

A photograph of three people in a modern office setting. A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is smiling and looking at a laptop. A man with a beard, wearing a green button-down shirt, is pointing at the laptop screen. A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white top, is leaning over the desk, holding a pen and looking at the laptop. The background shows a brick wall and some office equipment.

# Funding the future:

Why earning through learning is critical for modern membership organisations.

**D2L**

How associations can deliver more value to members and the industries they serve.

# Industry contributors

We thank the many experts from the people management, finance, sport, healthcare and engineering sectors for working with D2L on this whitepaper.



The Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU)



Agustina Bruno Videla  
Instructional Designer and E-Learning Specialist

Agustina leads digital learning at the IRFU and manages GAINLINE, the organisation’s D2L Brightspace-powered LMS. Her work focuses on improving usability, streamlining workflows and supporting learners across all levels of the game.



Colin Moran  
National Training and Education Manager

Colin leads the strategic design and delivery of learning across all strands of the game—including coaching, match officiating, player welfare and volunteer development. He’s played a pivotal role in modernising rugby education through the integration of digital platforms and blended learning methodologies to ensure it’s fit for purpose, future-focused and accessible to all.



The Lighting Industry Association (LIA)



Ayça Donaghy  
Chief Executive Officer

Ayça brings over 15 years of experience in the broader electro-technical sector that combines strategic thinking, team management, and a dedication to sustainability, diversity and innovation. Since taking on the role as CEO of the LIA, she has spearheaded a series of groundbreaking initiatives—including university competitions aimed at bridging the skills gap—and has been instrumental in propelling the industry’s mission and amplifying its voice on a national level.



Teresa Beazley  
Commercial & Training Manager

With over 25 years of expertise gained from both the public and private sectors and across a range of industries, Teresa is passionate about bridging skill gaps through innovative, proactive approaches to ensure that both employees and business are well equipped for the future. She has successfully implemented strategic initiatives that enhance workforce capabilities and deliver measurable improvements to employee engagement, performance and retention.



The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)



Andrea Cook  
Director of Specialised and Lifelong Learning

As a qualified Chartered Accountant with a strong interest in learning and development, Andrea has been heavily involved in training for both ACA trainees and ICAEW members. In her current role, she is leading the introduction of a brand-new suite of e-learning courses for ACA trainees.



The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine (BSLM)



Andrew Howie  
Chief Finance and Commercial Officer

Andrew leads the BSLM’s Learning Academy Project, overseeing both the implementation of the organization’s LMS and the development of course content. With extensive experience in both the private and voluntary sectors, he has successfully delivered major initiatives around compliance and policy frameworks and workplace wellbeing.



The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)



David D'Souza  
Director of Profession

David oversees the CIPD’s membership offering—from member engagement, retention and growth to overall customer experience. A respected voice in HR, he brings deep expertise across a range of industries in organizational development and culture, learning and development, corporate ethics, and the future of work.



# Table of contents

FOREWORD FROM STEWART WATTS	5
LEARNING THAT MEETS PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE	6
LEARNING THAT KEEPS PACE WITH SECTORS AND SKILLS	10
LEARNING THROUGH CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL PARTNERSHIPS	12
LEARNING WITHOUT BORDERS	13
LEARNING THAT DELIVERS EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION MARGINS	14
LEARNING THAT IS FLEXIBLE—RE-PURPOSING, SHORT COURSES AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS	16
LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION	18
LEARNING THAT SUPPORTS A SUSTAINABLE AND EXCITING FUTURE	20



## FOREWORD

Delivering exceptional value to members is the ultimate purpose that drives professional associations, but they must secure their own financial future in order to achieve it. This can be easier said than done when members face their own time and resource constraints or when external factors put pressure on organisations’ operating budgets and processes.

To provide value, modern membership organisations need to connect with members in more personalised ways, help them build in-demand skills relevant to their industry and support them throughout their careers. This requires investment, innovation and an openness to being more commercial in their approach.

In this paper we hear from five associations that are working to futureproof not only the associations themselves but also the professional skills and standards of the industries they serve.

