



# **Workplace learning and performance in 2024**

*Trends and priorities  
shaping L&D*



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## Welcome to the World of Learning report

We have analysed some of the most prominent learning and workforce research reports published in the last 12 months to surface the key trends and challenges facing the profession. Taking these insights, we invited industry experts to provide analysis of what they mean in practice for 2024. I hope you find this report useful and thought-provoking and the thinking here informs your learning strategies for the coming months. I look forward to seeing you at one of our events where we will continue to discuss these and other challenges.



**Andy Lancaster**  
*Learning Champion  
and Lead*  
The Chartered  
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and Development  
(CIPD)

## Foreword Connections matter!

**T**hroughout this report, the research and insights inspire learning professionals to establish relationships that underpin cutting-edge practice. Collaborative connections are the structural warps and wefts that enable innovation to be weaved into each unique context.

The report calls out key areas in which new, or reenergised connections must be forged.

Firstly, connections with the organisation are vital. Effective learning is aligned to strategic priorities; that requires practitioners to step out of learning ghettos to engage with stakeholders through active listening and diagnostic questions. It demands a shift from reactivity to proactivity, moving beyond comfortable course-centric methods to integrating learning and performance support into work.

Building strong connections with managers is crucial in the face of pressing needs for upskilling and reskilling. In a fast-changing world enhancing team capability to support high performance is imperative. Hard pressed managers will be energised by the potential for enhanced productivity in the face of increased demands.

Establishing connections with employees is paramount, empowering individuals to pursue career aspirations in a fast-changing job landscape. That requires talent pathways, options for self-directed learning and a heightened eye on employee engagement and retention in the context of a wider skills scarcity and quiet quitting, the phenomenon in which significant numbers of employees are staying in their jobs but are disengaged and only doing what it is required of them, nothing more.

It's also vital for courageous connections with the fast-emerging realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Learning professionals must expand their vision beyond AI's ubiquitous use to generate text, by exploring how it can revolutionise adaptive, personalised learning experiences.

Finally, all aspects of learning practice must be underpinned by a passionate connection with evidence-based principles and a wholesale rejection of out-dated methods.

The golden thread throughout this report is the pressing need for learning professionals to connect with the organisation, strategic priorities, managers, employees, emerging AI, and evidence-based practice.

The poet and scholar John Donne famously said, "No man (or woman) is an island." If ever there was a time for learning professionals to prioritise connections, it's now!

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## Key trends for 2024

- Business alignment: still a top priority for L&D (and business leaders) but still a long way to go.
- AI: big in 2023. Will be even bigger in 2024
- Skills and learning: less focus on knowledge acquisition and awareness building. More focus on behaviour change, doing things differently, learning transfer, practising, doing, reflecting, failing and trying again
- DEIB: L&D is key to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, to ensuring that everyone has access to meaningful work and skills development
- Employee engagement and retention: keeping hold of people, keeping them engaged and developing them. Beware the quiet quitters!
- Hybrid working: what do employees and organisations need to do to make it work? Making work and roles inclusive for all



**Establishing connections with employees is paramount, empowering individuals to pursue career aspirations in a fast-changing job landscape.”**



## Where we are now: the five challenges facing L&D

### Challenge one: Aligning with business goals

At the close of 2023, Mind Tools for Business released its big annual report. It says L&D is still falling short on business alignment (although there is some improvement), and that a surprisingly high number of practitioners are operating in a strategic vacuum:

- 30% of L&D teams are operating without a learning strategy
- Just one in five business leaders believe L&D contributes significantly towards the achievement of their three priority goals
- In 2023, business leaders wanted L&D to focus on improving talent strategies, employee engagement and staff retention
- Over half (51%) of L&D teams participating in the Mind Tools for Business maturity benchmarking sit at stage one (with stage four being the most mature). Of those 51%
  - 12% of L&D leaders work with business leaders to agree organisational metrics and KPIs
  - One-third say they 'understand the strategic goals of the business', with even fewer aligning their activities with these goals

This research suggests L&D is getting better at aligning to business goals - the number of L&D teams creating strategies that factor in changing business priorities, ensuring their activity aligns with organisational goals, and assessing programmes to make sure they support these goals has increased by more than 10%.

But, the CIPD's Learning at Work 2023 found the opposite - learning practitioners were less likely to agree that their learning strategy supports business priorities than they were in 2021.

### What do the experts say?



*"L&D are looking for organisations to tell them what courses to put on. That's not aligning to the business goals."*

**Robin Hoyle, head of learning innovation at training company  
Huthwaite International**

*"If we aren't aligned to business goals, how does the business stay relevant with skills and talent in the marketplace? And how can we align reskilling and upskilling to the business agenda?"*

**Sukhvinder Pabial, L&D delivery and ops lead at Marks and Spencer**



### Challenge two: Employee retention and development

In the early months of 2023, record numbers of people left their jobs, and in many cases, the labour market altogether, in what was dubbed 'The Great Resignation.' That trend tailed off as the year progressed, partly because economic headwinds and rising living costs prompted workers to prioritise job security. But, skills shortages remain. After 'The Great Resignation' came a new problem for employers - quiet quitting, when people stay in their jobs but are disengaged and just do the bare minimum.

**Dan Lucy, director of HR research and consulting at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES)**, says a substantial proportion of the workforce – particularly older workers and those with caring responsibilities or health problems – have either left the workplace or are stuck in jobs they don't really want because of insufficient flexibility around hours or job roles. He thinks learning teams need to focus on designing job roles and workplaces in order to attract and retain talent.

- 93% of organisations are concerned about employee retention
- What's the number one way that employers intend to retain employees? By giving them learning opportunities.

**2023 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning**

- Employee retention is learning leaders' most urgent organisational outcome, cited by 70%

**The State of Learning Report, LearnUpon**

## What do the experts say?

*"A lot of people are either locked out of work or from the kind of jobs they might like to do or from progressing within work because the way the job is designed doesn't fit their needs."*



**Dan Lucy, director of HR research and consulting at the IES**



*"In a period of 'The Great Resignation', creating an environment where employees feel valued, engaged, and motivated is paramount. This is more than simply offering competitive salaries and benefits - it's about nurturing a culture of recognition, providing opportunities for growth, and ensuring employees have a sense of purpose in their work."*

**Cathy Hoy, CEO at CLO100**

## Challenge three: Upskilling and reskilling

The top priority for L&D professionals is addressing skills gaps, cited by 29% in the CIPD's Learning at Work 2023 report. This is a business imperative as employers estimate that 44% of workers' skills will be disrupted in the next five years, according to the World Economic Forum's The Future of Jobs Report 2023.

