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Short on skills?
Rethink your Learning
Approach



“In the future the person acquiring new skills will be at the center of the learning process, with a focus on personalized, integrated, hybrid and life-long learning.”

Introduction	05
Which trends are shaping the L&D landscape	06
What do learners expect from their learning environment?	08
What do organizations need regarding L&D	12
Recommendations	16
Contact us	26



Introduction

A new way of learning for a rapidly changing world

Several factors contribute to the fact that the world we live in is changing rapidly, disrupting the way we live and work, but also learn. Scarcity of resources, war, the COVID-19 pandemic, demographic change, digitalization, globalization... You might call these factors mere buzzwords, but these trends and events are the reason why individuals and organizations face rapidly evolving markets and framework conditions that create immanent pressure on individual employability and business models. As a consequence, the skills needed to satisfy the market's demands are constantly changing, creating short-term lifecycles for key skills.

Take the COVID-19 pandemic as an example: It has changed the way we collaborate, it has shattered established business structures and norms, forcing workers and corporations to swiftly adapt virtual collaboration models and significantly accelerate digitalization not only within organizations, but across industries. Looking back after more than two years of COVID-19, it is certain that there won't be a back to normal, but that individuals and businesses have to adapt to the new normal.

Thus, in order to cope with the market's dynamics, adapting to learners' needs, new circumstances and conditions, is crucial for enterprises to avoid becoming casualties of transformation. There is more pressure than ever on Learning & Development (L&D) to generate the strategic alignment at the manager and executive level needed to gain a competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing business environment.¹

Within this point of view, we therefore assess three questions...

- 1. Which trends are shaping the Learning & Development landscape?**
- 2. What do learners expect from their learning environment?**
- 3. What do skills-based organizations² need regarding Learning & Development?**

... in order to provide recommendations on how to successfully set up and take L&D to the next level.

Which trends are shaping the L&D landscape?

New skill requirements and a shortage of talent force businesses to adapt

Facing current trends, organizations have to answer the following three questions:

The tasks of tomorrow

What impact do current trends have on individuals and organizations and how are they shaping future tasks?

The workforce of tomorrow

Which demands must organizational capabilities and the workforce meet in the future and what should the corporate culture look like?

Realizing Potential

How can new skill sets be acquired, and trends swiftly be adopted by the workforce and by organizations?



Fig. 1 – Trends shaping the L&D landscape



Digitalization & Technologization

Businesses are facing fundamental disruptions affecting the very basis of their business models. These changes urgently require new skills to adapt to the new market environment and realize associated potential.



Shortage of Skill-Lifecycles

The significant shift in necessary skills, intensified by digitalization and fast technological innovation, confront businesses with dramatically shortened skill-lifecycles (e.g. in IT with max. 6–12 months).³



Run for talents

The demand for future skills far exceeds the supply of the workforce, resulting in a fierce war for talent across industries. Combined with the expected demographic development of a declining workforce in many developed countries, this problem will likely intensify over the next years.



New Organizational structures

Due to fast-changing market conditions and a shortage of future skills, organizations must show flexibility and adaptability to ensure their attractiveness. Established hierarchical and management-centered linear structures might lack the required flexibility. Thus, businesses have to rethink their organizational structures and create efficient adaptable frameworks that allow a swift shift in scope and a flexible availability of skills across the organization.



Data based business

With digitalization and technologization, analyzing data enables businesses to make fact-based and accurate decisions. Thus, the ability to gather, systemize, combine and analyze data in order to create new insights is a key-component of future business success and empowers organizations to prevail over competitors. This trend does not stop at learning and development.



Redesign of Work

An unprecedented talent reshuffle is happening globally. Employees are rethinking not just how they work, but why they work and what they want to do with their careers and lives. We must therefore redesign and reorganize traditional work and adapt the workplace while unleashing the human potential and humanizing work.

What do learners expect from their learning environment?

Modern skill building focuses on individual needs by combining personalized digital and in-person formats that are embedded in the daily flow of work

The aforementioned trends have not only transformed the way we live and work. They also affect how we learn today and how we will want to learn in the future.

