

State of the skills gap

A research-based examination
of the organisational impact of
the growing skills gap across
both L&D and employees

Introduction

Our world is accelerating at speed. Knowing what skills our business and our people need both now, and in the future, is no easy feat. With digital transformation and the Internet of Things (IoT) accelerating progress, many organisations are contending with a new challenge: accessing skills which will support their growth in line with these wider world changes.

Back in 2015, the World Economic Forum forecasted that this year (2020) more than a third of desired skill sets of most occupations will comprise skills that are not yet considered crucial. They anticipated a rise in the need for skills in automation, AI, machine learning and more, as well as ongoing demand for more ‘human’ skills such as creativity, negotiation and emotional intelligence.

They believed we had a looming skills gap, and according to our research, they may well be right.

But even worse still, how prepared are we for it?

Two sides of the same coin

Here at D2L, we wanted to help businesses better understand the context of the looming skills gap and help to identify some of the core skills they likely need to keep pace with modern technology, digitalisation and the introduction of machines and AI into our workforces.

We hope to help answer this one question:

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How do we all prepare for the future, whilst still supporting our present needs?

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Our research surveyed 500 learning and development (L&D) leaders across the UK in a bid to highlight some of the key reskilling challenges faced by business today as well as identify modern approaches which may well help allay them.

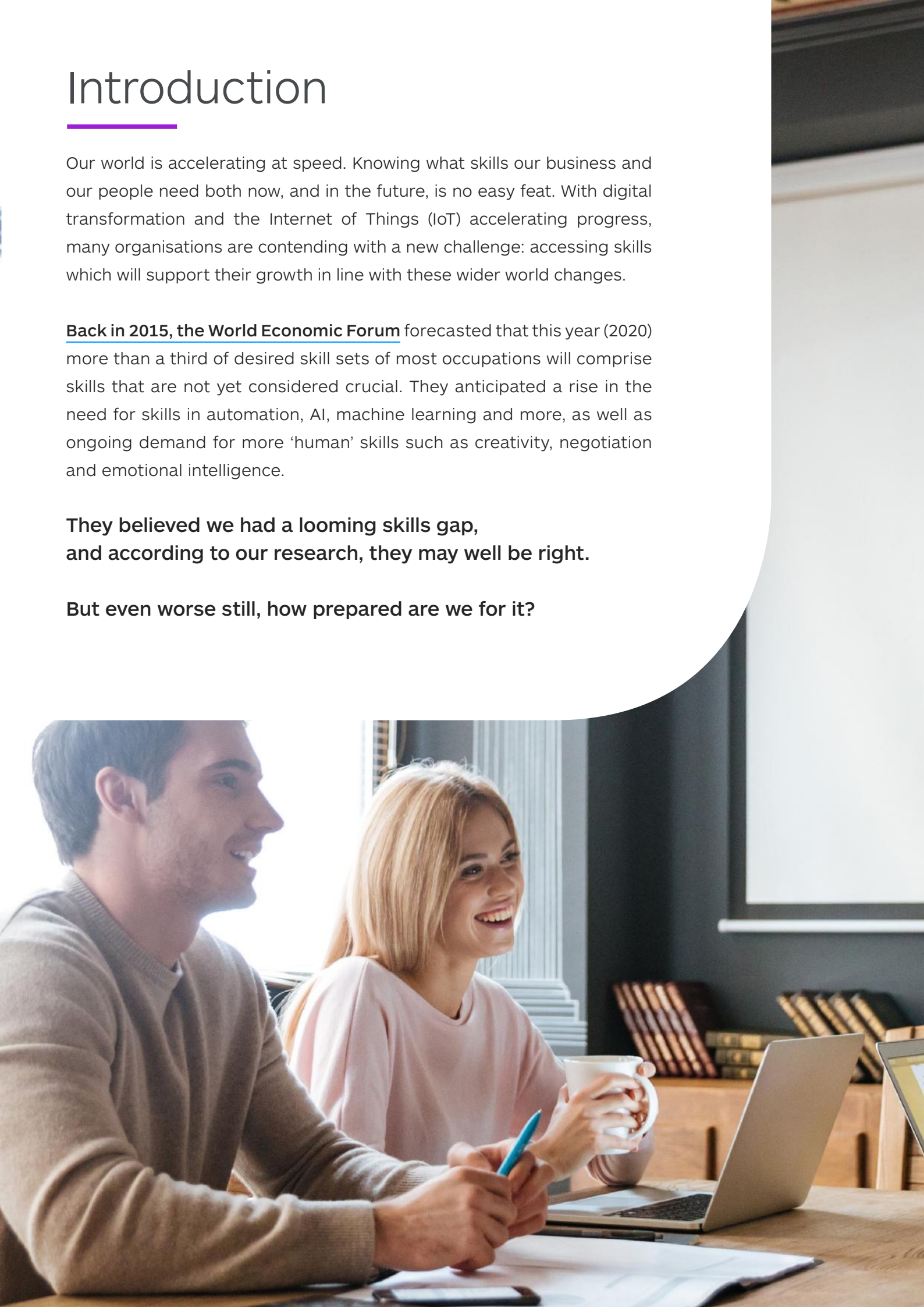
But it's not just about business; it's about the people in it too. Our employees are our lifeblood and they will be the ones largely impacted by any emerging skills gaps.

So what do they think? How are our people responding to these transformational changes?

In tandem with our employer survey, we also gathered data from 500 employees at UK organisations to contextualise their perceptions of how prepared businesses really are to meet their needs in our changeable world. And to understand what they think about the new skills they might need.

It's our hope that this two-pronged approach to research will allow businesses and more importantly, L&D departments, to better understand the primary learning challenges they're likely to face in the coming years. The result is a compelling, data-driven directive towards the need for transformation and developing the known and unknown skills of the future.

Truly, to remain competitive organisations and the people within them must adapt. So how are we doing? Let's explore what is happening.



Skills gaps are a major business concern

According to research undertaken by CompTIA in 2018¹, all signs point to an ever-increasing skills gap. Emerging tech is causing the most worry, with organisations lacking skills in IoT, AI, automation and AR/VR. Over 60% of UK Managers have concerns about the lack of these abilities in their teams.

Even more worrying is the preparedness of organisations to meet the growing demand for these skills, with only 39% of businesses having a formal process and resources in place to fill the gaps. Despite the known negative impact of skills gaps in organisations such as declines in productivity and huge economic costs, it appears many aren't ready.

Clearly, skills (or a lack thereof) in new technologies are dramatically affecting the way businesses can perform and remain relevant in competitive landscapes. But what does L&D think?

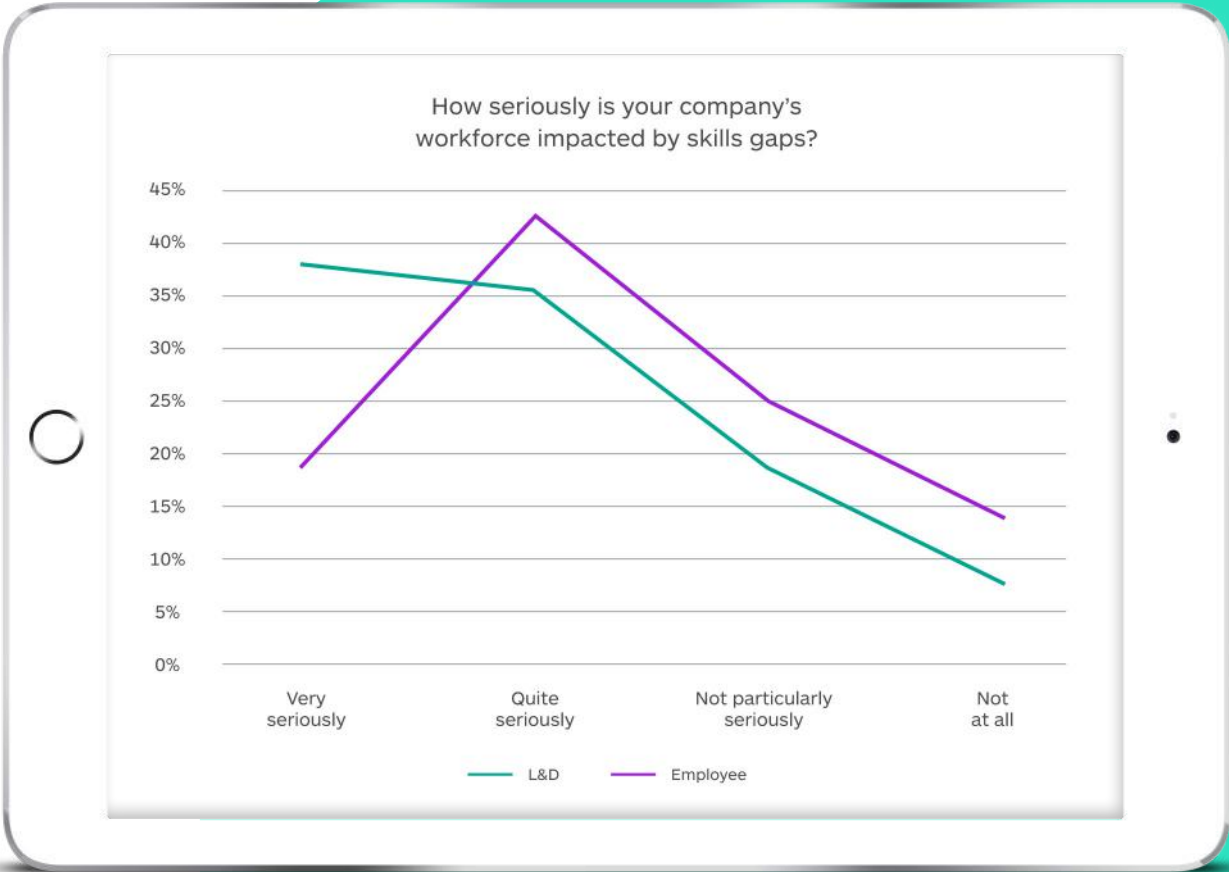
How prepared are we for the skills gap?

Not very, according to our research.

Although **74% of L&D professionals believe the rise of automation and AI is having a serious effect on their workforce**, only 59% have adapted their L&D programmes to address this. Even though three-quarters of L&D believe they will be impacted by a skills gap, so far just over half have taken action.

Employees are even less confident: 60% believe automation will have some effect on their careers over the next five years and 59% don't believe or are unsure whether their current L&D offering can meet these challenges. Staggeringly,