Our contributors all believe that an effective learning strategy, underpinned by technology, can help them achieve this. We are grateful for their honesty and insight. We hope you find inspiration on how adopting a balanced and innovative approach to earning through learning can help your association achieve its purpose more effectively than ever.

*Stewart Watts*



**Stewart Watts**  
senior vice president, EMEA and APAC  
D2L



# Learning that meets people where they are

The notion that every member of an association will access and engage with learning in the same way is outdated. Variables for each member—such as the device they’re using to access content, their accessibility requirements, their location and their demographic, to name but a few—affect how each personal learning experience should be delivered.

A flexible, agile and responsive learning strategy is crucial to meeting the diverse and evolving needs of members. Plus, giving people ownership over their learning journeys can enhance engagement and long-term retention.

This has been the case at the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) where Colin Moran, national training and education manager, and his team have completely transformed the way that learning is delivered.

Historically, the association was deeply rooted in traditional, face-to-face learning—with trainers spending hours travelling around the country, only to sit in a seminar room talking through PowerPoint slides. Colin’s advocacy for enabling people to learn as and when they want to took time to take hold internally, but its adoption was accelerated when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Once that shift happened, the association didn’t look back.

**“The ability to coach or referee effectively on the field requires hands-on feedback and practice, but modules such as session planning and theoretical exercises were redesigned for online,”** Colin explains.

“The more classroom-based learning we put online, the more time we found we could invest in honing the practical skills of referees and coaches.” For Colin, this was also about understanding the needs and time pressures of the IRFU’s members, most of whom are volunteers. “People can now learn at their own pace, working to their own schedule. It’s about bringing the learning to them,” he adds.

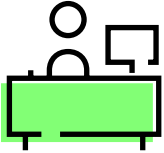
**“Prior to COVID, training was delivered entirely in person, relying on traditional classroom settings where industry experts delivered content via lengthy presentations.”**

Teresa Beazley  
commercial and training manager, LIA




THE LEARNING MODEL SHIFT

TRADITIONAL MODEL



- ❌ Face-to-face only
- ❌ Limited geographic reach
- ❌ High travel and facilitation cost
- ❌ Long course formats
- ❌ Completion dependent on attendance

MODERN MODEL



- ✅ Digital-first/blended
- ✅ Global access
- ✅ Scalable, lower overhead
- ✅ Modular, bite-sized
- ✅ Self-paced and trackable

The pandemic was also a pivotal moment of change for the Lighting Industry Association (LIA).

“Prior to COVID, training was delivered entirely in person, relying on traditional classroom settings where industry experts delivered content via lengthy presentations,” says Teresa Beazley, commercial and training manager at the LIA.

By adopting a blended learning model, the LIA now offers learners the freedom to engage with online content at their own pace and participate in facilitated workshops to discuss practical applications. This flipped classroom approach has significantly improved engagement levels and is also helping members apply their learning more effectively.

An ability to offer more modular content also allows members to learn at their own convenience and pace, and this approach has been adopted as part of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s (CIPD) learning strategy.

“There’s no doubt that we’re having to work harder for people’s time and attention than we’ve ever done before,” says David D’Souza, director of profession at the CIPD. His focus is on connecting the CIPD’s diverse offerings to ensure that engagement with one product naturally leads members to other valuable resources, fostering a more immersive, relevant and holistic professional experience, when and where learners need it.





# Learning that keeps pace with sectors and skills

Members are also turning to their associations to help them acquire a broader or more specialist skillset, or to carve out their own individual learning pathways.

Andrea Cook, director, specialised and lifelong learning, has been at the heart of shaping the Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales’ (ICAEW) learning strategy for more than a decade, witnessing first-hand how the profession—and an accountant’s learning journey—have evolved.

The ACA qualification has long been the ICAEW’s flagship offering and is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of stakeholders. While fundamental skills remain important, the world of accountancy has become increasingly diverse and complex, with accountants demanding highly focused skills.