Many of the experts interviewed for this report say L&D and business leaders need to rethink what skills are, reframe the conversation and redesign learning. They want the focus to be on behaviour change – getting people to do things differently - rather than the current focus on knowledge acquisition and awareness building.

- 89% of L&D professionals agree that proactively building employee skills for today and tomorrow will help navigate the evolving future of work

**2023 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning**

- Only one in five learning practitioners strongly agree they are prioritising the skills needed to help their organisation in the future

**Learning at Work 2023, CIPD**



## What do the experts say?



*"The L&D profession needs to get better at being clear about what a skill is. I see a lot of people saying things like "We've got more skills because we've got a LinkedIn library". Watching a video is developing knowledge not skills. L&D is about enabling people to do things differently. The key word is do - not know about or learn or understand or have an awareness of. It's about application and changing what you do."*

**Robin Hoyle, head of learning innovation at Huthwaite International**

*"We've seen upskilling and reskilling as a high priority. There is such a clear economic, strategic and commercial need to develop the right skills for your organisation, to keep on top of them and keep developing them. That's a great route into strategic value for the learning profession."*

**Myles Runham, senior analyst at HR analysts Fosway Group**



## Challenge four: Creating a learning culture

Creating a learning culture was the number one challenge for many learning leaders in October 2023, according to The Learning and Performance Institute's L&D Dashboard.

- Creating a culture of learning was cited as the third most important priority for L&D, after aligning learning programmes to business goals and upskilling employees

**Workplace Learning report, LinkedIn Learning**

- 90% of top-performing organisations have 'safe environments for individuals to share ideas and work out loud'
- 80% involve learners/managers in the design of learning approaches and solutions

**Megatrends Reshaping the Future: The Crucial Role of L&D in Business Transformation, Mind Tools for Business**

However, LearnUpon's The State of Learning Report tells a different story, with only 17% of respondents saying that building a strong learning culture was among their top three priorities. If L&D and organisations are going to deliver on the urgent need to continually upskill and reskill the workforce, they have to create a learning culture, one that enables employees to learn in the flow of work, and to engage with learning at the point of need. Everyone needs to be engaged with learning to facilitate the constant refreshing of skills.

## What do the experts say?

*"A learning culture is a shared responsibility – L&D can't do it all. And it's not just the CEO getting up and saying that it's really important everyone makes the time to learn."*

**Nahdia Khan, chief impact officer at Mind Tools**





*"Creating a learning culture is not about giving people access to lots of videos or about a new LMS. It's powering an environment where people pull learning from the centre. Individuals can and should continually learn from the experiences they have. People should be given the time and space to do that - it needs to be recognised and celebrated."*

**Robin Hoyle, head of learning innovation at Huthwaite International**

## Challenge five: Linking L&D with performance and development

In many organisations, L&D is still chasing and churning out the wrong metrics, using vanity metrics such as Did people like the learning? or How many people completed it?, when it should be using business metrics such as Has productivity improved? or Has x behaviour change been achieved?

### Top ways L&D measure success, taken from the 2023 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Employee satisfaction (survey)                               | 7. Team or org business metrics                   |
| 2. Employee satisfaction (informal or qualitative feedback)     | 8. Improved employee productivity                 |
| 3. Number of employees taking courses or trainings              | 9. Improved employee retention                    |
| 4. Employee performance on post-learning quizzes or assessments | 10. Number of hours spent learning                |
| 5. Number of courses or trainings each employee has completed   | 11. Progress towards closing workforce skills gap |
| 6. Improved performance reviews                                 | 12. Number of skills learned per learner          |

Vanity metrics
  Business metrics

- 57% of learning leaders feel under significant pressure to prove the ROI of learning programmes
- 59% say the pressure is more significant than in previous years
- 77% said demonstrating the impact of learning programmes on business goals and growth expectations was among their top three priorities
- Only 18% were tracking the ROI of learning programmes