The understanding of how we learn has fundamentally changed over the past years – as a result of the trends listed above and of other developments. Following a growth-mindset, opportunities for development have become the second most important factor in workplace happiness for employees, and learners today want to embed their learning experience in the flow of work.⁴

In a highly interdependent world, we need to ask: How do people, processes, technology, data, culture and purpose shape the future of learning that is expected by learners? And in turn, how will these factors be influenced by the future of learning? We have identified the following trends:

People

Learners are at the heart of the learning process

The process of learning and development needs to be learner-centered and embrace the diversity that learners bring with them. That means meeting the individual needs of learners, such as learning styles, current life stages, level of knowledge and individual interests, allowing the learner to be in

Welcome to the future of learning. Here, the person acquiring new skills is at the center of the learning process, with a focus on personalized, integrated, hybrid and life-long learning.

the “driver-seat” of their own development.⁵ It’s a matter of fact that managers and HR still bear responsibility to upskill employees, but their role is changing. More than ever, learners expect their managers and HR to support them in planning their next career steps, creating space for joint reflection on the individual learning progress and pointing out opportunities for further development. But it’s the learners themselves who are mainly responsible for their personal development and employability.⁶

At present, social learning is in high demand – a trend that is here to stay. Social learning can include a variety of different in-person as well as online-formats, such as job shadowing, communities of practice, social interaction via online platforms,

project work in teams and many more. By combining social learning with professional knowledge management (platforms), implicit knowledge gets converted into formal, explicit knowledge, allowing learners and supervisors to become co-creators who help to shape their own learning. Collaboration and teamwork, as well as opportunities to exchange ideas on topics, opinions, ideas and industry-related topics are highly sought-after. Learners expect organizations to create a work environment that reflects these experiences.⁷

Process

Learning takes place in the flow of work

According to our findings based on a global survey of 1,021 workers, 65 percent of workers agree the skills and capabilities required to perform their jobs have changed in the past two years.⁸ With rapidly changing environments, learners want and need to solve complex challenges immediately. Especially people working in fast-paced environments have to continuously update their skills. That is why a separation of work and learning is no longer appropriate and needs to be seamlessly embedded and integrated into the flow of work without interrupting daily work-streams. By changing learning processes and ensuring that learning takes place all the time and everywhere productivity can be increased, and individual and team knowledge can be built.⁹ The era of traditional course catalogues as the only way to learn is over. Instead, bite-sized learning opportunities, so called microlearnings, represent an easily digestible addition and/or alternative that can be embedded for relevant and current tasks in the daily work routine.¹⁰

It is more important than ever, that learners can easily and instantly find high quality content for their specific needs and learn by experience, rather than in traditional classroom settings.¹¹ Why? Because people learn more sustainably when they directly apply their newly acquired knowledge to real-world situations and immediately get feedback on what they did. Thanks to mobile devices, learning nowadays is possible almost anytime and everywhere – in public transport, while waiting for a client, etc.

Technology

Technology changes how learners (want to) learn

Learning without technology is no longer imaginable – new software and devices shape how we learn and replace pen and paper in traditional classroom environments. You might want to pause reading for a second and think about how often you

consult Google, YouTube and other online resources to seek help with urgent matters in daily life. Software and digital learning tools shape the world of learning and development, enabling learners to quickly and simply access and share knowledge at the right time and at the right place.

Learners also have expectations the software they use needs to meet: It must be user-friendly, intuitive and fun to use, combining gamification elements and social learning with short learning nuggets that can be easily consumed when it is needed despite the learner's decreasing attention span. Being confronted with an overwhelming amount of providers and resources for new material, people value the benefits of personalized learning experiences enabled by Artificial Intelligence. They want to benefit from personalized learning journeys that are tailored to specific skills, skill gaps, needs and individual preferences, all of which can be found in so called Learning Experience Platforms.^{12, 13}

Learning Experience Plattform:

In contrast to classic learning management systems (LMS), so-called learning experience platforms, also called LXP, offer a learning software solution that focusses on the employee and learner needs and a user-friendly and modern user experience.

It combines individualized and self-organized learning and puts the learner into the center by providing individualized learning experiences and recommendations through the usage of data collected and Artificial

Intelligence, combining (curated) learning content from various sources. Through the usage of an LXP-platform, learning becomes a social, on-the-job event, where learners can also create and share content and learn on the go through hybrid and mobile solutions. Besides social interaction with like-minded people, peers and experts, also gamification and nudging take the learning experience to the next level. The data collected gives deep insights on the user's learning behaviour and can help plan further development and following career steps.