To cater to this, the ICAEW is introducing specialised learning pathways which allow students to tailor their

learning experiences to their specific field of work. This enables trainees and their employers to select additional learning modules that may be relevant to their industries or sectors—a module on taxation in the agricultural sector, for example.

**“This shift is about empowering students, giving them knowledge that aligns directly with their career paths, while still upholding the standards of the ACA professional qualification,”** says Andrea. “We recognised that one core set of exams couldn’t accommodate the wide variety of roles that students do. Specialised pathways give learners the opportunity to access more specialised or niche content as part of their ACA—meaning we can deliver even more value back to both students and their employers.”

A cross-industry skills shortage is also a challenge that most industries expect to face in the coming years, particularly around the adoption of AI and other

emerging technologies. The LIA estimates that “in 10 years’ time there could be more jobs than there are skilled professionals to fill them”, says Ayça Donaghy, chief executive officer. But high-quality, engaging and bespoke learning will enable associations to face this head on, ensuring professionals always have the skills they need, and enabling entire industries to benefit.

The modern membership association has an obligation to continually upskill its members and deliver career-long learning. **“We’re shifting some of our emphasis to supporting people in their career, not just in their specialism or expertise,”** says David, at the CIPD. “It’s a given that we should be able to help you be a great recruiter or HR advisor. But there’s more we can be supporting members with. Maybe they’re about to attend their first board meeting, for example. That’s something outside of their technical expertise, but we can build niche learning content to support them with those critical moments in their career.”



## CAREER-LONG SUPPORT: FROM FIRST STEPS TO LEADERSHIP

### CAREER START

The LIA aspire to provide members a “succinct route from the start of their career to the end” – LIA

### EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“We’re shifting some of our emphasis to supporting people in their career, not just in their specialism or expertise.” – CIPD

### CRITICAL CAREER MOMENTS

“Maybe they’re about to attend their first board meeting. That’s something outside of their technical expertise but we can build niche learning content to support them” – CIPD

### LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

When surveyed, learners shared that they are “very, very satisfied with the courses. They say that it improves their coaching” – IRFU

### LEGACY

Support can continue “even through retirement, where we are able to offer a discounted membership fee and certain additional benefits, relevant to that stage of their lives.” – ICAEW

# Learning through corporate and individual partnerships

Learning technology is the foundation upon which these lifelong career journeys are being built. It is also opening up opportunities to generate additional revenue that can be reinvested back into membership value.

One such opportunity lies in working directly with organisations within the industries that associations represent.

This is a key focus for Andrew Howie, chief finance and commercial officer at the British Society of Lifestyle Medicine. The BSLM is working with organisations to help them deliver lifestyle medicine training to their employees. It has recently secured a contract with a multinational client, with almost 60,000 employees.

**“We’re able to offer accessible tools and resources that are relevant to people at all levels within the organisation,”** says Andrew. “Not only is this beneficial to staff but it also has implications for the company, helping to reduce sickness and increase productivity. It’s the flexibility of our learning platform that has opened up these opportunities to us.”

As Andrea explains, this ability to deliver engaging content efficiently is critical to serving the ICAEW’s ultimate purpose: engaging those they serve.

**“Engagement drives everything for us,”** says Andrea, and it’s this dedication to member experience which allows the ICAEW to be a lifelong partner to its students and members.

**“As they grow in their careers, so do we in our ability to offer support which caters to their ever-changing needs,”** explains Andrea. “That is what keeps our members engaged and that is why the vast majority stay with us, even through retirement, when we are able to offer a discounted membership fee and certain additional benefits, relevant to that stage of their lives.”

The CIPD has also seen significant success here. While the association typically sees an average net membership increase of approximately 3,000 per year, the introduction of corporate membership is expected to accelerate this growth, potentially adding 5,000 members annually.

