry
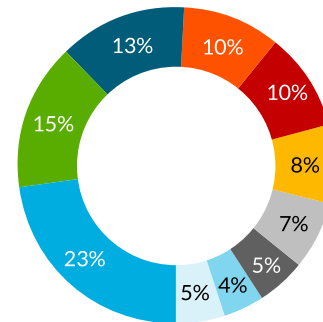
- Technology — 23%
- Professional Services — 15%
- Education — 13%
- Financial Services — 10%
- Other — 10%
- Consumer (Products and Retail) — 8%
- Manufacturing and Industrials — 7%
- Healthcare (Providers and Insurance) — 5%
- Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals — 4%
- Government and Public Services — 5%

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

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About The Josh Bersin Company

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, including diversity, equity, and inclusion; employee experience; remote and hybrid work; wellbeing; HR strategy and capabilities; learning and career mobility; HR technology; organization design and development; and talent acquisition and mobility. 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.

Corporate Membership

Corporate membership provides senior business leaders and their teams with research, tools, support, and special events that translate The Josh Bersin Company's cutting-edge insights into actionable, transformative organizational strategies. Members have exclusive access to research reports, case studies, definitive guides, playbooks, tech market studies, and a robust toolkit featuring assessments, strategy guides, maturity models, and frameworks. Through executive briefings, thought leadership sessions, and personalized advisory support, members can better apply lessons learned within their own corporate environment. To facilitate collaboration and networking, membership also includes community events, interactive discussions, exclusive webinars, conferences, and interactive learning opportunities.

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the
joshbersin
company