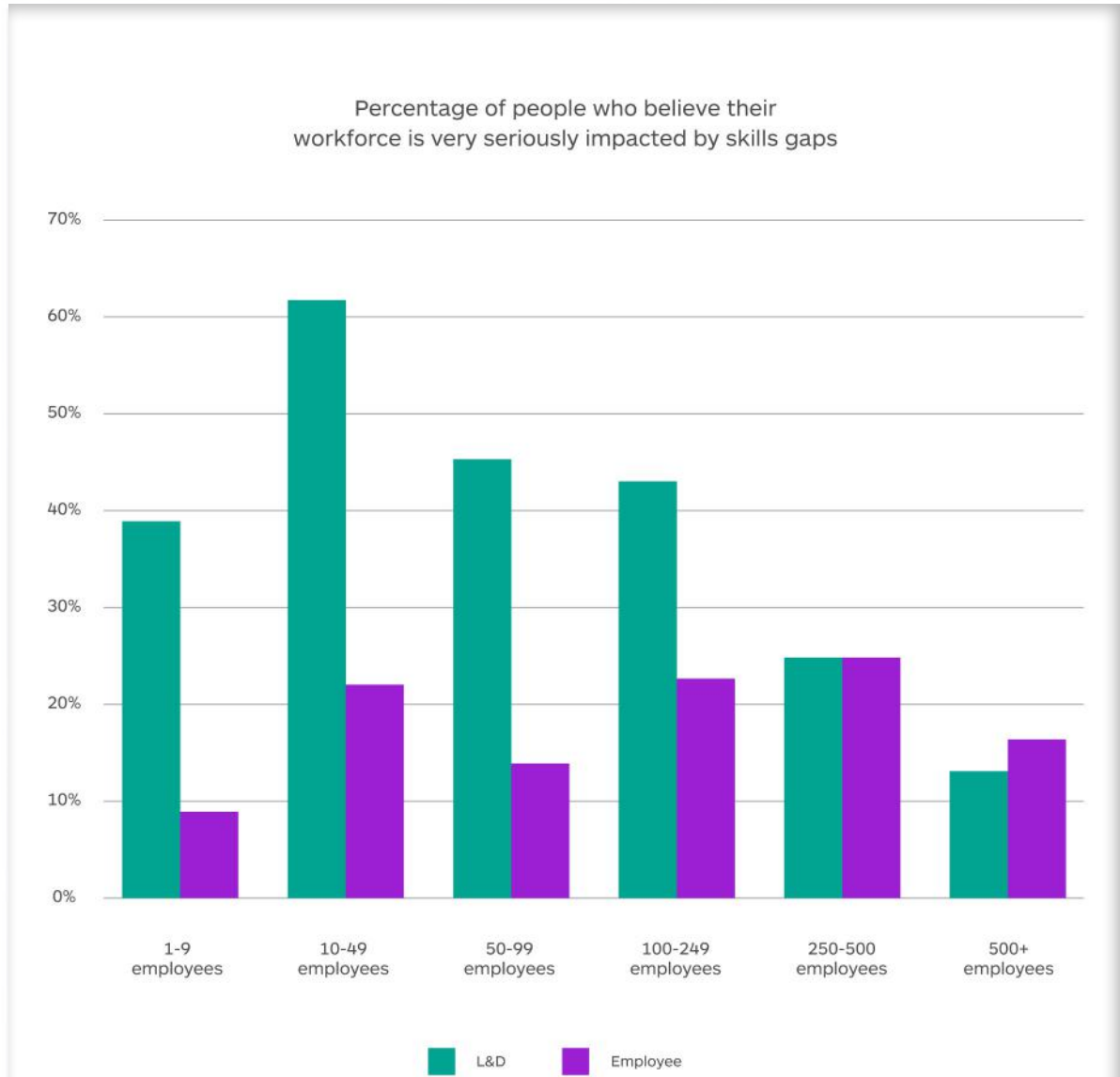
“
nearly a third (32%) of L&D teams do not believe, or are unsure, whether their current L&D offering is adequate to address these potential skills gaps.
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¹ Research Brief: Assessing the IT skills gap in the UK

It appears that the disparity between employer and employee perceptions also vary immensely depending on business size, with L&D generally surpassing employees in their belief that their business is already being very seriously impacted by skills gaps.

Interestingly, this shifts as organisations get larger, with 16% of employees at organisations of 500+ employees feeling already very seriously impacted, compared to only 13% of L&D leaders.

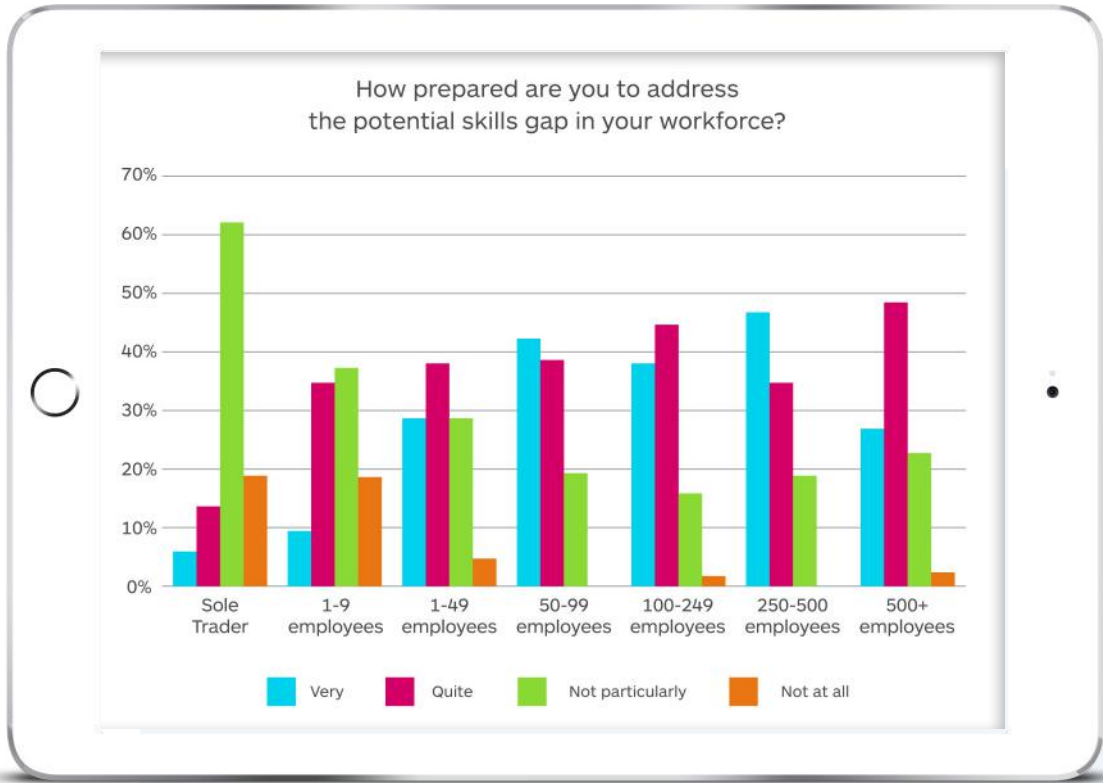


Small businesses are being hit hardest

Our research found that nearly 30% of employers do not feel prepared for the skills gap, however there are clear discrepancies and inequalities when it comes to business size. Smaller organisations (unsurprisingly) are feeling the most pain when it comes to adjusting to the swift changes and emerging technological skills gaps.

For example, we asked 500 L&D leaders:

“With a well-documented requirement to reskill millions of workers in the next three years, how prepared are you to address the potential skills gaps in your workforce caused by AI/Automation?”



Only 5% of sole traders feel very prepared, compared to 47% of organisations with 250–500 employees. Although this is not a surprising trend, it's worrying to see that smaller organisations are likely to suffer the most as a consequence of the looming skills gap.

With over 5.9 million SMEs in the UK in 2019 (businesses with up to 250 employees)¹, this cohort accounts for over 99% of all businesses. And they are not ready for what's to come.

¹ House of Commons
Briefing Paper No 06152 - Business Statistics

Our biggest challenge –the skills gap

As we've touched on already, we know there is a skills gap. There is plenty of research (including this report) which compounds an overall sentiment towards a real disparity in what businesses need vs the skills they currently have.

Business preparedness,
by percentage



Rather interestingly, however, the perceptions of business performance vary from Director level to management, signifying that perhaps leadership is not entirely connected with the hands-on requirements of their business. We found that 93% of business directors felt they were quite or very prepared for the skills gaps, compared with only 66% of middle managers.

Perhaps it's time to talk to our managers and understand exactly what skills are missing and needed to begin to create skills which drive business results.



Employer perceptions of the skills gaps

We wanted to glean some real insight into what future skills L&D thinks their business is going to need and, in true data nerd fashion, compare those with what our employees believe will be needed. Will it be the types of skills the World Economic Forum predicted such as creativity and emotional intelligence, or will it be the technological skills around AI, automation and more?

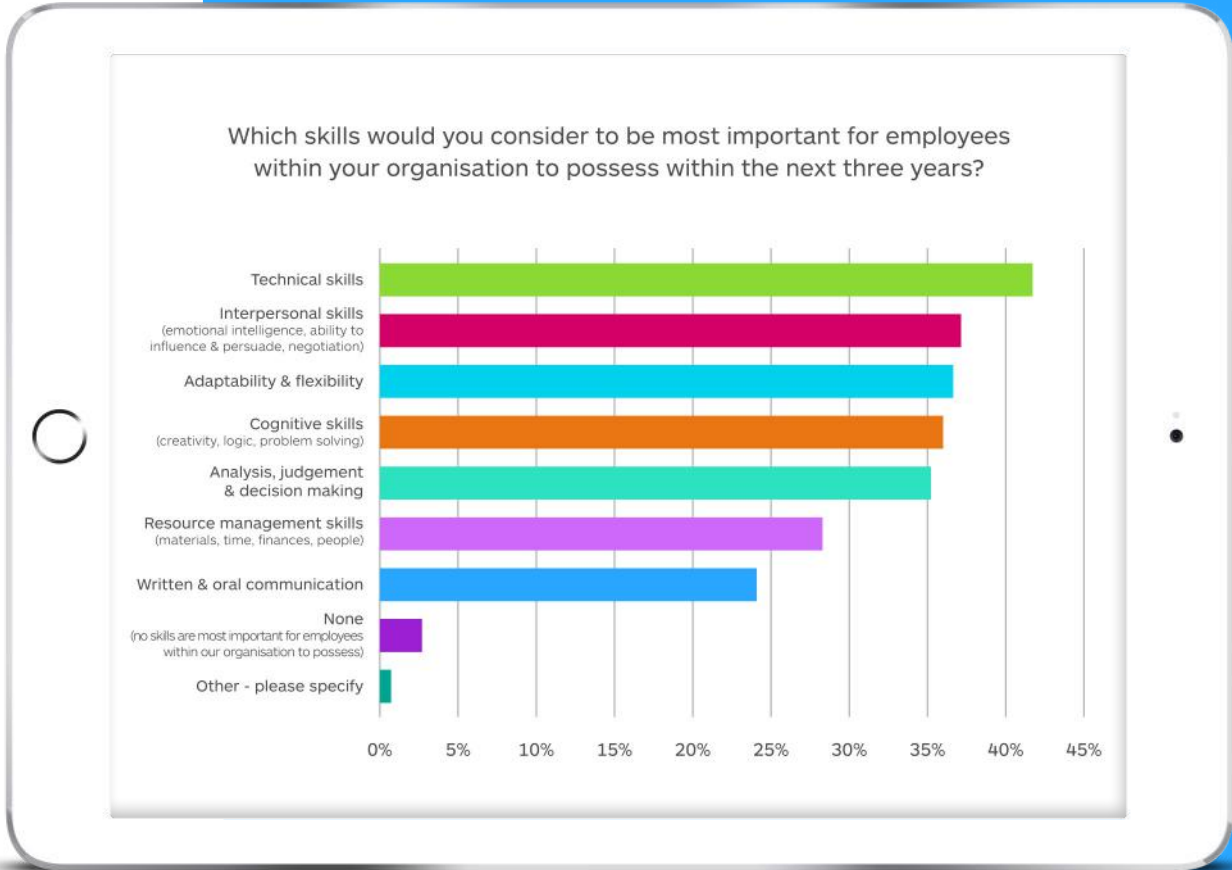
We asked our 500 L&D leaders:

“Which skills would you consider to be most important for employees within your organisation to possess within the next three years? (Tick up to three)”

Given the insurgence of modern technology and proclivity of its use, it's no surprise that

“technical skills were cited as the most needed in the next three years (17%)”

closely followed by soft skills such as interpersonal skills, adaptability and cognitive skills at 15% each.



These insights may well not come as a huge shock to you, given what we have already explored in this report. However we are curious humans here at D2L and decided to explore whether organisation size had any impact on the perceived required skills in the coming three years.

Turns out that yes, as businesses grow their employees need different skills.

