Brandon Hall GROUP

Realize it®

The Future of Workforce Training & Learning:

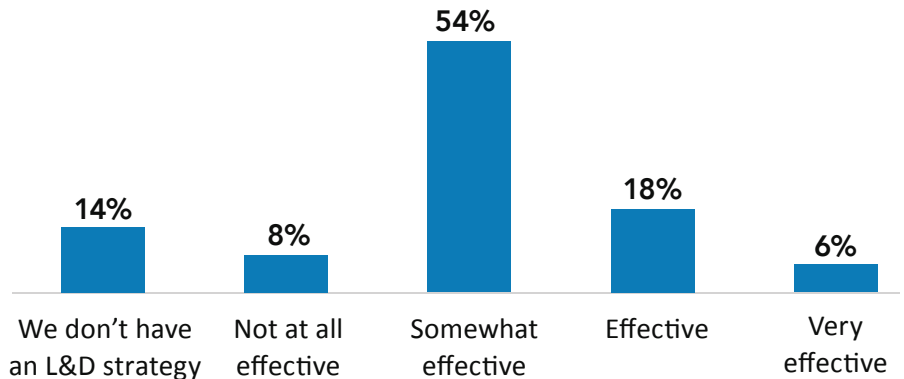## *What Does Good Look Like?*

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Introduction

What do workforce learners want? What do they need? Organizations have struggled with these seemingly simple questions for decades. But currently, as we move into the 2020s, we may be able to deliver some real answers.

To understand what employees want, organizations must start with what the business wants. The greatest learner experience is meaningless without a connection to the goals of the organization. Brandon Hall Group's 2020 study, *Creating a Learning Strategy that Drives Performance*, found that learning is having only a moderate impact on the business.

How effective is your Learning & Development strategy in helping your organization achieve its business goals?

Category	Percentage
We don't have an L&D strategy	14%
Not at all effective	8%
Somewhat effective	54%
Effective	18%
Very effective	6%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Creating a Learning Strategy that Drives Performance, 2020

A confluence of demographics, digital transformation, emerging technology and a strategic shift in learning's role in the organization brought us to a point where we can truly deliver on learning and development's promise. This eBook describes an ideal workforce training and learning environment. This can and does exist today, but for many companies, it is an aspirational future state.
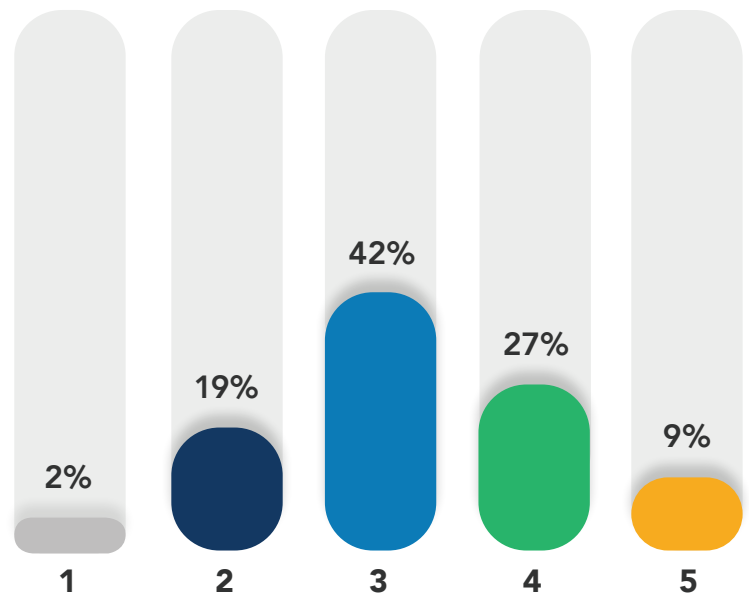
Key Elements

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what degree is your organization prepared to develop the skills required by the business in the near future?

1=Not at all
5=Completely prepared

2% 19% 42% 27% 9%

1 2 3 4 5

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Creating a Learning Strategy that Drives Performance, 2020

To be effective in an increasingly volatile and uncertain business climate, employee training must not only meet the immediate needs of the business, but should also be instantly adaptable and equipped to prepare the workforce for the challenges of the future.

Traditional learning models cannot keep up. Reliance on classes and courses that are created or updated annually — at best — is not getting it done. Organizations recognize that they are unprepared to impart the skills they will need from their frontline employees.

What is the right approach? There isn't one solution that fits every organization. But there are several consistent truths. Chief among them is that people really need and want access to information. In an environment where employees require connections to learning resources daily, weekly or even multiple times a day, a static, event-based training and learning strategy does not suffice. People are accustomed to quickly finding information and answering questions via platforms like Google and YouTube, so workforce training needs to be able to provide similar experiences when possible. A learning environment that meets these needs incorporates key elements that ensure learning delivers impact to the business: precision, scale, speed and ease.

