



**Issue
16**

THE LPI RESEARCH COMPANION

Guiding you through the maze of L&D research



THE LPI RESEARCH COMPANION

Research, research, research!

There are so many organisations issuing research into L&D trends and topics that it can be hard to keep up.

Where do you start? Which reports have the data you're looking for?

This is where the *LPI Research Companion* can help, by cutting through the noise and giving you the most relevant highlights and action points from the very best research the L&D industry has to offer.

In this issue we look at the following reports, published recently:

[The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work—Are We Ready?, Microsoft](#)

[2021 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning](#)

[The State of Skills 2021: Endangered, Degreed](#)

[Same team, different sides?, Emerald Works](#)

[Disconnected? Exploring the digital skills gap, Learning and Work Institute](#)

As a learning professional, if something catches your eye we would encourage you to explore these reports more fully.

So let's delve in...

The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work—Are We Ready?

Microsoft

About the research

Microsoft surveyed more than 30,000 people in 31 countries and analysed trillions of what the company calls 'productivity and labour signals' across Microsoft 365 and LinkedIn in order to better understand the concept of hybrid working and what it means to workers.

Eye-catching findings

The research is summarised into seven trends. They are:

1. Flexible work is here to stay
2. Leaders are out of touch with employees and need a wake-up call
3. High productivity is masking an exhausted workforce
4. Gen Z is at risk and will need to be re-energised
5. Shrinking networks are endangering innovation
6. Authenticity will spur productivity and wellbeing
7. Talent is everywhere in a hybrid world

Each trend is supported by a variety of data points. Here we pull out some of the most eye-catching ones. The two big data points are that 73% of workers want flexible remote work options to continue, while 67% want more in-person time with their teams.

This seems to be the challenge for creating a hybrid working experience – to be able to support flexible remote working whilst at the same time providing more in-person team time. As a result, 66% of business leaders are considering redesigning office space to accommodate hybrid working.

(contd.)

Despite the fact 37% of the workforce says their companies are asking too much of them, 61% of leaders say they are thriving. That compares with 38% of people without decision-making authority. There is a clear disconnect with how leaders feel right now versus everyone else.

The shift to digital and remote working is causing a problem of digital information overload.

Comparing collaboration trends in Microsoft 365 between February 2020 and February 2021, the research shows that the average meeting is 10 minutes longer, increasing from 35 to 45 minutes, and that the average Teams user is sending 45% more chats per week and 42% more chats per person after hours. Workers are grappling with more information and more ad hoc communication, with 62% of calls and meetings unscheduled.

The research shows that younger workers are struggling more than older workers in various aspects of their work, including being able to bring new ideas to the table, getting a word in during conference calls and feeling engaged or excited about work. And pandemic isolation has shrunk work networks with workers becoming more siloed than they were before the pandemic.

On a more positive note, compared to one year ago, 39% of people say they're more likely to be their full, authentic selves at work and 31% are less likely to feel embarrassed or ashamed when their home life shows up at work

What to act on

This research provides useful insights on how employers can create effective hybrid working experiences. This matters as the research reveals 41% of employees are considering leaving their current employer this year and 46% say they're likely to move because they can now work remotely. Making hybrid work for everyone – at all levels of the organisation – is now a priority.



The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work— Are We Ready?

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>

2021 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn Learning

About the research

This research report was based on a survey of 1,260 L&D Professionals and 814 Learners carried out in November 2020. LinkedIn Learning also surveyed 3,080 people managers in November and December 2020.

Eye-catching findings

At 65 pages long, there is much to digest in this report. Here we look at some of the insights that caught our eye. We recommend digging further into the report as there is plenty more to digest.

L&D professionals report that the Covid-19 pandemic helped boost their reputation, with 66% of L&D pros globally agreeing that L&D is focused on rebuilding or reshaping their organisation this year and 64% saying that L&D shifted from a “nice to have” to a “need to have” in 2021.

Respondents say that upskilling and reskilling (59%) is the number one priority for the year ahead, followed by leadership and management (53%) and virtual onboarding (33%). And 51% say that internal mobility is more of a priority now than before Covid-19.

When it comes to diversity and inclusion, 64% of L&D professionals say that their executive colleagues have made diversity and inclusion programs a priority.

The research also sheds light on how L&D teams are measuring impact and the tactics they are using to upskill colleagues.

(contd.)

The top 10 ways L&D measures the impact of learning are:

1. Qualitative feedback from employees using online courses
2. Satisfaction of employees using online courses
3. The number of employees that consistently engage with learning content
4. Employee engagement survey scores
5. Qualitative feedback about behavioral changes that learning was intended to drive
6. The number of online courses completed
7. An increase in the number of skills employees are developing
8. Team/organization/business metrics (deals closed, customer satisfaction) before and after training
9. Time saved/productivity increase
10. Ability to retain talent within your organization

L&D teams are using a broad range of tactics to upskill and reskill employees, such as:

- Including people managers in driving employees learning and skill development - 49%
- Using internal data and tools to identify skills gaps in the organization - 41%
- Creating career paths with course recommendations and skills needed - 41%
- Setting up feedback loops to understand what skills to build or courses to recommend to the organization - 36%
- Working closely with the organization's executive team to align skilling programs to a revised business strategy, in response to Covid-19 - 36%
- Working with talent acquisition and/or HR departments to identify skills needed for workforce planning - 32%
- Leveraging skill assessments to validate skills in the current workforce - 30%
- Using external data resources and tools to identify skills gaps in the industry - 19%
- Creating large-scale reskilling programs to fill positions that are new or difficult to hire for - 17%

(contd.)