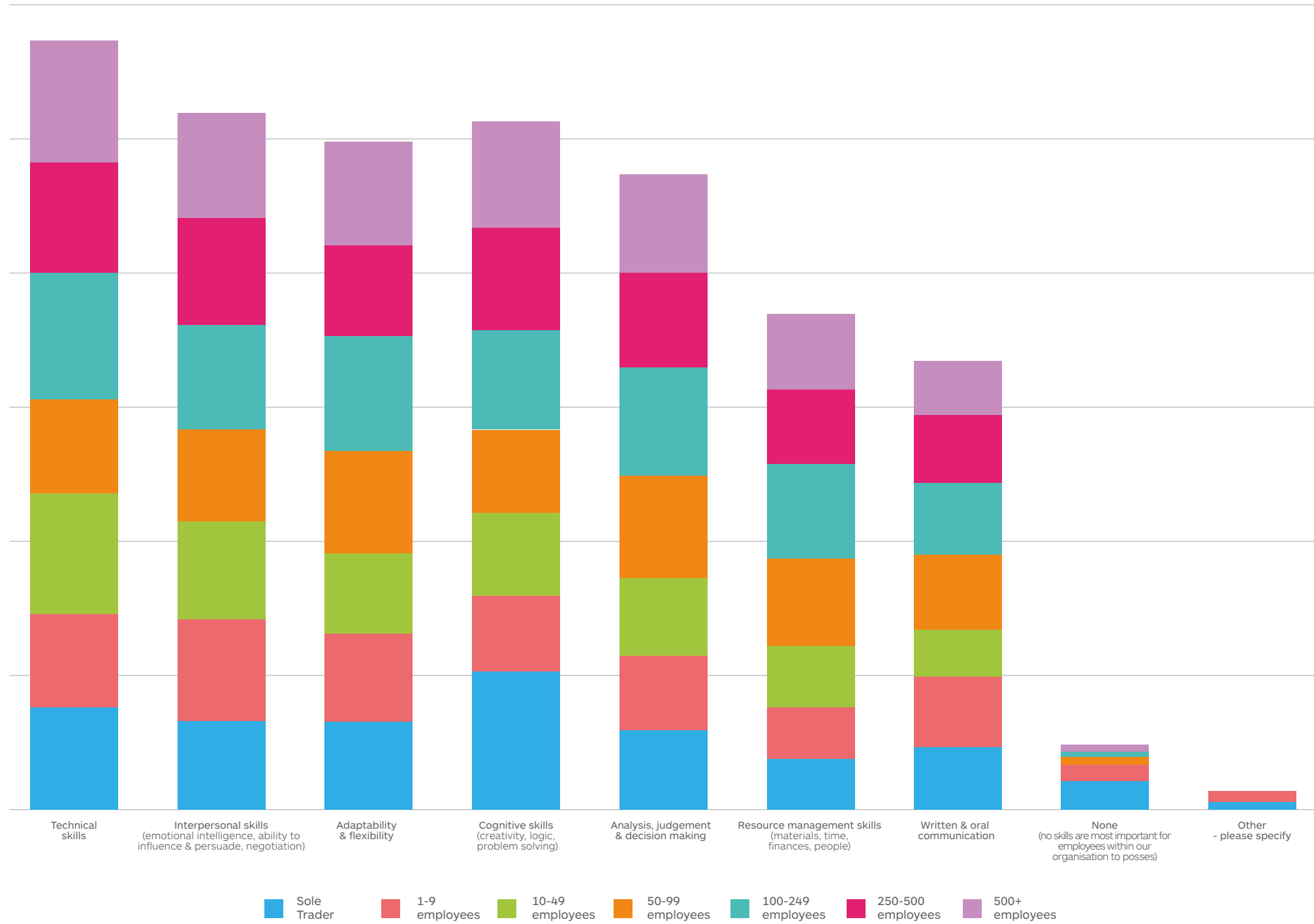
There are some very interesting nuances when you dig into the anticipated needed skills on a company size basis. For example,

only 19% of businesses with 500+ employees cited a need for written and oral communication contrasted with 28% of those with 100–249 employees.

Interpersonal skills were ranked the highest amongst very small businesses (1–9 employees) whereas technical and cognitive skills ranked highest in businesses with more than 500 employees.

To us, this makes sense. Smaller businesses rely immensely on human interactions, with many of their customers buying their product or services because of the people selling them, hence why interpersonal skills rank highly. That's not to say that we don't buy because of people when business gets bigger; likely the reason for this is more due to the business having other priorities and focuses as they grow.

Which skills would you consider to be most important for employees within your organisation to possess within the next three years?





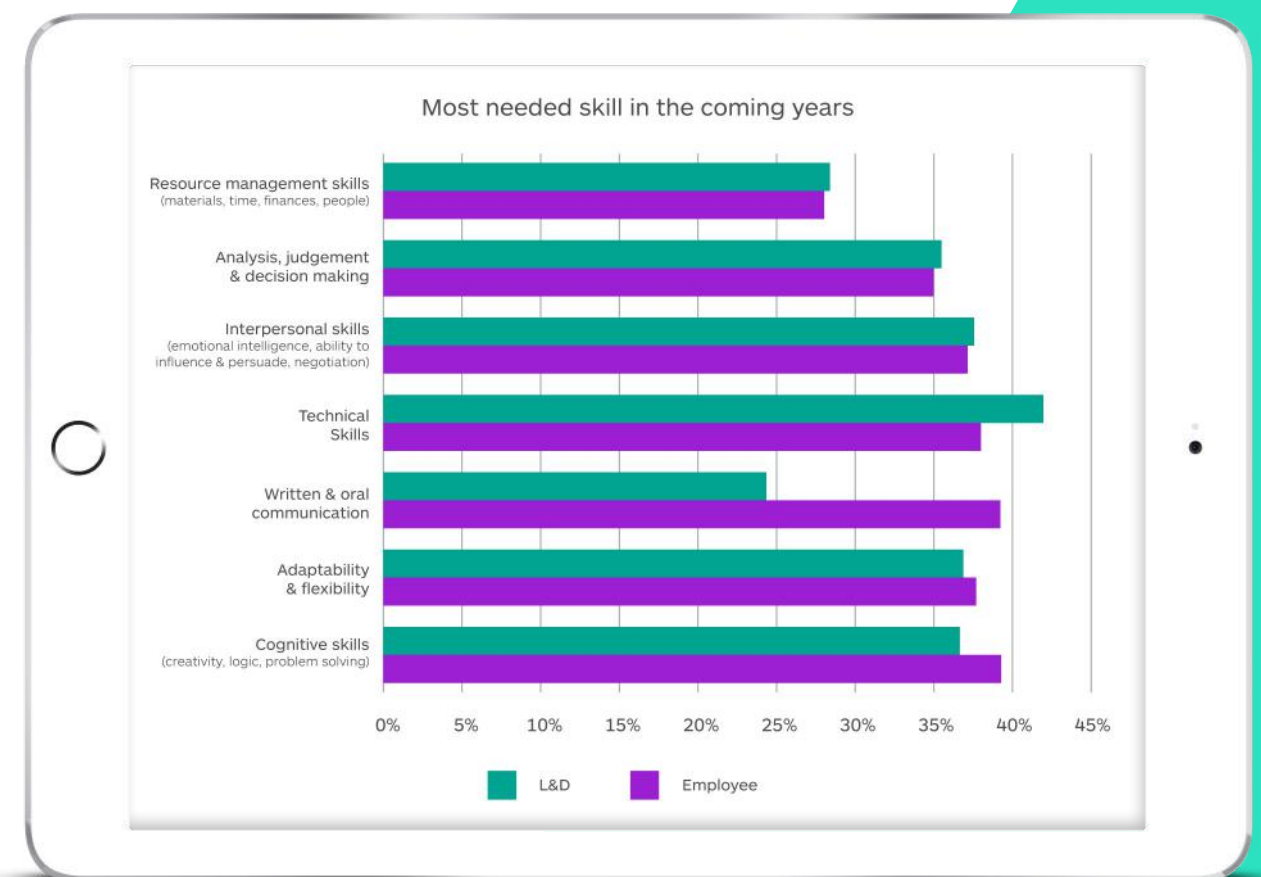
Employee perceptions of skills gaps

Interestingly, there is a marked contrast when we explore what skills L&D thinks their people need when compared to what their employees actually believe will be required. We asked employees how important the same skills would be to their careers in the coming years, and their responses were much more evenly spread.

This result compounds our earlier findings around the sentiments of how automation and AI are impacting workforces at present (37% of L&D said 'very seriously' compared to only 19% of employees). Clearly, our people are more comfortable than we are with regards to the skills they need both now and in the future to do their jobs.

Ultimately, this diverse requirement of skill sets changes as the business grows, highlighting a clear need for organisations to offer opportunities for continuous development. Not only does L&D need to consider the skills which the business will require in the future as a result of the introduction and wider adoption of AI and automation; they also must understand the skills which will be needed by the business as it scales and grows too.

Exploring the perceptions of L&D provides us with some thought-provoking insights in what is needed in the near future. But we're not the ones doing the work, our people are. Our employees are the boots on the ground and they're the ones undertaking many of the tasks which may well be affected by a looming skills gap. So what do they think? Do they agree with L&D?



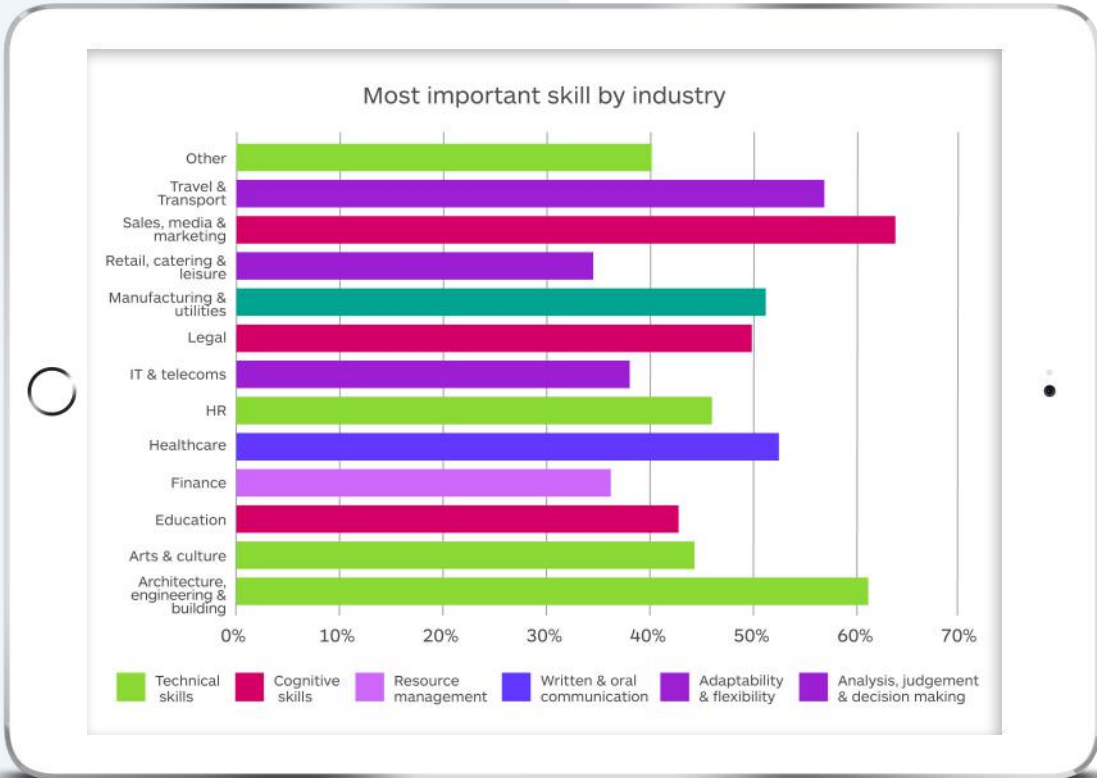
It's compelling to discover that skills such as written and communication skills, which can often be overlooked by L&D due to their foundational nature, are actually the skill which was ranked as 'very important' by the highest volume of our respondents (39%). Clearly, our people aren't seeing such a risk when it comes to technical skills, but that doesn't mean those risks aren't there. It seems that in spite of a multitude of research solidifying the belief that jobs will be displaced as a result of the wider adoption of automation and AI, in many cases our employees aren't convinced.

In fact, according to our research, **33% of employees do not believe that their career will be impacted by automation.**

What skills do different industries need?

When we started digging into this data we began to wonder whether the perceived skills needed would vary across industries, with some clearly being much more affected by technological advances than others (for example, manufacturing vs legal).

We examined what each industry's employees said would be the most important skills they'd need within the next five years and the results are staggering.



This is a very interesting graph because, although written and oral skills were selected as 'very important' by the highest majority of our overall audience, when you dissect the data sets and segment it by industry, it tells a very different story.

Rather unsurprisingly, the healthcare industry's top needed skill was written and oral communication, whereas technical skills appear to be in high demand in industries

such as Architecture, Engineering and HR. It seems Sales, Media and Marketing instead value skills in cognition such as creativity, logic and problem solving.

This diversity of required skills showcases just how nuanced each industry is (and indeed the businesses within them) and how much work will be required by L&D to truly understand these needs.

How do they plan to acquire new skills?

Because this report is namely focused on the skills gap caused by AI and automation, we were keen to discover more about the role workplace training plays in helping close that gap. We've already outlined the lay of the land and highlighted some of the primary skills industries will require in the coming years. But how are we going to acquire these skills? How are our employees going to get access to this new knowledge they know they are going to need?