Data

Show me your data and I will show you what you need (to learn)

Data is king – also in the field of learning and development. Data collection and analysis enables learners to truly understand which knowledge, skills and competencies they have, how they learn and what knowledge, skills and competencies they need to ensure their employability or to reach the next step in their career. A first move would be to identify skill gaps the individual learner needs to fill in order to be ideally qualified for their (desired) role. Collecting data about a learner's individual Learning & Development activities helps to track valuable information. This might include time spent on learning and trainings for specific topics, insights on the interaction with learning content, focus of learning topics to derive other relevant learning content as well as indications on the progress that has been made to close skill gaps. In this context of Learning & Development artificial intelligence comes into play, as learners want to be provided with automated suggestions for their individual training and education based on their personal data, including education, completed trainings, fields of interest, future career plans, etc.

Culture

Company culture is the backbone for Learning & Development

The numerous factors described above and all the (new) possibilities that digitalization provides, inevitably influence the learning culture that learners want and need. As they seek to acquire new skills, they look for a learning culture that unifies attributes such as openness, trust, flexibility – but also guidance. While more and more learners embrace and demand such an open learning culture, others might still struggle to identify learning moments while working because they have been programmed to think that learning only happens in the classroom.¹⁴

In order to create an open learning environment where informal learning is recognized, interventions based on neuroscientific and behavioral science might be necessary to change the learner's

behavior and embed constant learning as part of everyday life. Sometimes the way to learn is also to unlearn mental models and behavior that have grown outdated or obsolete, especially in rapidly changing environments. Depending on the industry and type of organization, fostering a fail-fast culture that encourages workers to experiment and test different solutions without the repercussions of failure could be an aspirational target to enhance internal innovation as well as individual learning. Fostering a company culture like this needs time, targeted interventions as well as management support, for example by exhibiting open-mindedness to ideas and suggestions presented by employees.¹⁵

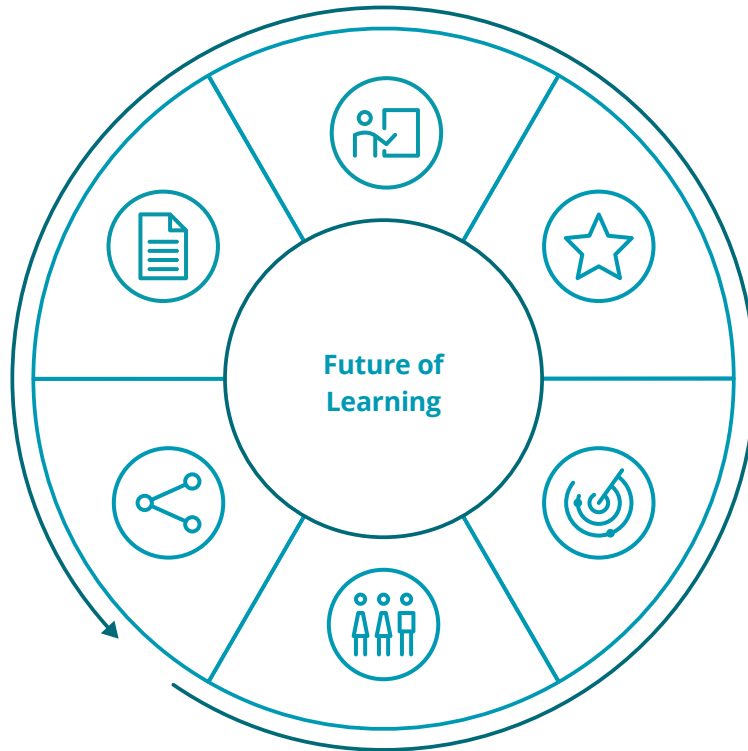
Rewards

Purpose and recognition are necessary

Employees want to understand the purpose and bigger picture of where their employer is headed in the long term. Ideally, company and learners share the same values and learners can identify with meaningful goals of the company. Regardless of whether employees will stay with an organization or not, organizations must focus on developing employees and invest in their careers in order to empower them to achieve their individual long-term career ambitions, while contributing to organizational goals.¹⁶ Only when employees experience appreciation and recognize that their learning activities can have an impact both on their own personal development and on the overall business, they will be motivated to learn. Especially younger workers appreciate supervisors who value their learning accomplishment according to the LinkedIn Learning Workplace Learning Report 2020.¹⁷

These needs and expectations of learners and their preferences of how they (want to) learn inevitably influence how learning takes place within organizations today and how it will take place or should take place in the future. Let us therefore take a look at the implications that these trends can have for L&D in organizations by asking: What do organizations need regarding Learning & Development?