**“It’s an exciting model for us, to convince one decision-maker in an organisation to support their entire team’s development rather than try to convince an entire profession, individual by individual,”**

David D’Souza  
director of profession, CIPD

## 5 WAYS ASSOCIATIONS ARE EARNING THROUGH LEARNING

### Modular learning design

Shorter, stackable courses

### Corporate learning partnerships

Packaged learning for employers

### Specialist career pathways

Deep skills and credentials

### International expansion

Cross-border growth

### Micro-credential bundling

Bite-size qualifications with CPD

# Learning without borders

Blended learning removes barriers around physical location and reduces the workload on instructors, making learning more accessible for the member and therefore more scalable for the association. This is evident at the LIA where removing geographical constraints has opened up its learning offering to an international audience.

**“Through attending events in the Middle East, I saw there was a significant demand for UK-accredited lighting expertise,”** says Teresa. **“This global expansion could become a major revenue stream for us, made possible by our ability to deliver scalable, online learning.”**

International expansion is also fundamental to the BSLM. It is currently delivering its core accreditation to the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine, for example, generating significant overseas revenue that is being re-invested back into organisational efficiency and member services.



# Learning that delivers exceptional contribution margins

Regardless of the sector or the membership base, enhanced digital learning capabilities are delivering exceptional contribution margins for associations—and helping secure support at board levels. For the LIA, the shift to digital, modular and AI-supported learning has vastly improved the efficiency of its education offerings. The association can also serve more learners without increasing costs, with every additional learner contributing to the bottom line.

One pilot programme saw 77 learners register for a course in just two weeks. This compares to a previous average of 400 learners completing courses over a 12-month period—demonstrating the potential of the LIA’s ability to respond and scale at pace.

“Our instructor-led training had high costs, including trainer fees, administration and venue hire, with a low contribution margin of approximately 5%,” says Teresa. “By moving to online, self-paced learning, we have been able to maintain our income while significantly reducing our overheads, leading to a projected 75% contribution margin within the next 18 months.”

Colin also emphasises how learning technology has streamlined outdated manual processes, allowing the IRFU to invest more into delivering better learning experiences.

“Previously, the only person who knew what course a coach had completed was me, because I literally had a spreadsheet tracking everyone,” he says. “Now



“Our Learning Academy is the main driver of growth within the business.”

Andrew Howie  
chief finance and commercial officer  
The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine

it’s fully automated and accessible to the learner—benefitting them and our operational team.”

“Our Learning Academy is the main driver of growth within the business,” adds Andrew at the BSLM. Income from education now represents over 50% of turnover, and the organisation has doubled its revenues over the past three years. Since January 2023 the association has provided education to over 2,500 individuals and has delivered more than 70,000 hours of high-quality online learning to people in over 25 countries.

## EDUCATION AS A REVENUE GENERATOR: THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

2,500+  
individuals educated  
since January 2023

70,000+  
hours of online  
learning delivered  
across 25+ countries

2,500,000+  
patients receive care  
from GPs who have  
completed the BSLM  
Core Accreditation

50%+  
of total revenue is  
generated through  
learning



# Learning that is flexible

## —re-purposing, short courses and micro-credentials

Learning management platforms enable associations to maximise the potential of their content—whether that’s through refreshing, re-purposing or re-packaging it into shorter, bite-sized course material. The ability to update learning content at speed is also crucial when responding to industry changes. As part of the ICAEW’s Specialised Learning offering, the institute will be providing learning packages on new and emerging trends, such as on revised accounting standards and budget updates. Repurposing content to offer this in various digestible formats allows the ICAEW to ensure learning content is reflective of current market conditions, while maintaining internal operational efficiency.

**“What might constitute valuable learning for one person is completely different for someone else, which is why we need to be able to offer a wide variety of learning opportunities that offer value to all of our members.”**

Andrea Cook  
director, specialised and lifelong learning  
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Offering smarter bundling and packaging can also help increase the percentage of members that access additional learning, which justifies the investment into content creation for the association. For David at the CIPD, this is also about maximising the use of existing resources, whether that’s through intelligent integration across departments or rethinking how existing systems can be used more effectively.

**“Essentially we’re looking at ways to link content in more meaningful ways,”** he explains. “For example, if someone completes a course, they’ll receive a prompt on the next logical steps, such as upgrading their membership, offering a discount on the next course or accessing related materials.”