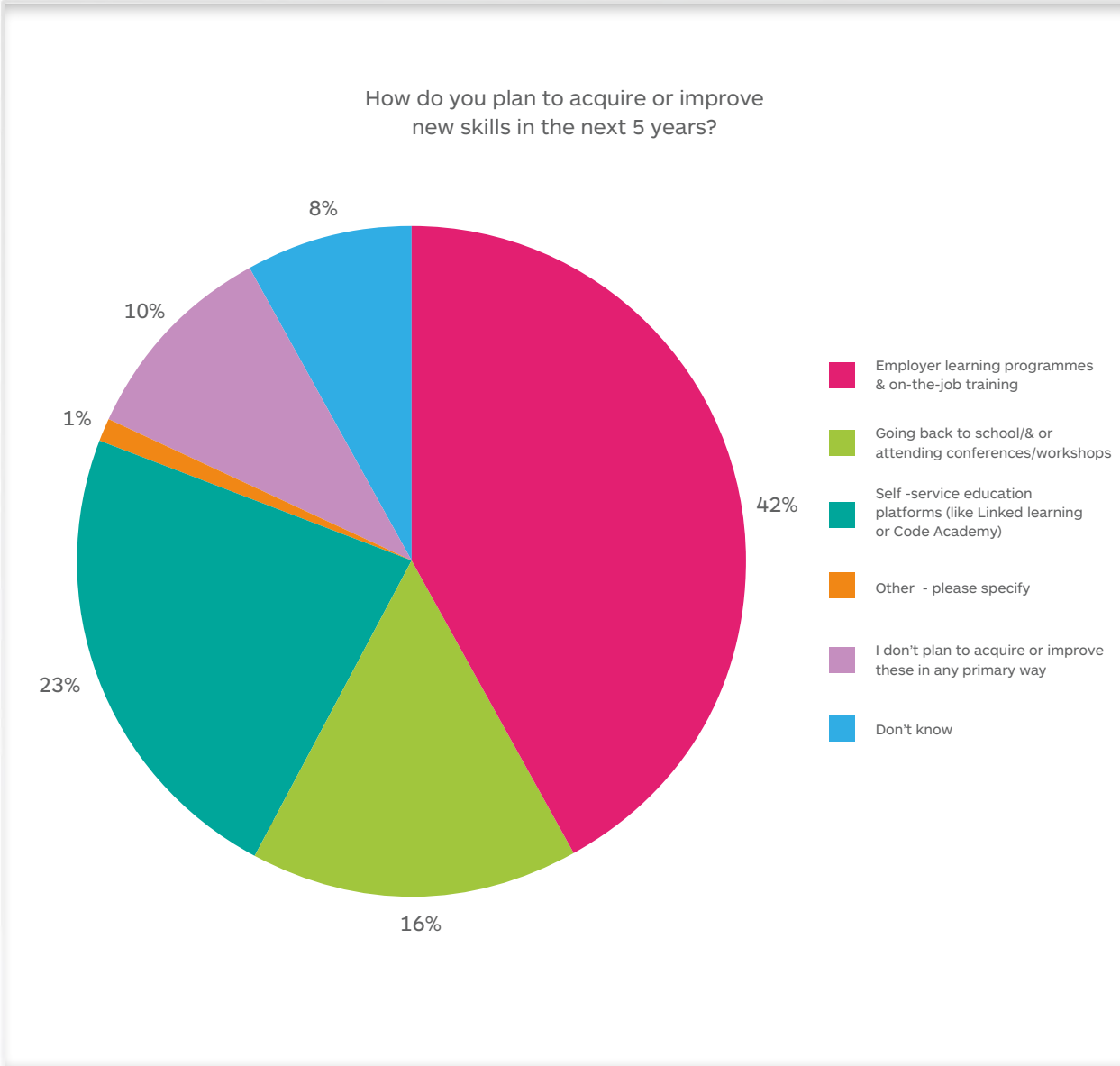
Within our survey, we asked our 500 employees:



This question relates to cognitive skills, adaptability and flexibility, written and oral communication, technical skills, interpersonal skills, analysis, judgement and decision-making and resource management skills. What is the primary way in which you plan to acquire or improve these skills within the next 5 years?



The majority (42%) of our cohort said they planned to acquire new skills through employer learning programmes and on-the-job training. But, as we discovered earlier in the report, 38% of employees are neutral or dissatisfied with their current L&D offering, so this may not be as straightforward as we thought.



Rather worryingly, over 17% of our respondents have no plans to acquire or improve new skills, or don't know how they'll do it.

So what's holding them back?

How L&D is currently performing

We clearly have a perceived skills gap amongst both L&D and employees. We also know that a lack of training will affect whether an employee will work somewhere, as well as their decision to leave a job (more on this later).

With 73% of L&D leaders and over 60% of employees believing they are very or quite seriously impacted by the skills gap it begs the question, what are we doing to fix it?

It remains an ongoing dichotomy within the world of learning: what a business needs vs what a learner **wants** are rarely aligned. Learning and development teams are often still left searching for solutions which align with the needs and expectations of our learners.

And for good reason.

The world of personalisation, algorithms and artificial intelligence is here to stay and it's elevated what our learners expect from our learning interventions. Add to that the need to replace nearly a third of the skills our employees currently hold and it can become an overwhelming challenge.

How is L&D working to solve these known challenges?

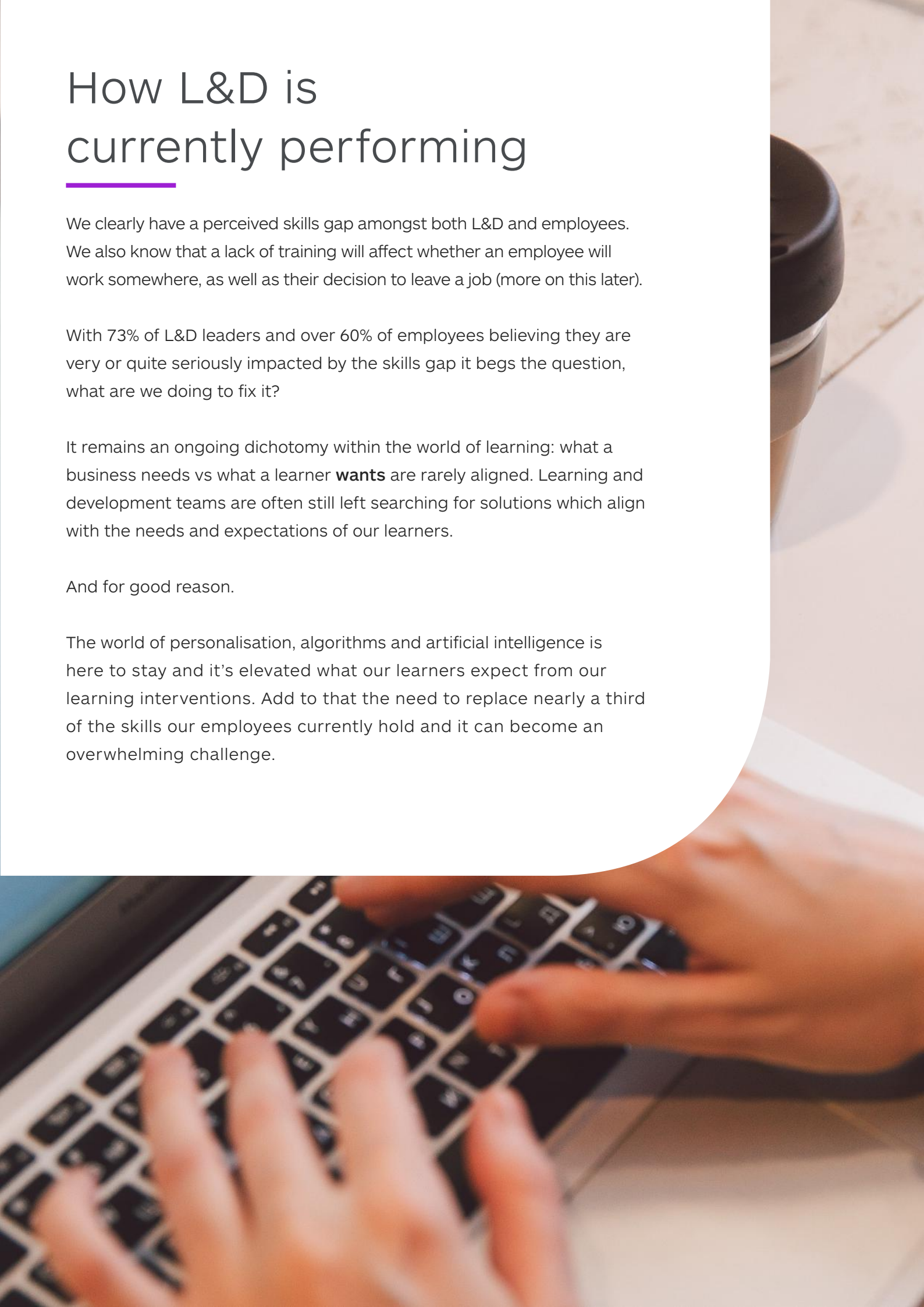
We were keen to understand the current performance from learning and development, particularly from a learner's perspective, to better contextualise how prepared L&D may well be to solving the skills gaps challenge.

In a nutshell,

learners aren't entirely satisfied with the current solutions and support that L&D is offering, with only 20% of those surveyed saying they were 'very satisfied' with the current learning programmes they received.

Firstly, it's important to understand what learning approaches and technologies are available within organisations.

Based on what we discussed earlier in this report, the rise of digitalisation and technological advances etc, you'd expect digital learning environments to be the most widely used. But our research shows a very different story.



We asked our L&D leaders:

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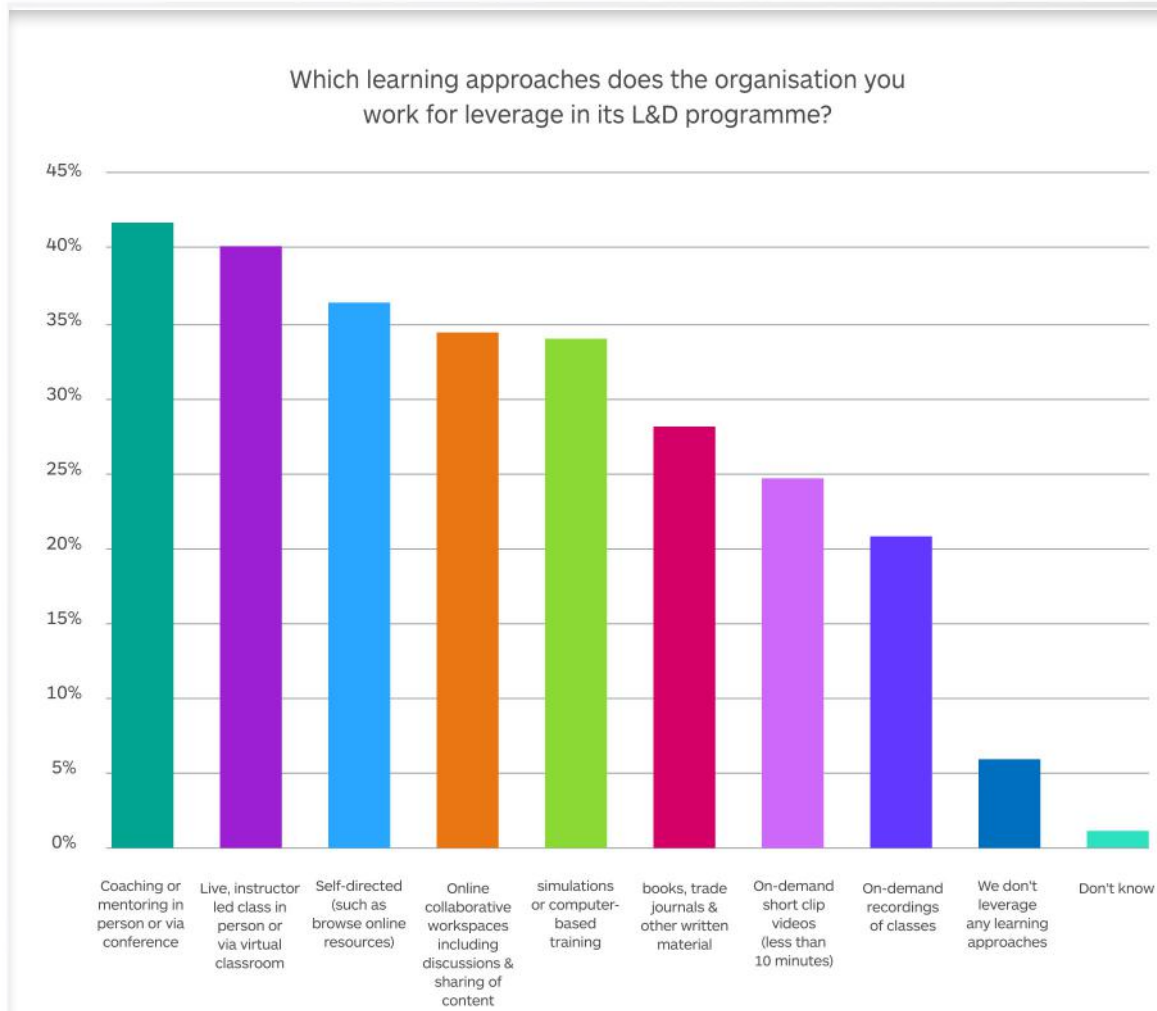
Which learning approaches does the organisation you work for leverage in its L&D programme? (Tick all that apply)

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We were startled to see that, actually, some of the more 'traditional' learning approaches such as classroom training (albeit potentially virtual), books and coaching and mentoring still feature highly in the L&D arsenal.