**The State of Learning Report, LearnUpon**



## What do the experts say?

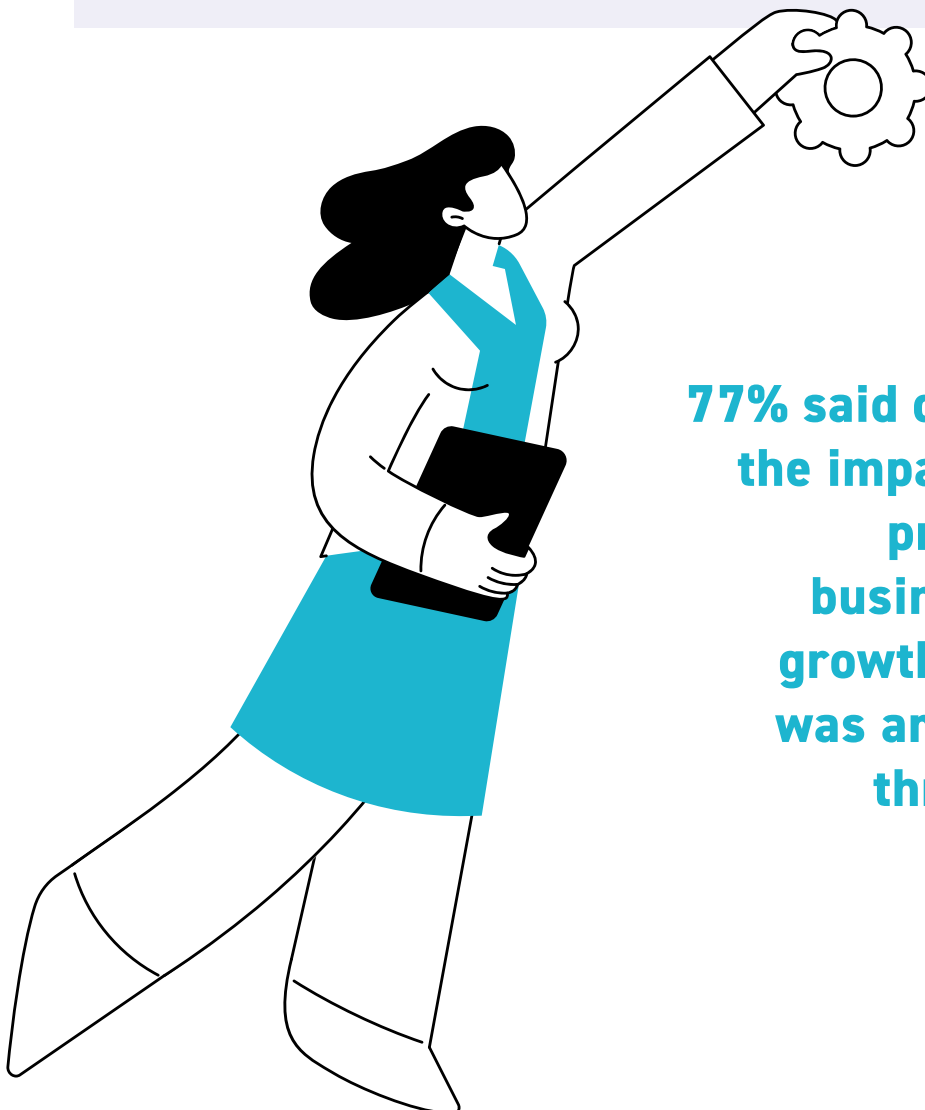


*"If I have one wish that didn't come true for 2023, it's that we measure impact. Impact is not the number of people who watched something. We've known that for years but people still talk about it. We still measure the things that are easy – numbers. It needs to be about performance improvement – getting better at doing something. If you make an investment (and ask people to give their time, commitment and goodwill to it) what do you and they expect back?"*

**Robin Hoyle, head of learning innovation at Huthwaite International**

*"A learning intervention, be it a workshop, piece of content or experience, is just the beginning. The most important part of learning is what happens after. Are they implementing it in the workplace? Are they playing it back with peers? Their manager? Did it work for them? That's the business impact."*

**Celisse Saxton, academy lead at consulting company AND Digital**



**“  
77% said demonstrating  
the impact of learning  
programmes on  
business goals and  
growth expectations  
was among their top  
three priorities”**

## AI: challenges and opportunities



**Detlef Hold**

*Global Pharma Company.*

Detlef is a keynote speaker at The World of Learning Summit

The current position on generative AI for learning teams is what I call the creative exploration phase. The focus is on use cases, experimenting and gaining knowledge. We see this creativity in emerging use cases such as coaching support through AI-powered co-pilots and AI tutors. There's also a lot of experimenting with assessments, content curation and learning design. It seems like the learning community is building up a body of knowledge, figuring out how to most effectively use gen AI and getting up to speed with governance, risk and ethical considerations.

Everyone is also trying to figure out what capabilities are needed for L&D - and for the business. It's a challenge: AI experts are in demand, yet the talent market is competitive. You might have data analytics experts who are able to pivot to AI, or you might have AI expertise to leverage elsewhere in the business.

Learning teams need to orientate themselves towards the business to understand how things are shifting due to (gen) AI. Roles, capabilities and business strategies are changing so we need to think differently about learning solutions, reaching customers and providing them with AI enabled products.

Our job is then to educate others on AI in actionable, pragmatic ways. That means identifying relevant use cases and then simulating them as learning opportunities.

So how will this play out in 2024? The technology will become even more democratised and maybe more affordable, and for these reasons more available and

scalable within organisations. Despite clearer guardrails, constraints and regulations for AI use emerging in the coming months, learning teams will accelerate experimentation and their own upskilling to avoid falling behind the business - and to figure out the biggest value of generative AI for the workforce. Due to the current economic climate, we can expect to see many use cases focusing on efficiency.

I would also expect that learning teams will slowly embrace knowledge management as AI accelerates the creation, access and distribution of knowledge through peer and social learning communities. This should allow us to build a body of knowledge faster and train the AI with more proprietary contextual knowledge, thus making it more accurate.

Learning teams need to quickly develop AI expertise, building their knowledge, understanding and capabilities around AI. We missed the opportunity to build strong data analytics capabilities in learning years ago. This time we should be trailblazing (gen) AI use for the business to accelerate learning and the adoption of this new technology.

The evolution of AI is happening so fast that we need to understand what's going on and what risks and opportunities exist. Our role can be to educate and build trust in AI in the business. Of all the use cases that emerge through this period of experimentation, let's identify the most relevant, scalable ones to create the most value. That may be content creation, targeted curation or maybe the better use of data to identify needs and show the value of our contribution. Exciting times ahead!



**So how will this play out in 2024?  
The technology will become even more democratised and maybe more affordable, and for these reasons more available and scalable within organisations."**



**Trish Uhl**

*Founder of Owl's Ledge.*

Trish is a keynote speaker at The World of Learning Summit

There is a critical need for L&D to evolve into leaders as organisations embark on a process of AI-driven transformation. If L&D limits itself to just instructional content creation it could sink into obsolescence as AI's capabilities in this area continue to grow. I think L&D needs to pivot strategically towards impactful learning experiences, value creation, and driving organisational growth through continuous learning and talent development.

These capabilities, once considered advanced, are now basic expectations. L&D needs to harness AI for automating everyday L&D tasks, thereby freeing up time for more strategic endeavours. Essential to this shift is the capability in AI fluency, enabling effective use of AI in two key areas:

1. Everyday AI – Streamlining core L&D operations through process automation.
2. Game-Changing AI – Creating substantial business impact by addressing strategic enterprise-wide priorities.

I can't emphasise highly enough the importance of L&D integrating AI as a strategic teammate, tailoring solutions to align with specific organisational goals and strategies, and moving beyond merely using AI as tools. This proactive stance will redefine L&D as crucial orchestrators in AI-led organisational change.

As foundational skills like impact measurement become standard due to technological progress, L&D must not only meet but exceed these expectations, leveraging AI to automate workflows and focus on strategic initiatives.

This transformation is urgent. With business users increasingly able to source high-quality training content via AI, L&D must quickly adapt, developing new skills and operational models to remain relevant. Failure to adapt could lead to L&D becoming increasingly marginalised in an AI-dominant future.

To this end, L&D professionals must develop AI skills such as 'analytical judgment' to discern when to leverage AI capabilities over

human ones, preparing both themselves and the broader workforce for effective AI integration. This preparation involves progressing through four distinct phases of AI adoption and application:

1. Crawl – Employ AI tools for specific, individual tasks.
2. Walk – Integrate AI tools to streamline workflows.
3. Run – Develop AI copilots and AI factories.
4. Fly – Orchestrate networks of autonomous AI agents.

This progression demands robust AI aptitude, encompassing not only technical know-how but also the skill to foster an AI-ready mindset across the organisation.

I've already said it but I'll say it again because it's so important: L&D should not just utilise existing AI tools but actively lead in AI workforce transformation and the creation of innovative, transformative AI use cases.

By leading in AI workforce transformation and innovative AI application development, L&D is not just adapting to a new technological landscape but actively shaping it, marking a substantial opportunity for L&D to reinforce its strategic role in enterprises.