Fig. 2 – Main factors shaping the future of learning



People

Learners must be at the heart of the learning process, while providing the framework to live social learning



Process

Learning must be seamlessly embedded and integrated into the flow of work – everywhere and anytime



Technology

Software and digital learning tools such as Learning Experience Platforms make learning a more individualized, social, data driven and user-friendly experience



Data

Data collection and analysis allows learners to make fact-based decisions and systematically target identified skill gaps



Culture

The future of learning requires a transition towards an open, flexible, trust-based and thus well-supported learning culture



Rewards

Individual and organizational goal-alignment, contributing to a higher purpose and recognition for learning accomplishment are perceived as rewarding

What do organizations need regarding L&D?

Leaders develop forward-looking strategies that rely on learning technology infrastructures to facilitate a continuous personalized learning experience

Clearly, the developments and demands addressed in the previous chapters must be taken up by organizations. Instead of going back to normal after the events that are currently shaping our lives, businesses will have to adapt to the new normal in order to stay competitive. According to Deloitte's survey, 66 percent of the respondents indicated that they are struggling to keep up with constantly changing skill requirements.¹⁸ This strengthens the need for organizations to anticipate and adapt to new and ever-changing environments and adjust the respective business models and skills. That will result in short-term lifecycles for key skills.

However, established L&D structures and processes within organizations are often out of touch with the new realities and fail to transform the workforce's skills to meet the organization's demands. Over the course of multiple High-Impact Learning Organization studies, we've observed that high-performing organizations shift their focus from producing learning content to enabling organic learning in the flow of work.¹⁹ Our Human Capital Trends study found that a majority of organizations believe that learning should be a shared responsibility between the business and HR. The same study found that less than 10 percent of organizations are ready to reinvent learning.²⁰

So how can companies equip themselves to thrive in the short and long term and what are the needs of organizations regarding L&D? Let us have a look at some of the potential roadblocks, solutions and mindsets to bring L&D in organizations to the next level.

A strong, long-term and forward-looking L&D orientation – Make L&D a strategic priority

Companies need a strong, long-term L&D orientation in order to be well equipped to handle the short-term pressures and to adapt quickly to new ways of working. Our experience shows that organizations that were already in the lead in terms of L&D before COVID-19 were better positioned for the post-crisis rebound. Investing in L&D is of high value in equipping businesses for the subsequent recovery. So, there is a clear case for making investments in L&D now to build for the future. However, these investments have to yield results, build the skills and capabilities needed and adjust accordingly to changes in work (e.g. due to automation).²¹

To advance today's most important organizational goals, such as inclusion, organizational agility, growth, and innovation, companies need to consider a new model of work and employment that focuses on skills rather than jobs. We call this model the "skills-based organization", where people are no longer defined by their job, but are seen as whole individuals with skills and abilities that can be fluidly applied to work that suits their interests and thereby also accelerate business performance.²²

Another crucial demand is to link organizations' decisions about skills and development to their purpose and vision – an overarching objective that guides their way forward. Many organizations build L&D plans that overemphasize skills that were important in the past.

In contrast, leading organizations look forward and assess their strategic priorities, the skills needed to execute on those priorities, and the future impact on their workforce. Our High-Impact HR Operating Model research found that high-performing organizations are effective at sensing how their organization is evolving and then acting accordingly. This means to create conditions rather than content and align closely with the business.²³

Skills-based Organization

Challenges in today's work environment such as the Great Resignation, i.e., a continuing economic trend with many employees voluntarily leaving their jobs from early 2021 in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, require a change in organizations' structural orientation. Deloitte's research has shown that 8 out of 10 workers, HR managers and business leaders believe that jobs are no longer the best way to organize work. Instead, organizations recognized that fractionating work

(dividing it into projects or tasks) as well as broadening work (focusing work on solving problems or achieving results) can create added value for employees and organizations. To achieve this, a new approach is needed in which the organization moves away from seeing people as job holders. People and their portfolio of skills and capabilities that can be fluidly deployed to work are placed in the center. They form the basis of HR decisions – from hiring, to rewards and workforce planning.