It seems many organisations are adopting a more blended approach to delivering learning, likely seeking to meet the varying shifts in learning wants, needs and expectations as well as accommodate four different generations of worker.

We were particularly buoyed to see more modern opportunities in the form of video clips and self-directed learning being utilised. Given that these experiences reflect the knowledge acquisition experiences people have come to expect outside of the workplace, it's no surprise that L&D has begun to adopt them.



But what do our employees think about it?

It's clear organisations are expanding learning options for employees; there are a diverse array of options available in terms of how they can learn and gain new knowledge.

But is it working?

As we mentioned earlier, only 20% of employees are very satisfied with the L&D programmes they currently receive, which sounds a bit scary, but it isn't all entirely doom and gloom.

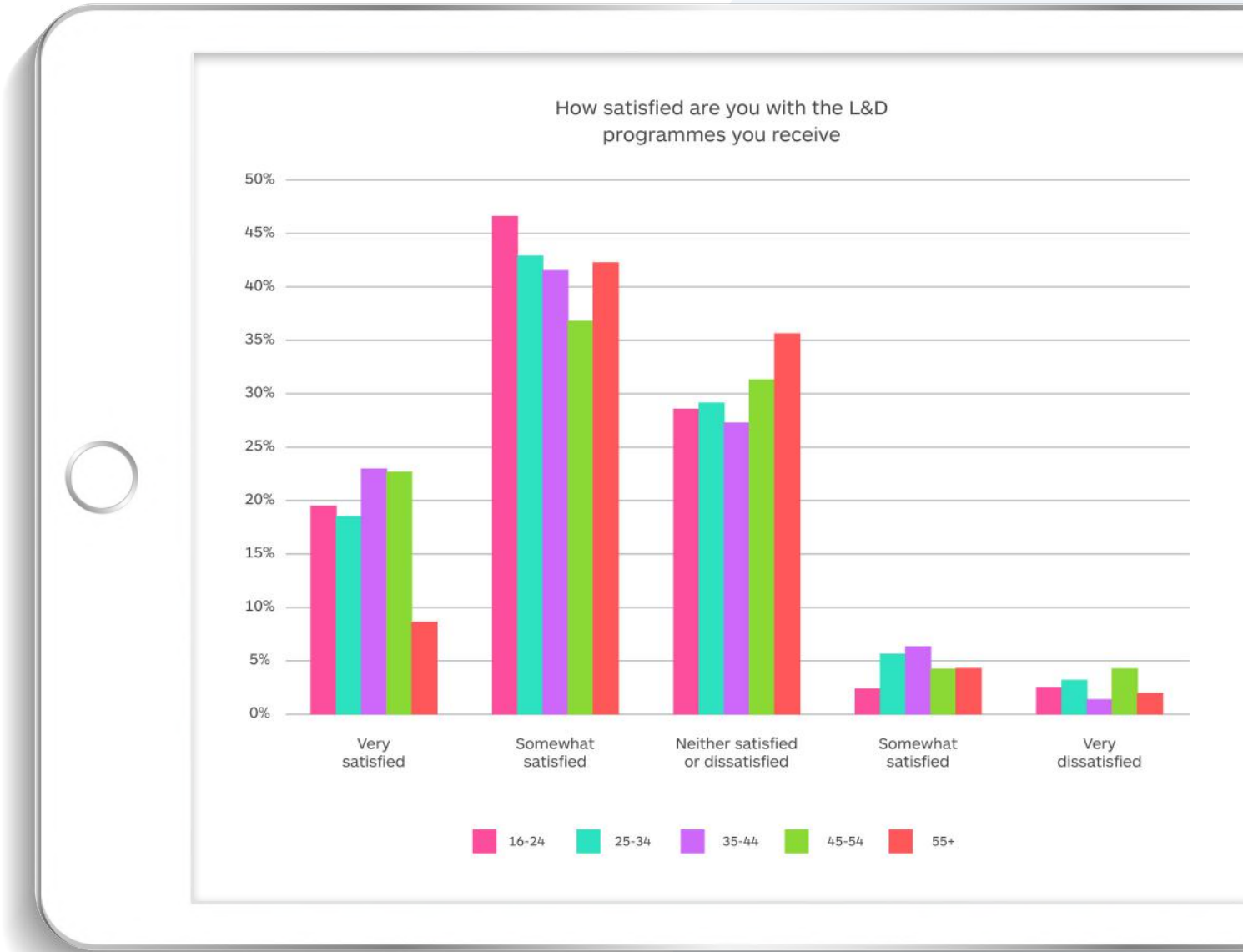
As you can see, 62% of employees are very or somewhat satisfied with the learning programmes they currently receive. That's great news, but it does mean that

“
38% of our people are neutral or dissatisfied with the current situation.
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It gets even more fascinating when we break this down by age.

If you listen to the hype of our industry, given the prevalence of more traditional learning methods such as classroom training, you'd expect Gen Y and Gen Z to be more dissatisfied than their older peers, however that does not seem to be the case.

Interestingly, audiences who are 55+ are the most dissatisfied with the learning programmes they receive, with only 9% saying they were 'very satisfied', compared with 19% of 25–34 year olds.



So, what do our people actually want?

It's all good and well understanding the challenges we are having with meeting the growing needs of our businesses through the emerging skills gap, but quite another to meet the needs and desires of our employees throughout this transition.

Organisations are searching for solutions to help them meet core challenges beyond the skills gap including:

- Attracting and retaining top talent in order to remain competitive and reduce employee turnover costs
- Align their L&D output with the expectations of their learners through technology, culture and engagement
- Improvements to business bottom lines through performance, upskilling and productivity by building better habits and behaviours towards professional and personal development



Our challenges in L&D extend way beyond the skills gap. Indeed, the skills gap adds an additional layer of complexity to the challenge but the point still remains the same: do we know what our people want from workplace training?

We wanted to understand what it is that our learners want, because we know that their expectations have changed, so we asked them:

“

Which strategy do you think would provide the BIGGEST improvement for learning in your organisation?

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The results are, frankly, enlightening.

The highest percentage of employees said that the biggest improvement would be from providing more personalised, guided learning journeys (20%), closely followed by a clear desire for more engagement and motivational learning triggers (20%). Learners also clearly want opportunities to apply their learning in practical scenarios, with 16% saying that L&D strategies need to better ‘support more real world practice’.

Amongst this data set, our learners found the least value in gaining richer feedback and introducing more business and benchmark data into learning.

A staggering 13% said that no strategy would provide the biggest improvement, which makes one wonder whether some employees even truly see or understand the merits of learning on the job.

We still have work to do.

Our top two answers account for over 40% of all responses and clearly point to a weakness in technology. Regardless of the changes we make in strategy to better close the gaps in skills and learner expectations, we are falling down when it comes to technology.

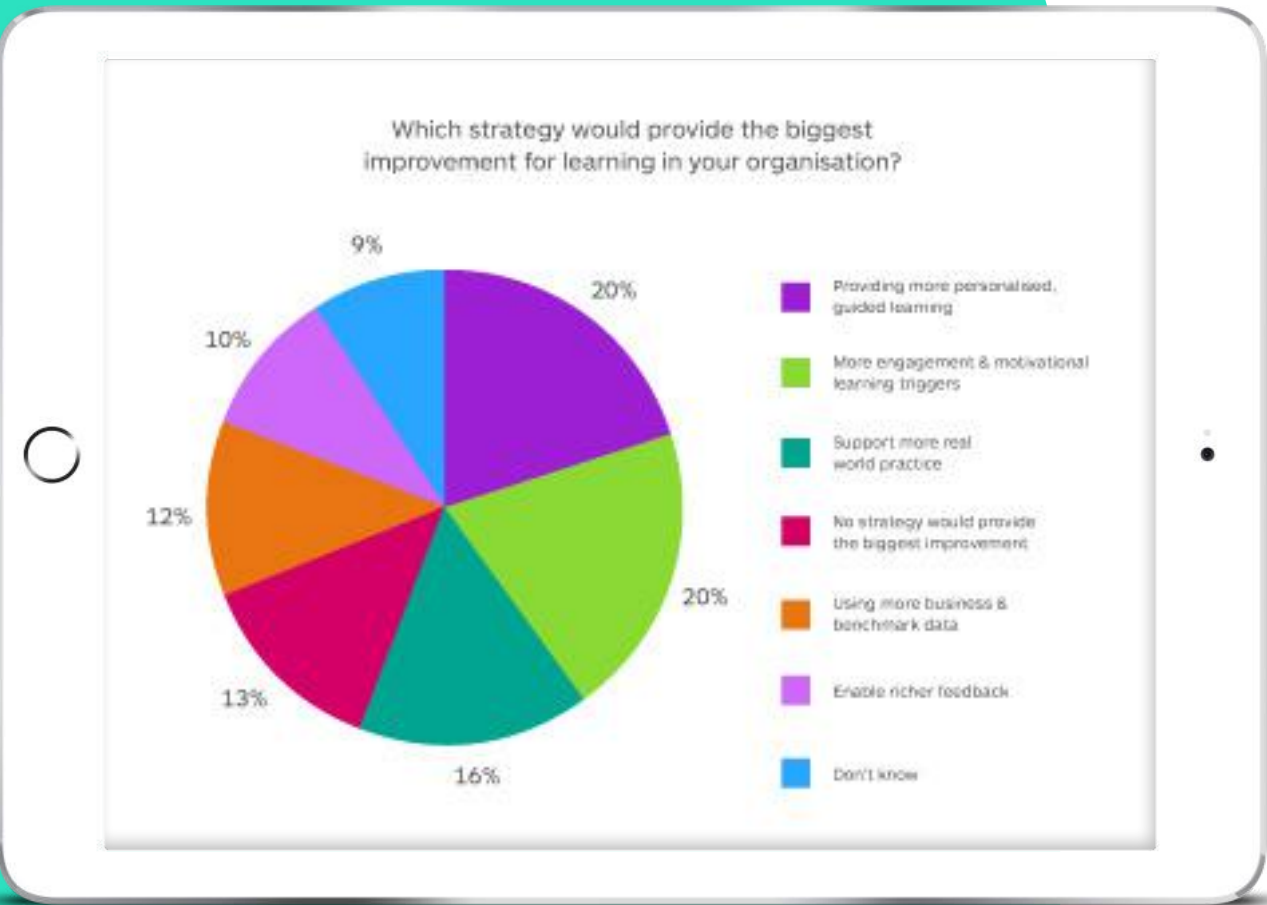
Unfortunately, there is not a L&D team out there who will be able to provide more **personalised learning experiences** without the use of good technology. The same applies to **driving engagement and increasing motivational learning triggers**.

Ironically, in many cases it appears the use of automation in this tech may well help to close the skills gap caused by automation and AI.

Let's be clear here.

Technology is an enabler, not the panacea for all of our learning challenges. However with a clear directive from our employees around personalisation, we may well need to explore how our tech can better support our requirements.