What to act on

This report shows that L&D teams have risen to the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, business leaders see L&D more as a need to have than a nice to have. The research shows how L&D teams have done this, so there is lots of learning here for L&D professionals. Diversity and inclusion has risen up the priority list for organisations. It will be interesting to see how L&D supports this agenda over the coming months. Despite the successes, there remain some big challenges as a result of the pandemic. These three statistics are a reminder of the work that needs to be done to ensure colleagues feel part of the organisation. Compared to their lives before the pandemic, the research shows:

- 31% of employees feel less connected to their leaders
- 37% of employees feel less connected to their teammates
- 40% of employees feel less connected to their friends



2021 Workplace Learning Report LinkedIn Learning

<https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report>

The State of Skills 2021: Endangered

Degreed

About the research

Among the 5,000+ workers, team managers, and business leaders we surveyed, demand is strongest for technological skills

For this research, Degreed gathered data from 5,208 workers, team managers and business leaders between July and August 2020. The report looks at the supply and demand for skills, the impact of Covid-19 on workforce skills and other workforce risks posed by Covid-19. The skills selected by survey participants are based on a taxonomy of 25 skills developed by McKinsey Global Institute for their 2018 study, Skill shift: Automation and the future of the workforce.

Eye-catching findings

The report reveals that the top 10 in-demand skills for 2021 are pretty much evenly distributed between technological, social and cognitive skills. They are:

1. Advanced IT and programming skills
2. Leadership and management skills
3. Communication and negotiation skills
4. Entrepreneurship and initiative-taking skills
5. Project management skills
6. Creativity skills
7. Advanced data analysis and mathematics skills
8. Critical thinking and decision making skills
9. Adaptability and continuous learning skills
10. Technology design and engineering skills

These skills vary by country and industry sector. Across countries and sectors leadership and managing others is the number one social skill and advanced IT and programming is the number one technological skill.

When asked about where the most up to date data about your skills are kept, respondents said:

(contd.)

- HR systems – 34%
- Resumes and CVs – 27%
- Online profiles and networks – 21%
- Nowhere – 18%

In the UK, 26% say this data isn't kept anywhere, which alongside Germany, represents the highest percentage of the eight countries surveyed.

The report shares some interesting data points showing how poor organisations are at documenting peoples' skills information. It says that 75% to 80% of workers don't complete their HR systems' talent profile but that is the main way of collecting skills information. Added to this, skills data tends to be inferred from job descriptions, competency models and other organisational data but 40% of employees say they frequently complete tasks outside their job description.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to acquire new skills for six out of 10 people. However, nearly half the workforce (46%) say employers have reduced opportunities for upskilling and reselling during the pandemic. And when people don't feel confident in their skills it has a detrimental impact on their work with 41% saying tasks take longer to complete and 22% say their work is lower quality.

Worryingly, 42% of workers believe their company is more likely to lay workers off than to reskill them or move them into another role.

What to act on

This research reveals what employees feel are the most important skills they need to learn. Do these skills chime with what your organisation needs? At the very least, this research provides a benchmark on future skills. It also highlights the challenges organisations face around understanding the skills they have. Disparate pockets of skills records mixed with undocumented skills suggests employers are unaware of the skills they already have. If upskilling and reselling are important it would appear that message is not getting through to many employees.



The State of Skills 2021: Endangered

Degreed

<https://stateofskills.degreed.com/>

Same team, different sides?

Emerald Works

About the research

This survey asked 260 executive managers on their perspective of L&D within their company. The research also pulls on data from Emerald Works' Learner Intelligence report

Eye-catching findings

This report looks at senior executives' perception of learning teams. Reading the report might be like holding a mirror to your own learning team.

When asked to rank their top five priorities for L&D, the senior executives said:

1. Quality of work performed
2. Business transformation, innovation and growth
3. Digital environment and capability
4. Organisational performance
5. Employee engagement and motivation

The report authors note that as a result of the pandemic, the proportion of leaders placing "build digital capabilities" in their top five priorities has risen to almost 60%. This shows just how important digital skills are for employers.

But it is not good news when it comes to skills with almost half of leaders saying their L&D function made a small or non-existent contribution to developing essential future skills.

Other leaders' concerns about L&D include:

- Focus on the short term
- Lack of investment or shortage of resources
- Lack of high-quality content
- Lack of strategic L&D influence
- Organisational learning is not valued enough

(contd.)