Precision

The future state of workforce training and learning must be a departure from the scattershot approaches of the past. Rather than a vast library of courses employees can wade through or classes aimed at no one in particular, precision must be built into the learning strategy with focus on two areas: linking learning to individual and organizational performance and making an experience contextual for learners.

It seems like a given that training programs would be aligned with the business, otherwise, why would they exist? But in reality, there is very little alignment. In the *Creating a Learning Strategy that Drives Performance* study, fewer than half (45%) of companies rate their learning strategy a four or five on a five-point scale for being aligned with business objectives. Additionally, Brandon Hall Group's 2020 *Learning Measurement Study* found that few training and learning programs are built with specific metrics in mind.

Without this alignment and these metrics, it is difficult for corporate trainers to demonstrate how their efforts drive employee performance and business outcomes. In an ideal environment, even the simplest learning activity would have a tie to some specific knowledge, behavior or performance outcome.

What portion of your learning programs are designed based on specific, defined metrics?

None	A few	Some	Most	All
8%	37%	31%	20%	4%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Learning Measurement 2020

The other part of precision involves the learners themselves. Employees want and need to know what is in it for them. They need to know how the training content relates to them and their role, and how it will help them do their job better while helping the organization. Today's workforce is busy and distracted and cannot afford to waste time with redundant or irrelevant learning. Training experiences must be learner-focused and personalized (at least to a degree) to their individual needs.

In an ideal environment, training has a positive impact on a variety of outcomes, such as time to productivity, employee engagement, individual performance and employee retention. To that end, Brandon Hall Group looked at companies that say this occurs and identified the differences in how they approach educating their workforce compared to companies where learning fails to have a strong impact. Those companies with a strong positive impact are more likely to provide this kind of contextual learning environment.

Which of the following are provided to learners?

● High Impact   ● Low Impact

The goals and outcomes expected
from the program
89%
46%

Contextualization based on
learner requirements
68%
31%

Personalized learning plan that allows
them to track their own progress
61%
31%

Learning recommendations based on
learner information
57%
15%

A link between learning and
personal objectives
54%
8%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Exploring the Learner Experience, 2019

To ensure the learner experience is truly contextual, High-Impact companies provide recommendations based on roles, career paths and training they previously interacted with. These businesses also provide employees a link between the learning they are offered and their personal objectives. Too often, companies believe the "what's in it for me" factor in learning is implicit, but it's not — and should be made clear. Employees who see the connection between themselves, training and the business are more engaged and poised for success.

Scale

As organizations shift to a more contextual learning environment, scale can be a challenge. It can be difficult to meet the needs of multiple employee groups across businesses, geographies or outside the organization. With 20 people, personalization is easy. But companies with a large, diverse workforce distributed across multiple locations (domestically or globally) are challenged daily to provide effective and uniform employee training throughout the entire organization.

Organizations must deliver the latest knowledge and skills their changing business requires in a relevant way, regardless of their size and complexity. The ideal learning environment enables the organization to readily deliver training to employees across time zones and in multiple languages, regardless of role. Scale is almost always a technology issue, but that won't solve it by itself. A technology solution will only scale the process or strategy to which it is applied. If the personalization/contextualization strategy is poor or nonexistent, technology will only make it happen poorly on a faster, larger scale. Companies need to identify technology solutions that do both.

Speed

A consistent theme is the need for learning to keep up with a rapidly changing business. This means workforce training must adopt a more agile strategy and employ technology that allows swift execution. There are several ways technology selection can improve speed from a training perspective.

First, speed is at a premium in the initial implementation. The prospect of a long, protracted technology roll-out can make an organization hesitant to effect change. In Brandon Hall Group's 2019 *Learning Technology Study*, the number two reason companies picked their learning technology provider was implementation capabilities. Among companies looking for a new learning/training technology, 49% say they are searching for one with better implementation capabilities than that of their current provider.

Another issue that challenges companies is legacy content. Migrating to either a new platform or transforming content into modern, contextual formats can be an arduous process; so much so that many organizations avoid it completely.

The final role speed plays relates directly to the contextualization and adaptability of the learning. The work of aligning training to specific roles and skills can be challenging. This is why companies should seek technologies that incorporate machine learning to ease that burden. By using these intelligent technologies, personalization tools can quickly associate jobs with skills and skills with training to ensure employees get what they need when they need it.