## What the reports say

Workforce dynamics are changing all the time. Here are five big reports from 2023 that highlight significant workforce trends that will impact on learning in the months and years to come.

### The State of Organizations 2023: Ten shifts transforming organizations, McKinsey & Company

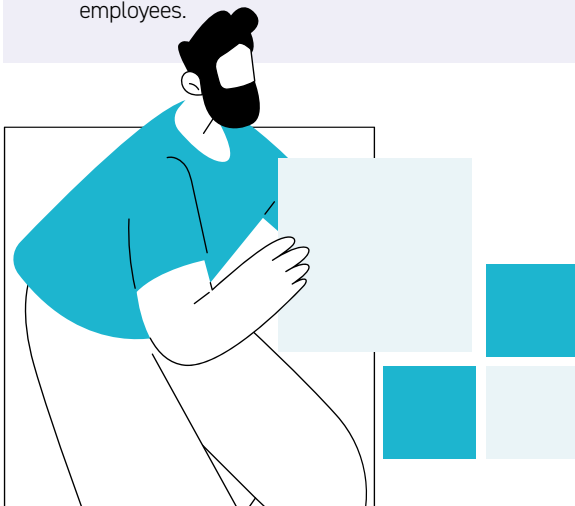
**Key takeaways:**

- Just half the respondents said their organisation is well prepared to anticipate and react to external shocks, with two-thirds saying their organisation was inefficient and overly complex
- Roughly 90% of organisations have adopted hybrid work models following Covid-19
- Roughly four of five employees working a hybrid model the previous two years want to keep doing so
- Organisations often include technological or digital elements in their strategies, despite not having the capabilities to integrate them. Just 5% of respondents think their organisation has the capabilities it needs
- Between 20 and 30% of critical roles don't have appropriate people in them
- The highest performers in a role are 800% more productive than average performers in the same role
- Employees with mental health and wellbeing challenges are 4x more likely to want to leave their employer

### State of the Global Workplace 2023 Report: The Voice of the World's Employees, Gallup

**Key takeaways:**

- Nearly six in 10 employees (59%) are quiet quitting. Only 23% are engaged and thriving at work, while 18% are actively disengaged – they are the loud quitters
- Low engagement costs the global economy an estimated \$8.8 trillion – 9% of global GDP
- 44% of employees said they had experienced a lot of stress the previous day
- Engagement has a big impact on workplace stress, with engaged employees reporting significantly less stress (30% v 56% among the actively disengaged)
- Engagement has x3.8 as much influence on employee stress as work location, meaning that how people experience work impacts more on stress than where they work
- 70% of team engagement is determined by the manager
- According to Gallup, quiet quitters represent the greatest potential opportunity for growth and change, as it might only take a few changes to how they are managed to convert them into engaged, productive employees.



**Low engagement costs the global economy an estimated \$8.8 trillion – 9% of global GDP**

## Global Talent Trends study 2022-2023, Mercer

### Rise of the relatable organisation

#### Key takeaways:

- According to the report, successful organisations are becoming more relatable – more human.
- Talent and attraction are top exec concerns: 50% think their current talent model means their organisation will struggle to meet demand
- HR priorities for 2023
  - Improve employee experience for key retention populations
  - Improve workforce planning to better inform buy/build/borrow strategies
  - Design talent processes around skills
  - Rethink compensation philosophy
  - Improve total rewards strategies
  - Invest in workforce upskilling/reskilling
  - Deliver on total wellbeing
  - Redesign work to improve agility
  - Reimagine employer brand
  - Ensure diverse workforce groups are heard and included

## 2023 Global Human Capital Trends, Deloitte Insights

### New fundamentals for a boundaryless world

#### Key takeaways:

- 59% of respondents expect to focus on reimagination over the next two-four years, a 2x increase from pre-pandemic levels
- Organisations that co-create with employees when designing and implementing organisational change are more likely to experience positive outcomes. They are:
  - x1.8 more likely to have a highly engaged workforce
  - x2 more likely to be innovative
  - x1.6 more likely to anticipate and respond to change effectively
- More than 80% of respondents reported their top focus areas as being: purpose, DEI, and sustainability

## Labour Market Outlook, Autumn 2023, CIPD

#### Key takeaways:

- 41% of employers surveyed had hard-to-fill vacancies – 38% in the private sector and 51% in the public sector
- Employers view gen AI as more of an opportunity (41%) than a risk (23%), although some (37%) don't know
- Two in five employers (40%) think using gen AI will lead to higher productivity and efficiency levels
- Privacy and security issues are the main drawback to using gen AI in the workplace, cited by 36% of employers

## Looking forward: the priorities for L&D in 2024

One thing that will definitely be on the agenda for learning teams in 2024 is AI. It's a top priority for virtually everybody in the workplace. Usage shot up rapidly in 2023 (ChatGPT, the forerunner, notched up 100 million users in just two months after its launch, making it the fastest-growing app

ever!) and there will be no avoiding it in 2024.

Learning teams need to be rigorous in their approach to AI, much as it needs to be rigorous with every aspect of learning in 2024.

We asked the experts what they think 2024 holds for L&D and what the top priorities will be.



### **Laura Overton, speaker, author, facilitator and award-winning learning analyst, talks about business alignment – where we are now and where we need to get to in 2024**

Alignment has been a big talking point for many people this year, although this agenda has been rolling for 20 years now. There are a lot of big business issues at the moment and as a result, learning teams are being bombarded with more and more requests and are being pulled in many directions. They have been overwhelmed with requests (leadership, culture change, wellbeing, DEI, digital awareness, AI...), but being asked for more doesn't actually mean we are more aligned.

It's easy to think – "I'm aligned because my business asked me for a piece of content on D&I and I gave them a piece of content on D&I". If you look at the current Mind Tools for Business study, we are still in a very responsive mode, and we need to get away from that.

Business alignment is not about L&D just responding to a business request for content. There has been a flood of content this year. AI allows us to do more content, but we don't really want to be pumping out more content – it's not what is needed. What is needed is more ability for people to learn.

Businesses are more aware that learning is needed but what businesses think of learning

and what L&D think of as learning are two very different things. We were very aligned during Covid because we were all pulling in the same direction – how do we survive? It shifted business leaders' awareness that learning can help achieve some of these bigger goals. What hasn't been shifted is their awareness of what to ask for.