The report authors say that many respondents had a lack of knowledge about their L&D function, with one describing it as invisible. “Many leaders in our survey expressed a lack of knowledge about their L&D function, with one leader describing L&D as “invisible” within their organization.”

The authors say that this could be in part due to a lack of communication: “Only 25% of leaders felt their L&D function regularly communicates with senior leadership to set goals, request feedback and report performance.”

The research shows that there are four common themes.

1. Isolation: L&D feels removed from the rest of the organization. Leaders want cross-organizational communication.
2. Invisibility: The impact and internal processes of L&D functions are not immediately apparent. Leaders want to understand the role of L&D within their organizations.
3. Disorganization: L&D is seen to be “messy” and poorly orchestrated. This is perceived as causing friction within the organization, delaying growth and reducing competency.
4. Transactionality: Leaders referred to L&D as “transactional” or “reactive”. They want learning programs with longer-term goals that seek to do more than address immediate training needs.

What to act on

This report is a challenging read for L&D teams. There is a perception problem here that learning leaders need to overcome. In particular, executives are looking for a longer-term vision and solutions to support the goals of the organisation. This is where L&D teams can open a dialogue with executive teams. Without doing so, L&D will be saddled with this perception problem. Use this report to kick-start a communications campaign that raises awareness of L&D and shows how the team has a positive impact on the organisation.



Same team, different sides?

Emerald Works

<https://emeraldworks.com/research-and-reports/management/leader-perceptions-of-l-and-d>

Disconnected? Exploring the digital skills gap

Learning and Work Institute

About the research

This report looks at the digital skills gap in the UK. The findings in this report are based on surveys of 1,004 employers and 2,017 people aged 16-24. Researchers also conducted eight employer roundtable events to explore the findings of the research. All research was carried out in February 2021.

Eye-catching findings

This report provides the employer view of the UK digital skills gap as well as how 16-24 year olds view digital skills. The report covers a lot of ground and introduces other external research to support its findings. Here we look at digital skills perceptions and how employers are tackling skills gaps. The report goes into more detail about the uptake of apprenticeships and digital inequality across the UK.

The report categorises digital skills in two ways: basic and advanced skills. Basic skills are a proficiency with common software such as Office 365, the ability to communicate digitally and the ability to process digital information and content. People with advanced skills have a good knowledge across a range of digital skills plus in-depth specialist knowledge in one or more area such as coding.

Most employers (92%) say basic digital skills are important to their organisation, something that is reflected in the fact 82% of job vacancies ask for digital skills. And 75% of employers say their reliance on digital skills will slightly or significantly increase over the next five years. The message is clear: digital skills are a business priority.

But employers continue to struggle to fill these skills gaps, with 23% saying their current workforce lacks the basic digital skills that they need. This figure rises to 37% for advanced digital skills. Just over three-quarters of employers (76%) say a lack of digital skills would affect the profitability of their business.

(contd.)

So how are employers tackling this skills challenge? They are using a range of tactics, including:

- Providing on the job digital skills training - 47%
- Recruiting workers to meet digital skills gaps - 33%
- Providing off-the-job digital skills training - 23%
- Engaging local training providers about the required skills - 16%
- Doing nothing - 11%

Employers are also increasingly looking for advanced digital skills, with 60% expecting their reliance on advanced digital skills to increase in the next five years.

The good news for employers is that young people recognise the importance of digital skills with 88% saying that digital skills will be essential for their career and 62% feeling confident that they have the basic digital skills that employers need.

That said, only 18% are very confident they have the advanced digital skills that employers are looking for.

The research shows a gender gap in which 62% of young males are interested in a digital career, compared to just two in five (42%) young females.

What to act on

This research shows that employers and younger employees understand the importance of digital skills. The good news is that 16-24 year olds want to develop these skills. However, there are challenges such the gender gap. If employers want to develop more advanced digital skills then this gap needs to be closed. The report also shows there are geographic inequalities with most digital skills based in London. Digital poverty also affects one in five among young people from lower socio-economic groups. Overcoming these challenges will require focused effort on the part of employers, government and training organisations.



Disconnected? Exploring the digital skills gap

Learning and Work Institute

<https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/disconnected-exploring-the-digital-skills-gap/>

CONCLUSIONS

These reports cover important topics for L&D teams: skills, hybrid working and the impact of learning and development.

Together they describe the current direction of travel for organisations and their learning functions. As lockdown rules in the UK ease so employers are looking at more hybrid ways of working, mixing working from home and face to face working environments.

Throughout the pandemic, L&D teams have helped support employees transition to new ways of working and that, according to this research, is set to continue in the coming months. This focus on business change has elevated the work of L&D and it is important that L&D teams continue to show their ongoing impact in supporting organisations through change.

They will also have to grapple with the digital skills challenge that almost all organisations now face. This is an area where L&D can have a real impact.



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Produced in April 2021

This document is current as of the initial date of publication and may be changed by LPI (Learning & Performance Institute) at any time.

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