The future state of learning must emphasize speed. A contextual environment that adapts to learner needs will be inherently more agile than a traditional one-size-fits-all model, thereby solving speed and personalization requirements. This ideal training environment is centered on the learner, providing the tools needed when they need them most. It will represent a reduction in overall training time since there is less wasted effort in the delivery of learning and by learners no longer wasting time with irrelevant training.
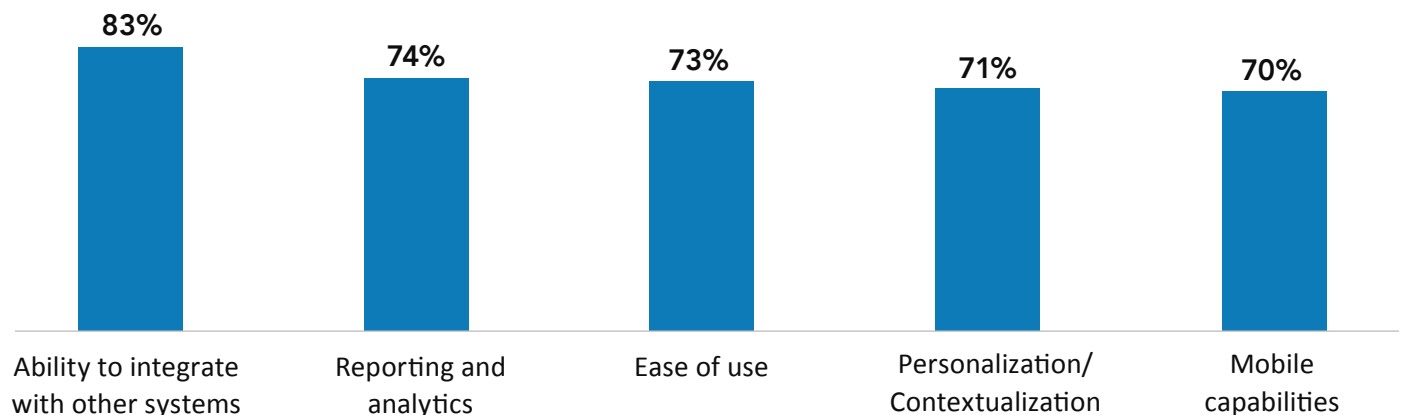
Ease

In the previous section, we saw how important an easy implementation is to getting everything up and running smoothly. It is critical to partner with a vendor experienced in implementations within different environments who can guide the organization through the process. This also applies to migrating legacy content into the platform. Many technology providers really don't have a good solution in this arena.

But perhaps the most important application of "ease" is ease of use. It's the Number 3 reason organizations choose their training technology, but only about half of companies say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their solution's ease of use. It is not surprising, then, that ease of use also ranks high on the list of things companies seek when replacing learning technology.

Top Five Reasons for Replacing Learning Tech

Reason	Percentage
Ability to integrate with other systems	83%
Reporting and analytics	74%
Ease of use	73%
Personalization/Contextualization	71%
Mobile capabilities	70%

Source: Brandon Hall Group Learning Technology Study, 2019

Ease of use applies to every aspect of the learning technology. The ideal future state is a technology environment where it is easier for:

✓ Admins to build curricula, convert/enhance legacy content and manage the learning process

✓ Authors to find resources and create (and recreate) content in a wide variety of formats

✓ Learners to navigate and find relevant learning

✓ Leaders to easily view learner competencies at both the individual and aggregate level.

In closing, this ideal workforce training environment is not some far-off fantasy. Many organizations are there (or almost there) now implementing solutions that deliver precision, scale, speed and ease. The technology exists to make it a reality. Companies just need to prioritize and raise the bar for their training and learning strategies and adopt the right intelligent technologies that will get them there.
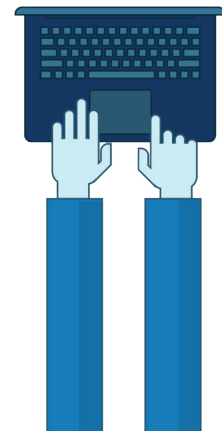
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About Realizeit

Realizeit is on a mission to transform workforce training and drive learning innovation for large-scale organizations by maximizing the value of training operations with our first-of-its-kind intelligent technology.

The Realizeit adaptive learning platform is powered by a self-learning engine fueled by machine learning. Realizeit delivers unprecedented levels of precision in corporate training and learning by leveraging the power of adaptivity and personalization at scale. This allows companies to transform from conventional one-size-fits-all, content-centric learning model to one that is personalized, knowledge-based and performance-linked for every employee.

To learn more about Realizeit's adaptive learning platform for workforce training, please visit our site:

Realizeit®

www.realizeitlearning.com

Or reach out to our team:

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About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

Some ways we can help …

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HCMA PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS
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