**How do you, as an L&D practitioner, get alignment? You have to listen more than you talk.** You have to ask the right questions –

performance consulting questions. You have to ask why? What are you looking to achieve? You need to be curious about what's going on and about how you might be able to make a difference. You need to get out there, watch and observe, listen and talk, read the company report... It's about observing and being confident enough to have conversations and address people's preconceived ideas. And it's about being smart in using what we have and know – tools, technology and learning science.

Engagement is a huge barrier. People aren't engaging with what we're doing. We are working hard but not necessarily on the right things. We need to work harder at the right things.



### **Melanie Lepine, global onboarding lead at commercial real estate services company CBRE, thinks 2024 is going to look a lot like 2023**

2023 was about doing more with less and that will continue in 2024 because of the socio-economic climate. I'm nervous about quiet quitting – people who could be shutting down, putting in less effort. People are more precious about their jobs because of economic pressures. Is that worse than The Great Resignation?

Probably. So there's a need to really focus on employee engagement and help people understand their aspirations.

Also leadership skills. How can our leaders and managers connect with people? Dig under the surface, understand people's motivators and help them find their way forward, when in a previous

time they would have quit.

There needs to be a culture shift so people understand that we shouldn't own their development. We shouldn't be leading them down a path. It's about empowering people to learn what they need, when they need it, the way they want it and using technology to understand their own development. It's about moving into talent

enablement, helping people see opportunities rather than career paths. As tech shifts, jobs shift and people will have to go on a journey because the jobs they do today are not going to be there. Typical career paths are not going to be there.

L&D needs to identify two or three things that will really make a difference, focus on them in 2024 and do them really well.



**Piers Lea thinks business alignment needs to be a key focus and that some learning teams need to up their game in 2024 if they want to be involved in strategic transformation work**

At one end of the scale you've got L&D as the order takers, there to deliver courses. At the other end, they are strategic partners, seen as a critical component of future strategy. A lot of organisations have set up digital transformation teams, and in some cases, L&D are in those teams. But in other organisations, it's managers, change strategists and good project delivery people that are taking control. These are specialist transformation projects, tackling issues around skills, and in some organisations, L&D isn't regarded as sufficiently up to speed to tackle something of this kind, at this scale.

Many organisations are putting learning and talent together. If you go through the process of identifying skills gaps, you realise that there aren't the people to hire in the market. It's a tight labour market and demographics are going to get tighter.

So you need to be upskilling and reskilling. But who do you reskill in what? What do people want to be doing next in their career and how does that align with business needs? So you have the talent aspects in the learning realm.

It's about going into 2024 with an open mind, about learning new things, and prepping people to learn new things. I also think good learning design remains one of the most undervalued things by organisations. **Good learning design teaches concepts very quickly and profoundly.** The whole process of learning has to be high quality and that means good design and good delivery. If people think everybody is automatically going to learn because they've got ChatGPT at their fingertips....People need pedagogy - they need to be led through a process of learning.



**Robin Hoyle advises L&D to incorporate existing organisational skills into strategy, not just focus on new skills**

**Organisations need to align strategy with organisational capability.** What can we do now? What do we need to do in 6-18 months? Longer term? Saying we want to do this is great if you have a long timescale, but a strategy without the understanding of an organisation's capability isn't a strategy. It's a wish list. Also, setting strategy without reference to the organisation's capabilities doesn't make best use of the information available, at a time when hiring people is difficult.

Clearly gen AI will be a biggie for most of next year. L&D needs to train people to work with AI - short term requirements

around understanding that it's not Google, for example. Also about helping people understand and take advantage of the chance to get rid of dull, repetitive tasks. What do they do or could they do that is different to what AI can do? Get people at the sharp end, those most likely to be affected, involved and engaged. What will it do for you? What problems will it solve for you? What do you want to do with the time it creates? Put them in charge of how AI is deployed in their team and organisation.

I hope we get in-depth consideration of the data in organisations. What will we train AI on? Large organisations have CRM systems, but I



suspect a lot have data that is inaccurate and out of date.

There are also issues around training the LMS on appropriate data rather than just

relying on stuff on the internet. There is no advantage to using ChatGPT if everyone else is using it. If need to train LLM on data that is uniquely yours, that is expensive.



### Myles Runham is looking forward to seeing organisations and individuals embrace AI and the opportunities it presents for learning

There's a sharper pressure on learning leaders and learning organisations to demonstrate that they are focused on the right priorities and how they're going to design useful, relevant solutions to those priorities.

There are some interesting post-pandemic dynamics. Having demonstrated that digital learning can be done, now the question is 'to what end?' How does it work? How does it contribute strategically? Commercially?

2023 was the year of gen AI, but it's worth remembering that AI has been impacting on L&D for some time, as a source of content recommendations and personalisation. It's been used in one of the most important areas - skills intelligence - for a lot of learning activities. This is probably one of the most important areas AI is going to have an influence on L&D. Gen AI is a powerful tool in a lot of what L&D does.

We did some research last year and saw that expectations are very high - **69% of people believe the hype around the impact of AI and learning is justified.** Less than 10% have seen AI have a great deal of impact in their function so far, with 38% saying it's had a moderate amount of impact. Just under 40% are expecting a great deal of impact in the next 12 months.

I think we will see more progress in the automation of media creation and design, things like synthetic media, automated ID and authoring. The potential to do what we have done already, but much more quickly, is powerful. I think there's great promise for genuine personalisation. Not just chatbots, but the ability to have a kind of conversational experience with a body of content, to almost talk to the expertise that lies behind content. That feels like a really interesting opportunity for learning.



### Sukhvinder Pabial thinks L&D needs to continue thinking about how to make remote/hybrid working work

There's an interesting balance for L&D to navigate around what's always going to be needed in terms of skills and then what's needed for the future that we can't see right now. How does L&D navigate that space? How does it work with that kind of ambiguity to upskill and reskill, when the business itself might not be able to identify it?

**The workforce is saying they recognise that they need to be skilled differently, either because technology is coming in or because of new ways of working.** Hybrid working requires a different set of skills and a different way of working. Have we enabled that as L&D teams and as talent teams? I don't know that we have.

What will work for one organisation won't be right for another - every organisation has to figure it out. Why do we want people to come together? What is it that people do better when

they're together, in person? And when does it work remotely?

Then skills that continue to be important and won't ever go away are skills like leadership management, project management, product development, service development... A business always needs to know how to develop itself as a business, take its R&D and do something interesting with it.

There are challenges around ensuring the workforce is as skilled as it can be. For the business I work for, it's questions like, how do we make learning accessible to people who are deskless? Who don't have easy access to learning? Who are time poor? How do you use mobiles in a different way to deliver learning? How do you free up time within the system so that people can access learning?