More on this later.



What is making new skill acquisition a challenge for employees?

We know that there are more pressures on our employees than ever. Remote working, high workloads and demands from a variety of stakeholders and departments means that even at the best of times our people are performing a delicate balancing act.

Sometimes, even getting them to undertake any workplace training is a real challenge. But is it a culture thing, a time limitation or something else entirely?

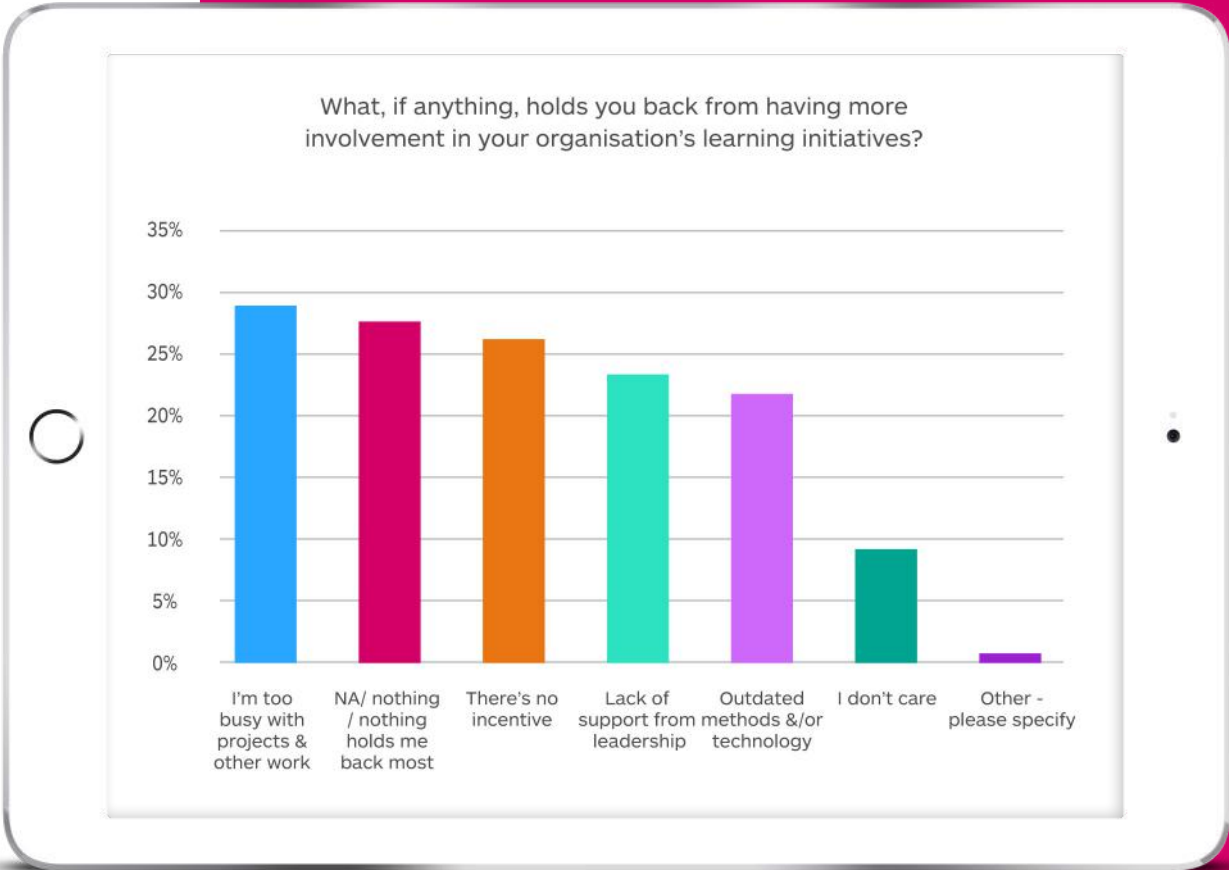
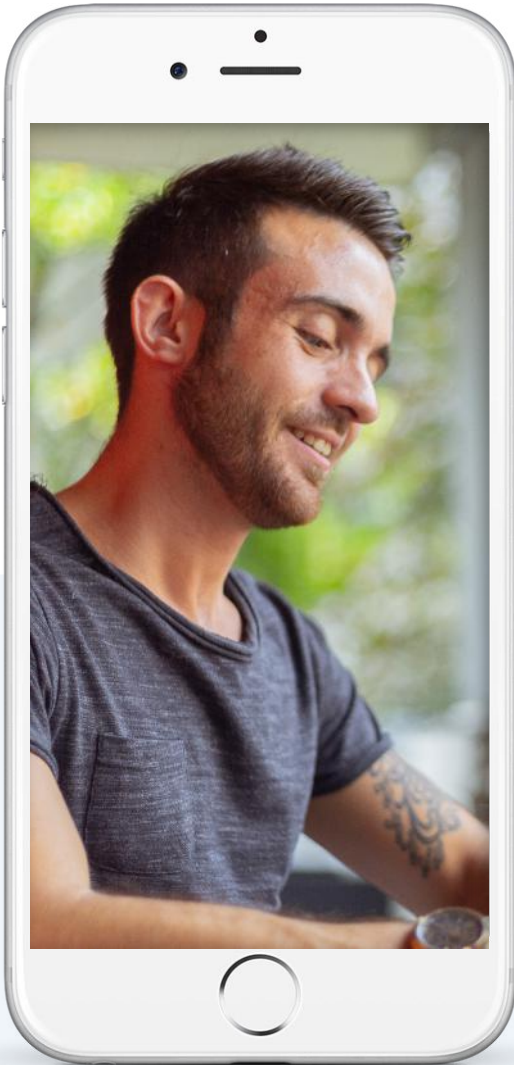
When exploring this in more detail, we asked employees:

“What, if anything, holds you back from participating in / having more involvement with your organisation’s learning initiatives most? (Tick up to three)”

Time, or a lack thereof, is the biggest culprit for prohibiting our employees from being able to engage with our learning initiatives. Of those asked, 29% of employees said: “I am too busy with projects and other work.”

We know that our employees are time poor, but that is not the only reason our employees aren’t interacting with learning initiatives in the workplace. A lack of incentives to learn, a lack of support from leadership and outdated methods and/or technology also were ranked highly.

A rather feisty 10% said they didn’t care. Ouch.



Is it that employees don’t feel connected to learning so aren’t making the time? Or do they really just not care? The reasons behind this are moot, namely because the root cause of all of these challenges point directly to the internal learning culture.

After all, 40% of employees said that the key ways to improve learning in their organisation were through providing more personalised, guided learning journeys and more engagement and motivational learning triggers. Are they getting what they need to connect with learning and get the most of the time they do have spare? Is L&D doing enough to make this modern, meaningful and continuous?

What's holding L&D back?

You're probably reading this thinking about all of the challenges you're having in your workplace. Moving from learning to performance, getting your stakeholders to stop seeing you as order takers. Changing a whole learning culture with outdated technology and contending with 10% of employees who just don't care about learning.

It's not easy. We know. But rest assured in the knowledge that many are in the same boat as you, and there are solutions which we'll explore in the next sections.

Before that though, let's examine the battles L&D are really having when it comes to developing the necessary, business-critical skills their employees need in their organisations.

We asked L&D leaders:



What, if any, difficulties are you coming up against when trying to develop the skills you consider most important within your workforce? (Tick all that apply)



Generational divides appear to be the main issue for most L&D teams, with over 35% saying that their biggest difficulty was “trying to engage with a wide array of staff from different generations and with different experience levels.” However, that is closely followed by getting interest from staff, which is frankly not surprising when 10% of the employees surveyed said that they didn't care about learning at work.

Budgets and timeframes were also prevalent within the pains of our L&D cohort, as was ill-suited technology.



What technology is going to work?

“
With 27% of L&D leaders saying that the main reason they are having difficulties in upskilling their staff in the wake of the growing skills gap was inadequate L&D technologies,
”

we were keen to better understand what that looked like. Earlier on we explored the fact that a big chunk of L&D teams still deliver learning via classroom or coaching environments, which still certainly have their place. But should they be the primary solution to our organisational training needs?

As the world continues to evolve and the prevalence of automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence escalates, many businesses will be searching for more modern, scalable solutions to better meet their training needs. Often times something as simple as a learning platform can help an organisation to evolve their approaches and better meet the needs of their learners. A great LMS can even support some of the things learners said they want most, such as more personal and appropriate learning experiences.

So we asked employees whether their organisation used a learning platform. According to our research, only 54% of organisations are currently using a learning management system, or some sort of online tool which supports employee development.



It begs the question: how are we ever going to fill our modern skills gaps, reach our remote and global workforce and train them when we are still primarily using classroom and face-to-face training environments?

The critical role of L&D

With all of this upheaval, change and ambiguity when it comes to skills gaps caused by the likes of AI and automation, L&D still has an ongoing and vital role in connecting with employees and providing them the skills which they need to be productive, happy and knowledgeable when at work.

So, are we giving our staff the skills they need to succeed now? It's easy to lose sight of the present when we are preoccupied with how to prepare for the future, but our staff still have critical learning needs and our research suggests that we could be doing more. Let's explore.

Onboarding-equipping our people from day one

The skills gap must be filled by organisations, but that doesn't mean all our focus should be just on existing employees. Of course, in many cases businesses will hire new people with unique skills to help solve the skills challenge they're experiencing. In fact, 54% of L&D leaders said that will be their main strategy to help manage the skills gap.

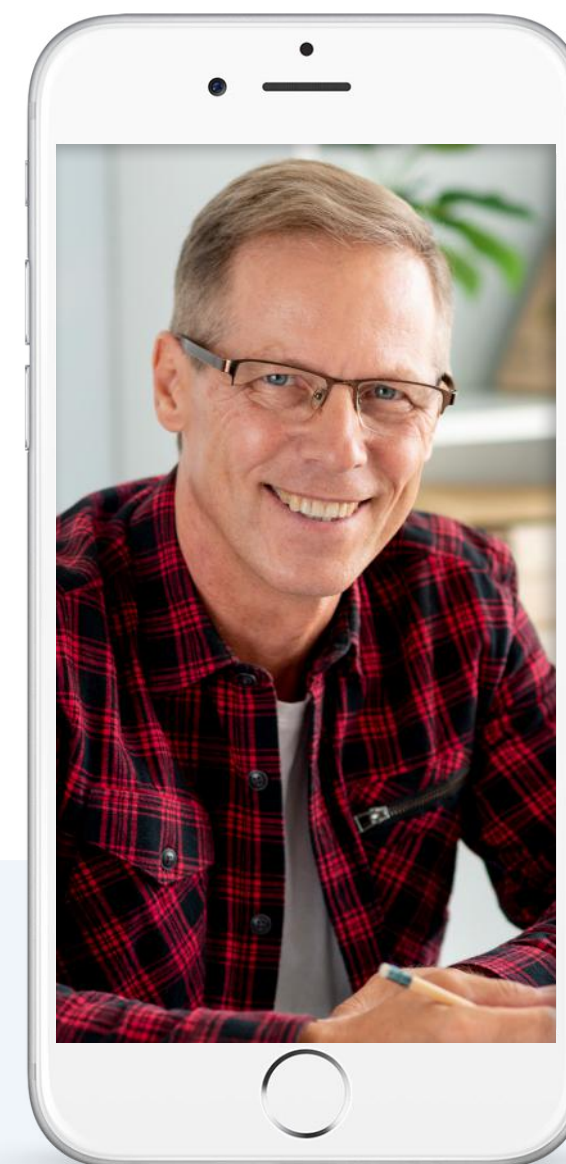
So we're going to expect a deluge of newly skilled staff to join our businesses. And when they join us, our new employees need to know what to do, where to do it and how to do it. How well equipped are they with the skills they need to do their roles?

In spite of strategic plans to hire in new skills, **only 61% of L&D feel that new entrants to the workforce are equipped with the skills they need for their roles**, with 62% of them saying they feel it's their organisation's job to upskill them.

This lack of present skills and opportunities to upskill when at work can have a major impact on an individual's career. Learners seem to

agree, with 50% of employees believing their career has been negatively impacted due to a lack of training at work.

It seems this sentiment is not shared generationally, with 58% of young workers (16–24) feeling negatively impacted due to a lack of training when compared to only 29% of those who are 55+.