David sees “sweating the assets” and deriving maximum value from every piece of content as being key to efficiency, better user experiences and sustainable growth.

**“When we interview an expert, we don’t just use that as a one-off piece of content,”** he says. “We look at whether it can be used in a podcast, in a magazine article, as part of a written guide or within a learning module.”





# Learning through collaboration

As industries and demands for specialist expertise evolve, associations see collaboration as crucial for delivering more rounded skills and expertise—and providing ultimate value to members.

Collaboration is the only way to maintain unified high standards of training across the lighting industry, according to Teresa at the LIA. **“The transformation of our learning offering has enabled us to do some soul searching and understand where we can really add value in our industry,”** she says.

Ayça and Teresa have a vision for a single, unified path for professional development, but they also recognise that this requires extensive collaboration.

“Our utopia moment will be when associations across our industry can work together to offer people a clear, transparent and succinct route from the start of their career to the end,” Teresa says. “Technology can play a major role in making that happen.”

David D’Souza agrees that the CIPD should focus on the areas in which it excels. **“Rather than trying to become AI experts overnight, we should be partnering with people who already have deep expertise in that space,”** he says. “This will enable us to deliver highly relevant and up-to-date learning to our members, quickly.”

Internal collaboration has been the focus at the IRFU—making the learner experience as smooth as possible by ensuring teams are working together around a solution rather than being focused on their own individual areas of responsibility.

**“Concussion training has elements of coaching, refereeing, medical, and strength and conditioning within it,”** says Agustina Bruno Videla, e-learning & digital co-ordinator at the IRFU. “Previously, clubs were being bombarded with multiple messages from different departments, often repetitive and uncoordinated. Now, we have oversight across our education offering as a whole—meaning we can work together to produce a single, integrated resource that meets the needs of all departments and learners.”



ENGAGING LEARNING = ENGAGED MEMBERS

**Course completion numbers have soared at the IRFU as a result. The number of Children’s Coach courses awarded increased 48% over a two-year period, for example, and the number of active users across all courses has increased almost threefold.**



# Learning that supports a sustainable and exciting future

**“I don’t think we’re ever going to get to the stage where we say, OK that’s it, we’re done now. Nor should we,”** Colin explains. As well as seeing opportunities to tackle some of the newer challenges that may be looming, there is also genuine excitement among professional membership associations around what the future holds.

Learning is viewed as being pivotal to their future, at a personal, commercial and societal level.

**“We should be able to demonstrate that something has changed for the better within our industry, and that it’s better because of us,”** adds David.

From our conversations, it’s clear that associations remain laser-focused on their purpose—to improve industries and the lives of the people who work in them. But they also recognise that an effective learning strategy is an enabler of this, providing the financial stability required to secure their future and give more back to members.

Although our contributors represent a variety of sectors and face a range of challenges, they are united in their desire to deliver exceptional learning experiences to their members. By recognising the commercial contribution that an effective learning strategy can make to member value—as well as its impact on the bottom line—professional associations can put themselves in a strong position to fund their future and transform the industries they serve.