**Stella Collins, co-founder and chief learning officer at AI learning and learning transfer platform Stellar Labs, wants to reframe the whole conversation around learning**

We need to be talking about what the business talks about - skills, behaviours, productivity and performance. What is the learning leading to? Or what's the purpose of learning? Learning is a means to productivity, to getting people better at what they do, or making them more innovative or quicker or more accurate or more agile...

In 2024, I would like L&D to really understand why people need to learn and how they learn so that we're not spending time doing ineffective things. There is still a huge amount of non-evidence based stuff. Most training is 'sit in a room and listen', whether it's digital or face to face. We need to understand how people's brains and bodies learn. Just because you completed learning doesn't mean you have taken the next step and put it into practice in the workplace. Learning is doing, practising and reflecting.

You have to do stuff, fail and do it again. Learning is about getting to a new place.

Behaviour change isn't easy. It takes more effort from people and more effort from the business to support the transfer of learning into the workplace. It's harder for L&D to drive it, for managers to support it and it's harder for learners too. You have to put the practice in, repeat it and make mistakes.

We know that managers are really important in supporting people to learn new things, so we need to talk to managers. Instead of asking them to support learning, we need to say: "If these people can do these tasks, it will free you up." Or "How would it be for you if you could delegate more? If your team were more productive? What could you do to make your team more productive?"



**Cathy Hoy thinks L&D needs to focus on recurring challenges in 2024, but that AI and sustainability will be increasingly important**

**It's critical that L&D becomes more business focused. By developing commercial acumen and strategic thinking, L&D can better align with their organisations and elevate themselves to executive level conversations and positions of influence. This not only enhances the credibility and value of L&D but also ensures that learning initiatives directly contribute to the organisation's success.**

Challenges such as aligning L&D with business goals, upskilling and reskilling and employee retention continue to be areas that require ongoing attention. Factors like budget constraints, time limitations and the need for senior level buy-in have been identified as common obstacles in these areas. I think we'll also see a growing need to help organisations become more sustainable in their mission to reach their 2030 goals and beyond.

I've seen progress in many of these areas, which is great, but they are not small topics and won't be solved overnight, or even over

a year - they are things we need to continually focus on and work at.

The advent of generative AI presents both a challenge and an opportunity for L&D. I believe its impact will be huge across all industries, but particularly transformative for us in L&D. AI gives us an opportunity to reinvent roles within the L&D team. It offers potential solutions to some of our most common challenges, such as personalising learning at scale or creating adaptive learning pathways that respond in real-time to a learner's progress.

However, as L&D leaders, we are tasked with guiding the rest of the business through this transition and we must lead by example, demonstrating how to leverage this technology effectively and ethically.

Generative AI is not just another item on our long list of priorities, I think it represents a massive shift in how we approach learning and development.



**Celisse Saxton thinks L&D has to get a lot more business focused**

The top change I would like to see in 2024 is around behaviour change. I would like to see a difference in how we talk about skills, so we're talking more about L&D purpose, in order to influence behaviour change.

It's about understanding the business goal when talking to people - is it efficiency that you're looking for here? Is it changing behaviours? Is it changing attitudes?... When we say business goals around skills, it's not just saying 'People want to upskill and develop their people'. That's actually a consequence and a benefit of what they want to do. What they actually want to do is something different, something underlying - they want to improve their revenue, for example. Or they want to get more clients. They want to do X, Y, and Z. That's the more tangible thing and then you work out a solution, and it's probably less content driven.

If we don't understand that purpose, we are always going to present the more obvious answers.

So it's about business acumen, speaking the right language, asking the right questions and then formulating our solutions. This is probably the thing that we're all pushing ourselves to do better.

And how can we make sure that people are encouraged to participate, to evolve, with all the change that's coming? Leaders will be a massive part of that - they need to role model the behaviours that need to happen. And managers - they are the ones that really influence whether learning is successful or not. It's important that people have psychological safety, so they know they can experiment, do things, fail and learn from failures.

Gen AI, for example. One of our approaches to the gen AI piece is to run hackathons - co creating some learning experiences around gen AI. And we're inviting our clients to come on the hackathons and present problems. We're exploring together.



**Nahdia Khan wants to get managers engaged with and co-creating learning in 2024**

Our research shows that the top three challenges for L&D teams in 2023 were:

- Reluctance by managers to make time for learning
- Being overwhelmed and under equipped
- Many in the organisation not seeing L&D as a priority

That's not changed in the 20 years that we've been doing this research. L&D has some responsibility here. If people are not seeing learning as a priority, is it because the learning is of no use to them? All our manager data points to employees saying that their managers are encouraging them to learn. But when you talk to L&D, they say managers say it is not a priority. There is a disconnect somewhere.

In 2024, we are going to look in a lot of detail at the role of the manager. It is very, very difficult to embed any kind of change or transformation unless you can bring your managers along with you - I call them the permafrost of the organisation! They are under so much pressure and many are not supported in the right way. So how can we sit down with them and design learning together? What's going to make them support us in this? And how will we make their job easier?

The debate around skills is always around future proofing organisations for the skills you think will be needed today and tomorrow. But change is coming at such a fast pace that you're never going to be able to keep up. What you actually need to focus on are behaviours - being agile, curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving etc.

Research shows that younger generations might have fewer "soft skills" than older generations, while industry reports suggest soft skills were most in demand in 2023. It's about leveraging diversity. Employees say that they value working with colleagues more than any other tool, resource or approach to dealing with workplace challenges. This means that those consistent markers of maturity - coaching and collaborative learning - are easier to achieve because L&D don't have to convince people that "working with others" is a good idea. L&D needs to bring people together, facilitated by spaces and technologies that allow them to coach (and importantly reverse coach), in a psychologically safe environment.

Also, we found that more than two thirds of employees want to work for an organisation that is committed to acting sustainably, but only 15% of business leaders are prioritising climate change.



**Meenakshi Krishnan, principal research fellow at the Institute for Employment Studies, talks about L&D's role in DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging)**

Great progress has been made with inclusive recruitment, but DEIB doesn't stop with recruitment – it has to go into skill building and that's where L&D comes in. L&D will be a key catalyst in ensuring inclusivity and belonging in retention practices, skill building and career development. Internal mobility programmes are so important for retaining diverse career groups.

**L&D needs to be proactive at skills mapping in their organisations and looking at diverse talent pools.** One of the biggest challenges we're finding in inclusive recruitment is line managers saying "These people don't have the skills we need" and "They're not skill-ready". But if the labour market doesn't have these people, you're not going to get them. So it's about reskilling and upskilling. We're increasingly seeing that older workers are an important talent pool, for example, so how do we make sure their skill readiness is at the level needed?