Not all businesses are created equal

We again see some level of inequality when it comes to employees who work at smaller businesses; their careers seem to be the hardest hit from a lack of training. 65% of employees at organisations with under £100k turnover said their careers were negatively impacted when compared to only 45% of those with £500m turnover. Is this because smaller organisations aren't able to invest in learning like larger ones can?

Truthfully, it's **staggering to discover that even still, nearly 50% of people at very large organisations feel they aren't getting the training they need to progress their careers.**

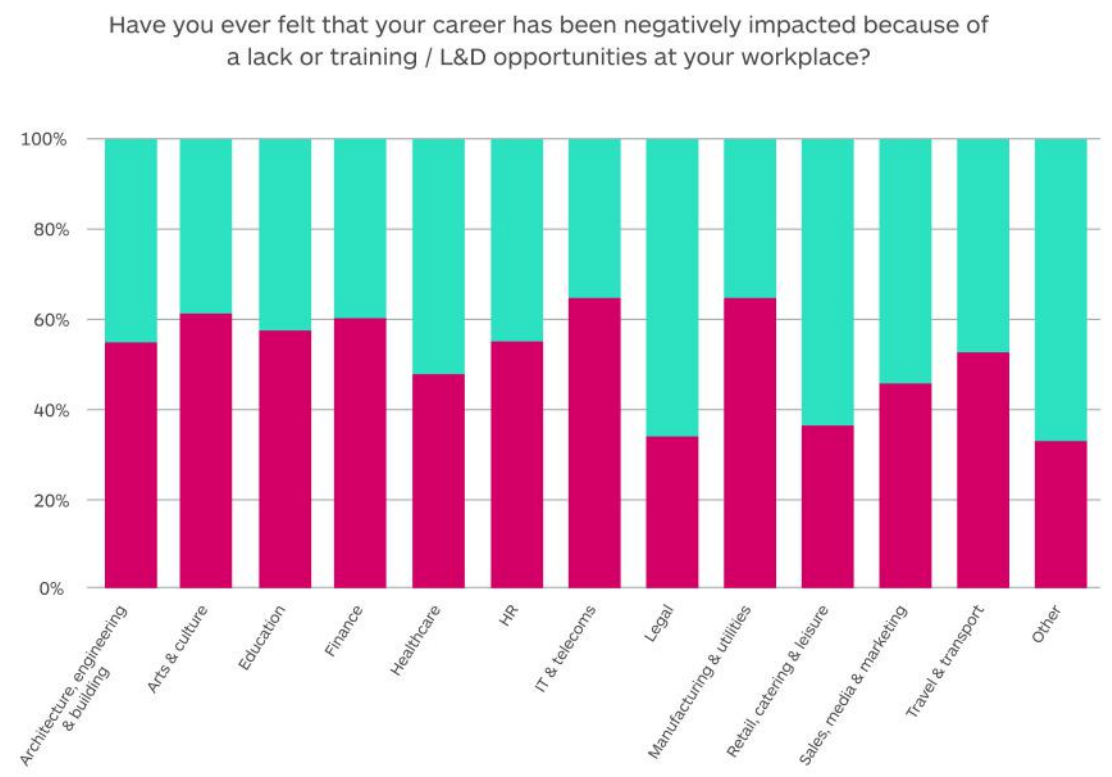
Workers in some industries seem to be impacted more than others too. For example, the manufacturing industry has been worse hit, with 65% of employees saying their career has been negatively impacted due to a lack of development opportunities. Conversely, retail and legal seem to be resilient to a lack of upskilling, with over 60% of people saying their careers haven't been affected (63% and 67% respectively).

Does a lack of development affect employee choices?

With 50% of employees believing their career has been negatively impacted due to a lack of training at work, we wondered whether a lack of upskilling opportunities could also affect whether a person would choose to work at a business, and indeed whether they would leave a role because of this. It would appear that to many of our people, the opportunity to upskill and re-skill when at work is of critical importance.

We asked our 500 employees:

“
How important is/would the quality of an organisation's learning and development initiatives be when making your decision on whether or not to work there?
”



Employee perceptions of skills gaps

Only 19% of people said that the quality of an organisation's L&D initiatives would not influence their decision to work there.

It seems younger generations value development more, with only 10% of 16–24 year olds citing this compared with 44% of 55+.

Employers seem to agree, with a staggering 92% believing that L&D quality has an effect when people are making career choices.

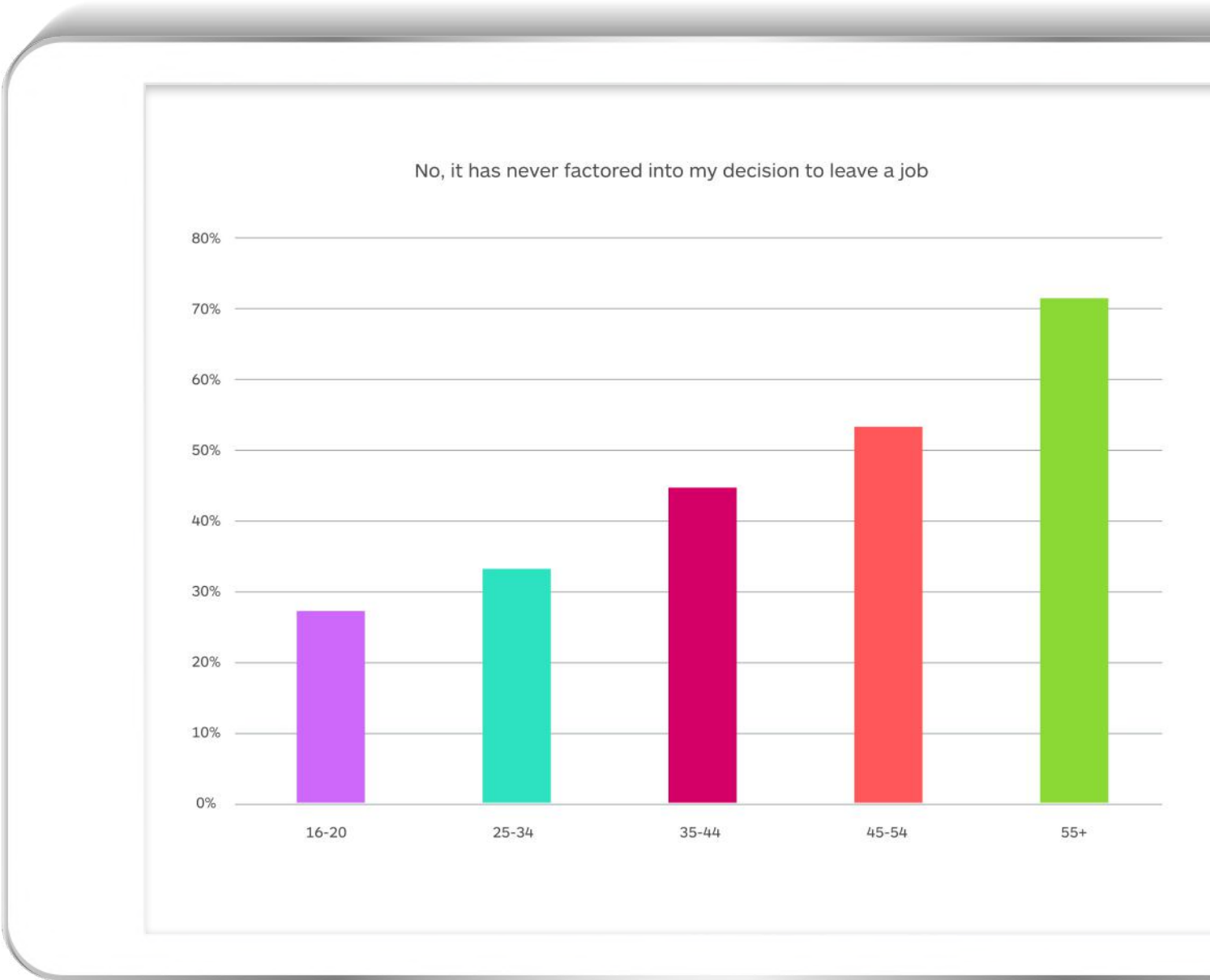
This graph shows an interesting trend, with L&D practitioners clearly finding more importance in their function than their employees do. But that doesn't mean that L&D isn't important or vital to an organisation, all this highlights is learners' overall attitudes towards L&D at present.



A lack of training also affects employee turnover

A staggering 47% of employees have said that the quality and availability of L&D has affected their decision to leave a job. Again, age seems to be a determining factor here, with over 71%

of 55+ individuals never factoring in L&D when they leave a role compared with only 27% of 16–24 year olds.



Perhaps it's high time for L&D practitioners to do more to meet the needs and wants of their employees to truly resonate with them and be perceived as more valuable and important to employees.

How are employers addressing the skills gaps?

So far, we've discovered that there is a very clear skills gap. Not every industry agrees as to what those skills are, but one thing is for certain: L&D are faced with some real challenges in coming years. Engaging employees, evolving learning cultures and modernising tech, just to name a few.

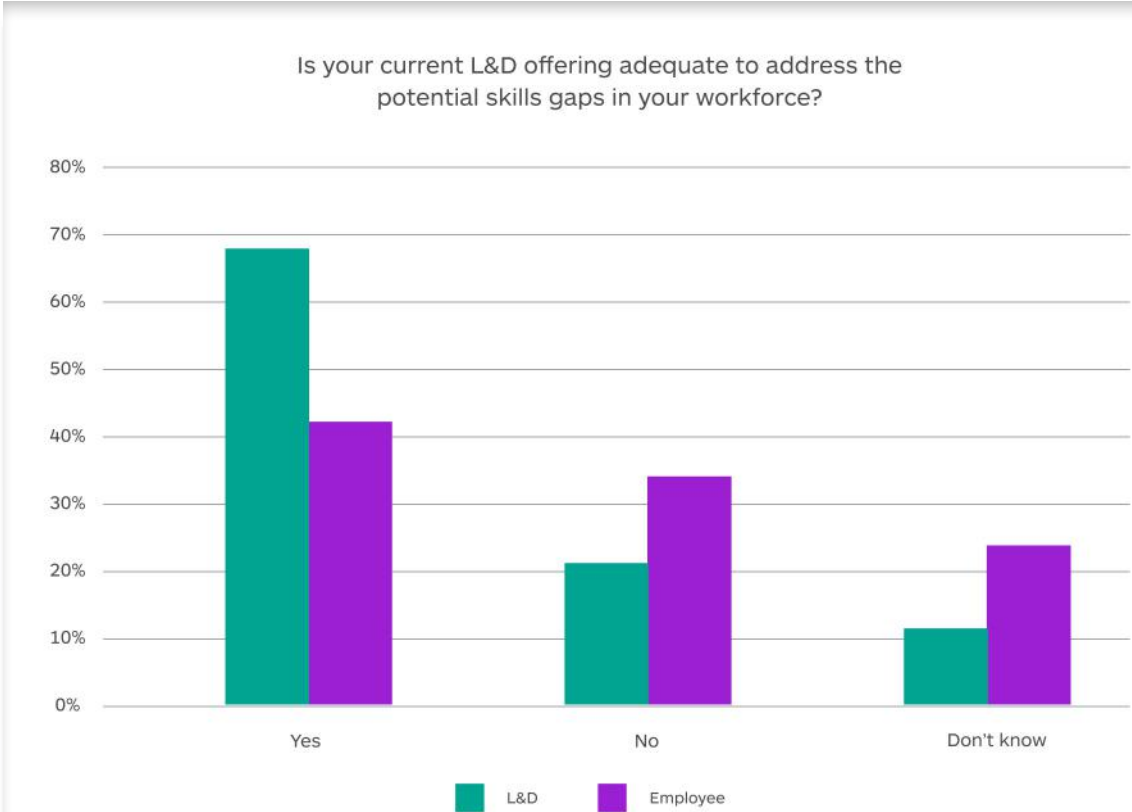
There is no clear cut way to approach this; each organisation will have its own challenges and therefore solutions to these, however we were keen to explore whether there were any key threads that joined us all together in this. We wanted to better understand what L&D is currently doing to manage and address skills gaps and indeed combine them with what our employees want, to get a much clearer picture of the current learning landscape.