## BEYOND AN INDIVIDUAL: THE TRUE IMPACT OF A LEARNING STRATEGY

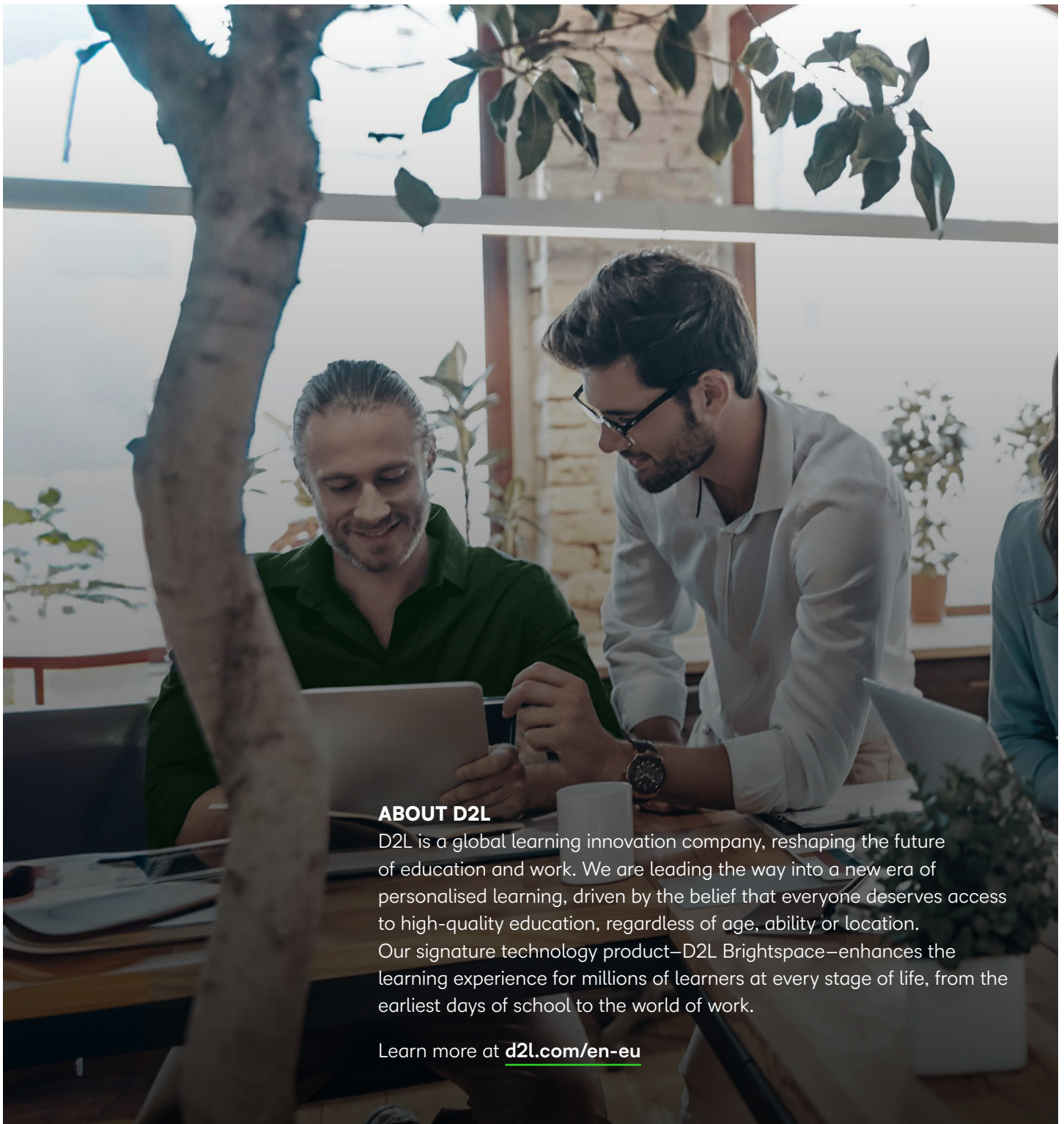
Wider societal benefit through industries with highly skilled specialists (vs. skills gaps/shortages)

Raising overall industry standards

Organisational capability growth through upskilled workforce

Individual growth through career progression





#### ABOUT D2L




D2L is a global learning innovation company, reshaping the future of education and work. We are leading the way into a new era of personalised learning, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of age, ability or location. Our signature technology product—D2L Brightspace—enhances the learning experience for millions of learners at every stage of life, from the earliest days of school to the world of work.

Learn more at [d2l.com/en-eu](https://d2l.com/en-eu)

# D2L

#### EMEA HEADQUARTERS

3<sup>rd</sup> floor, The News Building  
London Bridge, London, SE1 9SG  
UNITED KINGDOM

-  /D2Linc
-  @D2L
-  @D2L
-  [linkedin.com/company/D2L](https://linkedin.com/company/D2L)
-  [ContactUs@D2L.com](mailto:ContactUs@D2L.com)