Another piece that's emerging clearly in our research is the importance of line managers in ensuring DEIB. Again, L&D can step in with

skilling line managers. How does the line manager engage with diverse team members? Ensure psychological safety? That the work meets the needs of a neurodivergent colleague? Or a colleague that needs flexibility because of caring responsibilities?

L&D has to give line managers the confidence that if they hire someone who is not skill-ready, that it will help them get the skills. The resistance to L&D is – "I don't have the time to coach/mentor/train/create belonging – that's not my core job". L&D should not be waiting for the agenda to be given to them – it needs to take the initiative to create an ecosystem of constant career conversations, line manager training, inclusive leadership and reskilling so that DEIB culture and concepts are mainstream. The workforce is so diverse now – older workers, people with health conditions, with mental health issues, with caring responsibilities, neurodivergence...You have to create an ecosystem to address the needs of the entire workforce. So DEIB principles need to be embedded in L&D design and delivery.



**Nick Shackleton-Jones, CEO and Founder, Shackleton Consulting and author of How People Learn.**

We are all tired of hearing about the pace of change. Over the decades L&D has endured the near-constant drizzle of workplace change and technological advancement talk - and pretty much ignored it. Like surly commuters we have unfurled our umbrellas and carried on before, marching in unison. People are still standing in classrooms, elearning modules are still being produced, content libraries are being purchased and learning management systems rebranded to make them sound more exciting.

Though some of us prefer not to look up, the umbrella above us bears the words 'regulatory compliance' - and it is this, more than anything, that has permitted us to weather change and criticism. Mostly, what our organisations value is our ability to get people to tick a box. To a lesser extent they accept that some time away from the job, doing

something that gives them a sense of connection and belonging, is not a bad thing. And so we align the modules, organise events, and fret over the order of slides.

Everybody wants to talk about AI of course - but without having achieved an understanding of learning, almost all of the conversation revolves around the same old educational routines: how AI can summarise some content and spit it out in modular form (doing some instructional designers out of a job in the process). We have managed two decades of doing this without ever having to answer the question: why anyone would ever consume content in such ineffective formats when they have access to far more effective formats on their personal devices? Except, of course, compliance. We will not find compliance on YouTube, Google or TikTok.

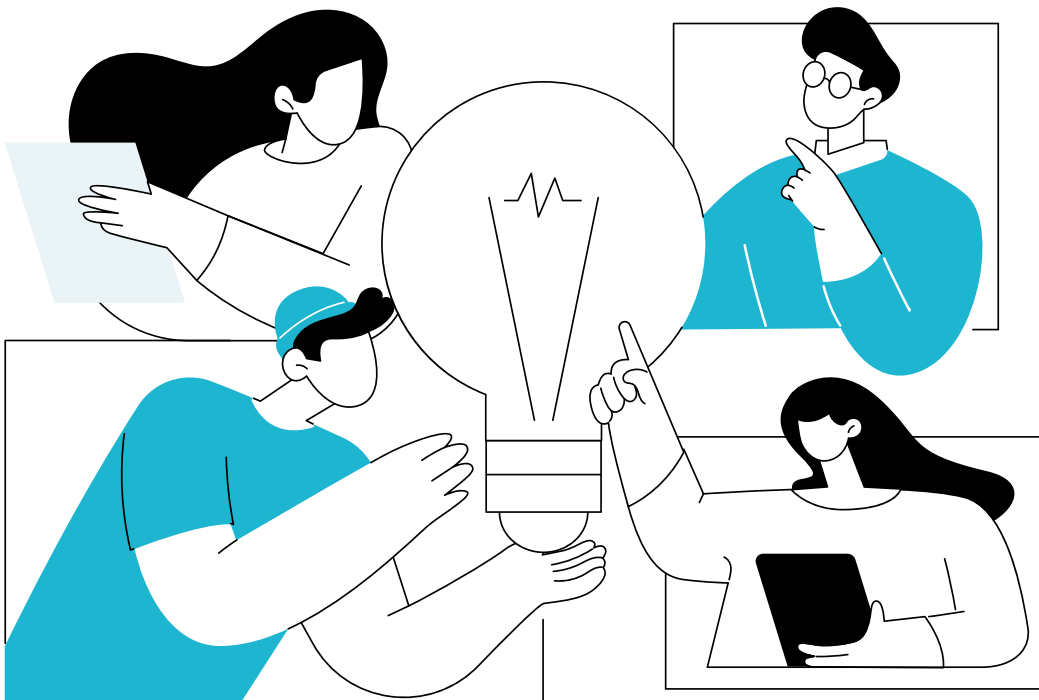
Beneath the umbrellas some of us have had aspirations beyond the world of regulatory compliance. And now might be a good time to think about stepping out from under the umbrella.

Work, the workforce and the workplace are all changing. They have always changed of course: but recent changes have been dramatic. Organisations do not really know how to induct new staff (in truth they depended on people hanging around in the same building for several months). Leaders don't seem to know what they are doing if they are not gathering people for a meeting and showing them PowerPoints. Young people are stranger than ever - the demographic cultural gap widening with each passing year.

Concurrently, the umbrella will shrink as a proportion of pointless activity is consumed - automated by AI. Of the two escape routes open to us - performance support and experience design - the latter looks more promising. Third parties

will begin to offer performance guidance systems that outpace our ability to design and distribute resources, delivering a proven performance uplift that L&D only ever dreamed of. But the event will remain largely untouched by technological advance - people still go to Disneyland after all.

What we should begin to consider is what makes for an impactful event - how are new starters welcomed and supported, for example? How are leaders transformed and equipped? How is a sense of belonging designed. And how do we build pathways that are practical (comprised of tasks & challenges) rather than theatrical (designed to give the impression that L&D are doing something)? Rather like Disney, we will have to become masters of the extraordinary experience, through our brilliance in human-centered, data-driven design. In a world where microwave meals delivered by drone become the norm, there is still space for a Michelin star restaurant.



**Rather like Disney, we will have to become masters of the extraordinary experience, through our brilliance in human-centered, data-driven design."**



**Nigel Paine, change-focused leader, speaker, L&D expert and author of several books, including Workplace Learning and the Learning Challenge**

There is something huge rumbling around organisations. It is called generative AI and it will change not just the way we work but the way we structure our organisation in order to work effectively.