L&D and employees are generally misaligned

First things first: let's remind ourselves that 32% of L&D leaders do not think, or are unsure, that their current L&D offering is adequate to meet the needs of the growing skills gaps. That does mean that

It seems that we don't agree. Add that to the fact that only 38% of L&D leaders believe their organisation is taking the skills gap 'very seriously' and we have a bit of a problem.

“ 68% of those surveyed believe L&D is meeting the needs of learner and business, but our research shows that 59% of employees do not think their L&D's offering is adequate. ”



How to improve our L&D offering

It's clear from our research that a large quantity of our employees are not entirely satisfied with how L&D currently helps them learn at work. We know that they are extremely time poor, that they want more personalised experiences and triggers and prompts which help to remind them to learn.

We postulated earlier that these challenges may well be allayed through the introduction of more modern technology which enables some of this, but is that what learners think is needed?

We asked them:



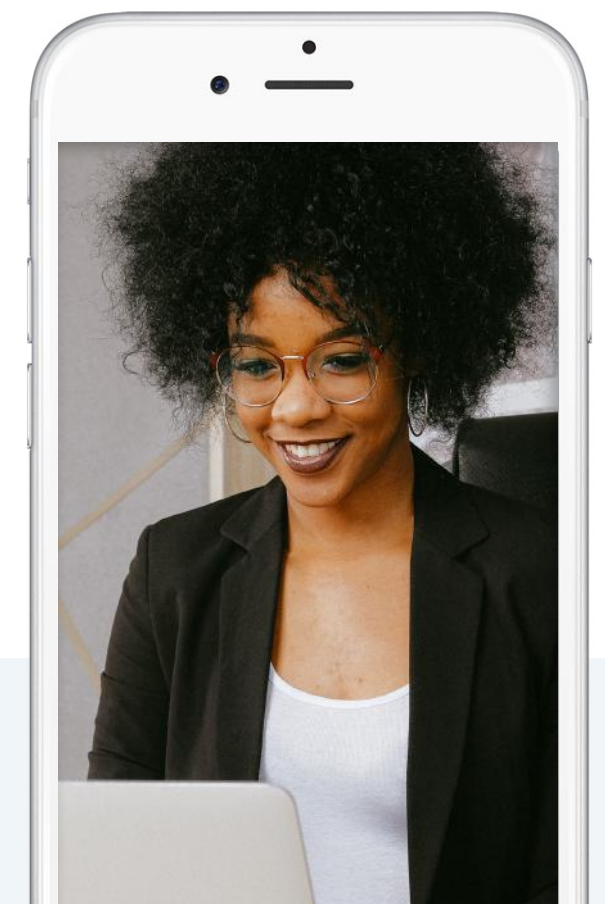
How do you think your organisation's current L&D offering can best be improved to address the potential skills gaps in your workforce caused by AI/ Automation? (Tick up to three)



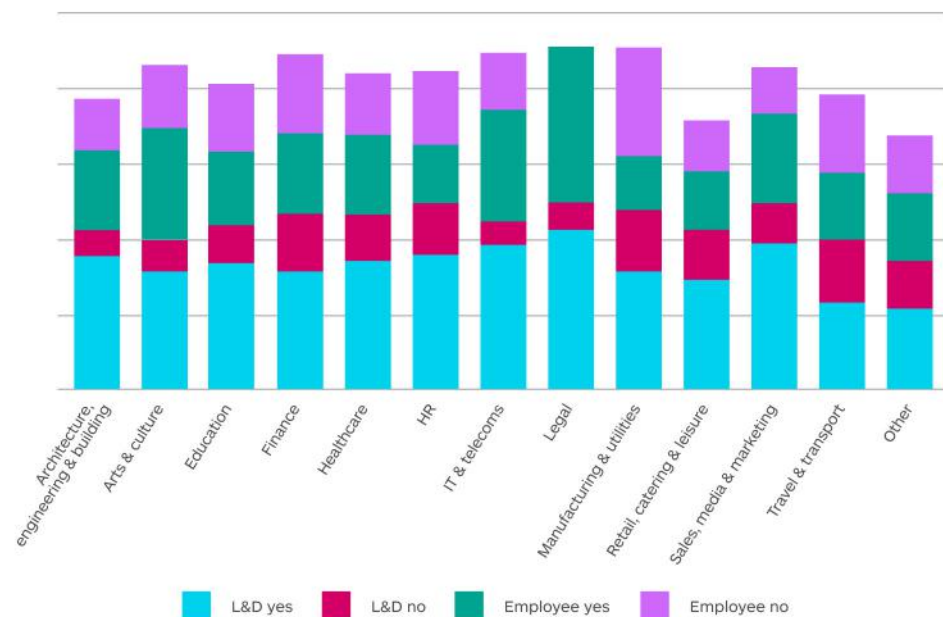
It seems our hypothesis was right. The top answer (26%) from employees was 'add new technology features such as collaboration, assessment, video, real time feedback etc'

To us, this makes sense, based on what we've learned so far:

- Only 54% of organisations are using a learning management system or online learning tool of some kind.
- 35% of L&D said their biggest difficulty was "trying to engage with a wide array of staff from different generations and with different experience levels", closely followed by engagement.
- 59% of employees believe their existing learning offering is inadequate.
- Coaching and live instructor-led courses dominate the L&D offering at present.



Do you think your current L&D offering is adequate to address the potential skills gaps in your workforce?



There is clearly a divide between learners and L&D as to how sufficient current learning opportunities are, and this disparity varies immensely when it comes to different industries too.

For example, 70% of L&D leaders in Architecture, Engineering and Building believe their L&D offering is adequate, compared to only 42% of their employees. The biggest gap in perceptions are in HR, where there is a 41%

gap between where L&D thinks they are in contrast to where employees believe they are (72% vs 31% respectively).

The only two industries which seem to be aligned are the Legal (87% vs 83%) and Arts and Culture industries (63% vs 61%). These two market sectors are wildly different from one another, so what might they be doing differently?

Let's take a deeper look into what they're craving from learning, and how that varies depending on age. Our L&D professionals said that one of their biggest challenges was trying to engage a wide array of staff from different generations and with different experience levels, but do their expectations/wants/needs really change that much across different generations?

The top three answers amongst employees were:

- 1. Adding new tech features to existing solutions
- 2. Including more opportunities for real world practice
- 3. Investment in different technology to shift the way that training is delivered.

Interestingly, the 55+ cohort in particular rated a wider investment in new technology (29%), whereas 16-24 year olds prioritised real world applications for learning (27%).

In Summary

It's clear from this research that L&D and learners aren't always aligned in terms of what is required to meet the challenges faced with skills gaps both now and in the future. We are buoyed to see that many learners are beginning to take L&D seriously by letting it influence whether they take and stay in jobs, as well as understanding how ongoing professional development can help to positively impact their careers.

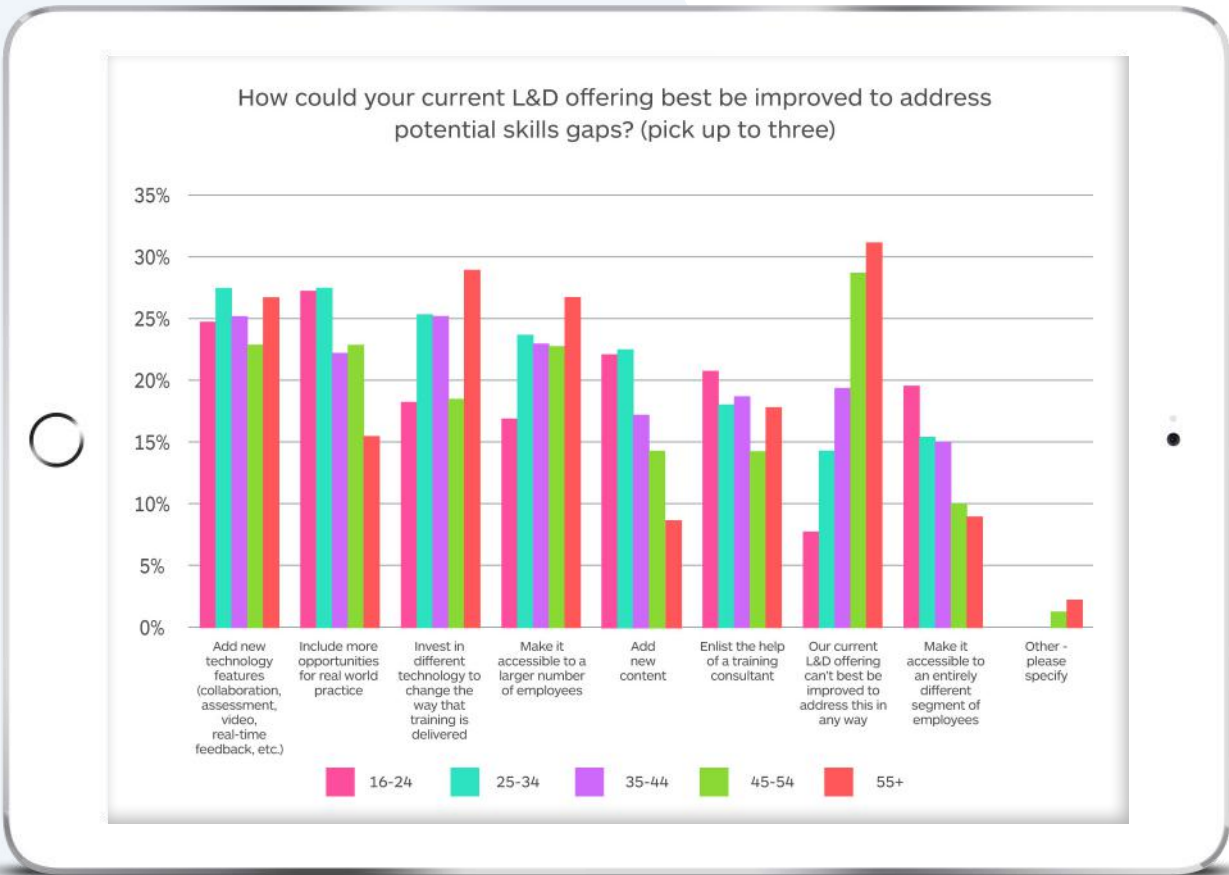
One thing is for sure - in many industries the status quo for how training is delivered is not sufficiently satisfying learner needs and expectations. Their responses in our survey are a clear mandate to L&D functions to modernise their approaches, technology and strategies to better support continuous learning which is applied on the job and supported with modern content such as video, social learning and more.

What's more, solutions such as programme-based learning design could well better meet our learners' needs; digitally enabled delivery of high-impact learning programmes which are centered around complex skill development must become the norm for L&D to truly remain relevant, applicable and desirous to learners.

It's not all doom and gloom out there in L&D; these changeable times are an opportunity for us to adapt, adjust and re-align to new ways of working, new processes and new solutions to new problems.

Let's search beyond the classroom for some of that, and we may well find greater success.


We hope you enjoyed reading this report and would love to have a conversation with you if you're eager to evolve your approaches and better meet the needs of your business and its people.



It is time to modernise our approaches—the mandate is clear from our employees as their expectations have evolved. In this age of

high-employee turnover, niche skills and skills gaps, the best way to retain employees is to engage them with a thriving learning culture.





Ready to develop
your approaches and
better meet the needs
of your business and
its people?

CONTACT US

About D2L

D2L believes learning is the foundation upon which all progress and achievement rests. Working closely with organisations globally, D2L has transformed the way millions of

people learn online and in the classroom. Learn more about D2L for schools, higher education and businesses at www.D2L.com.

About Brightspace

Brightspace is a **cloud-based** learning platform that makes online and blended learning easy, flexible and smart. Brightspace is a quantum leap beyond the traditional Learning Management System (LMS) – it is easy to drag-and-drop content to create engaging courses, supports all **mobile devices**, has industry-leading up-time, and is **built with accessibility in mind** for all learners. Plus, Brightspace enables the future of learning with a gaming engine, **adaptive learning**, **video management**,

intelligent agents, templated interactives for course design, full support for outcomes or **competency-based learning**, and actionable **learning analytics**. D2L's Brightspace was recently named the **#1 LMS for Next-Gen Online Teaching and Learning** by Ovum Research and #1 in Adaptive Learning by eLearning Magazine. In addition, Aragon Research included D2L in its highly coveted **Hot Vendors In Learning list**. To learn more, visit the **Corporate page** on our website.

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