There are enormous ramifications for staff in learning and development. This is the moment when they will have to leave the comfortable paradigm of developing, delivering and measuring courses as the yardstick by which learning and development is judged. Instead they have the potential to help rethink, restructure and realign entire organisations so that they can maintain competitive advantage as this transformation takes place. This process will increase in velocity over the next year.

Some are ready for this, but many L&D operations are applying the same ways of working to a new world where much will change. In other words, they can see their role

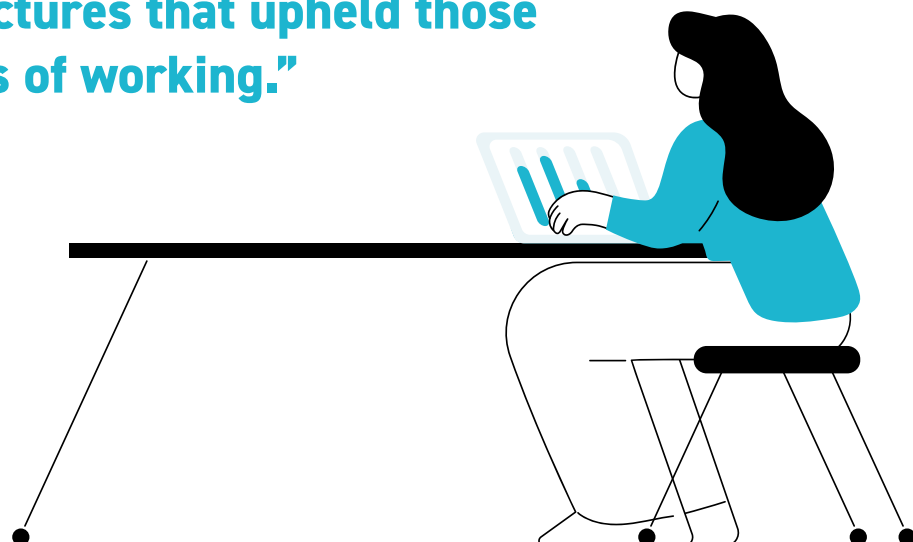
as speeding up course development, processes, using AI to manage more programmes, and short cut the development of content.

I feel that this focus should be down the list of their priorities. What organisations are facing is a tsunami of realignment that will wash away, not just existing ways of working but existing structures that upheld those ways of working. This, in turn, means that for the first time in a long time, L&D needs to recast what learning means, and how learning and work intertwine. We are no longer looking at learning adjacent to the flow of work, but learning deeply embedded in the work process.

This opportunity is very demanding, but incredibly exciting. Learning will inevitably move closer to centre stage in organisations. It is just a question of whether L&D wants to engineer that, or remain on the margins, streamlining its existing structures and processes. This is indeed an inflection point.



**What organisations are facing is a tsunami of realignment that will wash away, not just existing ways of working but existing structures that upheld those ways of working."**



## Summary

Headlines grab attention but the real story tends to be in the detail. This report shines a light on the nuances around the big trends in L&D and why they are increasingly important in driving organisational performance. Take skills for example. Learning professionals are used to seeing headlines about skills and the need for upskilling and reskilling but skills are about behaviour change, not just knowledge acquisition, which has been a key element of learning strategies for years. So for organisations to reskill and upskill there needs to be an understanding and appreciation of what that means - people will need time and space to be able to practise and develop the required new skills.

And the business will need educating about the implications for supporting workers who are more practice focused in their development activities. That means reimagining the learning, data and impact related to skills and skills development.

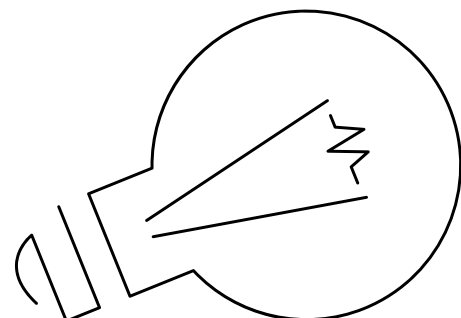
Generative AI has also grabbed the headlines but again, the devil is in the detail. What are the opportunities for the organisation, the risks and the skills and capabilities required to drive learning and performance in the year ahead? L&D teams will be searching for the answers and the answers will be dependent on many factors that are specific to the context of the organisation. Again, nuances matter.

This deep understanding of learning will help L&D teams reframe the discussion around learning and learning design which, according to many of the experts interviewed in this report, will be needed to deliver improved performance and better organisational outcomes for the months and years ahead.

### Diary dates:

world of  
learning  
Summit  
30 & 31 January 2024 • Olympia London

world of  
learning  
Conference & Exhibition  
8 & 9 October 2024 • NEC Birmingham



## Methodology

To highlight the biggest L&D and workforce challenges the report authors sifted through 10 reports to identify the key themes. ChatGPT was used as a part of the theme analysis to summarise the report findings and to identify the key themes.

These key themes were used as the basis for interviews with learning industry experts, including senior learning practitioners, analysts, technologists and authors. Interviewees sense-checked the key themes and set out their priorities for 2024. Many of the interviewees have spoken, or are due to speak, at World of Learning events.

The report was researched and written by the team at Insights Media (a thought leadership content agency that has written about the learning sector for more than two decades) on behalf of The World of Learning.

## The research reports included in this report:

### Learning trends

Megatrends Reshaping the Future: The Crucial Role of L&D in Business Transformation, MindTools for Business  
<https://www.mindtools.com/business/research/>

Learning at Work 2023, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
<https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/reports/learning-at-work/>

2023 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning  
<https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report>

The L&D Dashboard, Learning and Performance Institute  
<https://www.thelpi.org/resources/ld-dashboard/>

Digital Learning Realities 2023, Fosway Group  
<https://www.fosway.com/research/next-gen-learning/digital-learning-realities-2023/>

The State of Learning Report, LearnUpon  
<https://www.learnupon.com/resources/ebooks/learnupon-state-of-learning-report-23/>

### Workforce trends

The State of Organizations 2023: Ten shifts transforming organizations, McKinsey & Company  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-state-of-organizations-2023>

State of the Global Workplace: 2023, Gallup  
<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>

Global Talent Trends study 2022-2023, Mercer  
<https://www.mercer.com/insights/people-strategy/future-of-work/global-talent-trends/>

2023 Global Human Capital Trends, Deloitte Insights  
<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends.html>

Labour Market Outlook, Autumn 2023, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
<https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/reports/labour-market-outlook/>

### Research

<https://www.similarweb.com/blog/insights/ai-news/chatgpt-25-million/>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.similarweb.com/blog/insights/ai-news/chatgpt-25-million/>



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