A delivery model in L&D that matches business needs and expectations – Bringing the L&D team to the next level

To respond to the unpredictable nature of work and to the decreasing half-life of skills, organizations must reconstruct L&D to foster adaptability.

We notice an increased demand for digital and analytical skills among L&D teams. That is particularly true for digital learning, virtual facilitation and the curation of online content as well as expectations towards L&D professionals and their knowledge of the business and strategy. This might result in an L&D team that is smaller than in the past but more skilled and delivering a higher value for the business. In order to be a credible partner to the business, to have challenging conversations with leaders and to ensure that delivery models match business needs and expectations.²⁴

Management's relationship with L&D has also significantly changed. A few years ago, L&D teams would have autonomously decided what programs were needed. Today, business leaders play an equal role in those decisions, helping L&D to determine what the business learning needs are.²⁵ But because L&D and HR are often out of touch with the rest of the organization, business leaders who are keen to develop their workforce frequently take matters into

their own hands and fund development and training from their own budgets. These "shadow learning teams" can foster learning differently or at a greater speed than the L&D function. In doing so, they also challenge HR's desire for consistency and continuity, calling into question the validity of a centralized model. Given these factors, learning needs to embrace different approaches as part of the learning operating model and often needs to be managed and organized differently than it is done today.²⁶



A learning technology infrastructure that is the best fit for their business – Fuse processes, technology, and human capabilities

The use of technology plays an increasingly important role in enabling L&D to support a company's organizational strategy. To make the use of technology in learning a success, decision makers are faced with the challenge of selecting and adopting a technology that is the best fit for their business and target groups, of supporting all phases of an individual's learning process and of helping professionals to facilitate the learning process of others. The new reality of work demands that organizations adapt in order to keep up with the pace of change in the organizational environment. This includes the rapid turnover of capabilities needed as well as the evolving (digital) workplace and the diverse and distributed workforce. Work and learning are becoming increasingly interconnected, making learning a critical business investment.²⁷

Organizations need to reinvent their learning technology infrastructure in a way that it delivers a continuous personalized learning experience. They do that by using a learning technology ecosystem approach instead of an LMS-centric approach, by providing a personalized, interactive learning experience to employees and by making development learner-driven.²⁸ Employees look for more flexibility, more benefits and more investment into their careers. This is quite a challenge for learning and development teams, but it can be overcome by using technologies to make learning more flexible.

Adopting the learning technology ecosystem approach (over an LMS-centric approach) can bring multiple benefits for both employees and organization

- Improving the employee experience (anywhere, anytime and accessible via any device)
- Enabling informal learning and virtual collaboration through user-generated content, networks, blogs, online communities, etc.

- Automating the reporting process to improve productivity and compliance tracking
- Eliminating manual tasks, reducing the risk of errors and reducing costs
- Providing an integrated technology infrastructure, with a primary point of access, ensuring clear data structures and a focus on data security
- Improving content quality and relevance
- Establishing talent marketplaces

However, L&D departments need to go beyond the deployment of technology. They must not leave their employees alone with learning technology, but enable, support and accompany them in their use in the best possible way. That can be done by helping employees understand which skills they need and how to access relevant content.²⁹

A culture of learning, embracing continuous development – Establish a learning culture that embraces continuous development and learning from experiences and mistakes

The disruptions caused by the pandemic have shown companies how rapidly the priorities and requirements of L&D functions can change. Adapting to the future of work is one of the top concerns of businesses around the world today. However, for L&D initiatives to be successful, companies must create a culture of learning across all levels of the organization.³⁰

One of the most prominent needs of organizations is to respond to their employees' desire for a learning culture that emphasizes continuous and lifelong learning. Companies must up their game to provide the right culture and growth opportunities to engage their employees in building an agile, customer-centric, innovative culture that values diversity. There is more responsibility than ever on L&D teams to bring in solutions that help leaders and employees to achieve this. Moving forward is going to be the new normal and that is why con-

tinuous learning is so important.³¹ In this context, authenticity is a decisive factor for success. Creating and sustaining a culture in which lifelong learning is lived not only serves to help organizations achieve their goals, but it also provides employees with a sense of purpose, both in and out of their work environment.³²

Education in organizations is not (any longer) a guarantee of knowledge or success in the workplace. Instead, organizations need to become pillars of learning, providing the institutional education that their employees look for.

This will not only help the existing workforce progress, but it will also attract more talented and driven workers, while creating a culture of self-improvement.³³

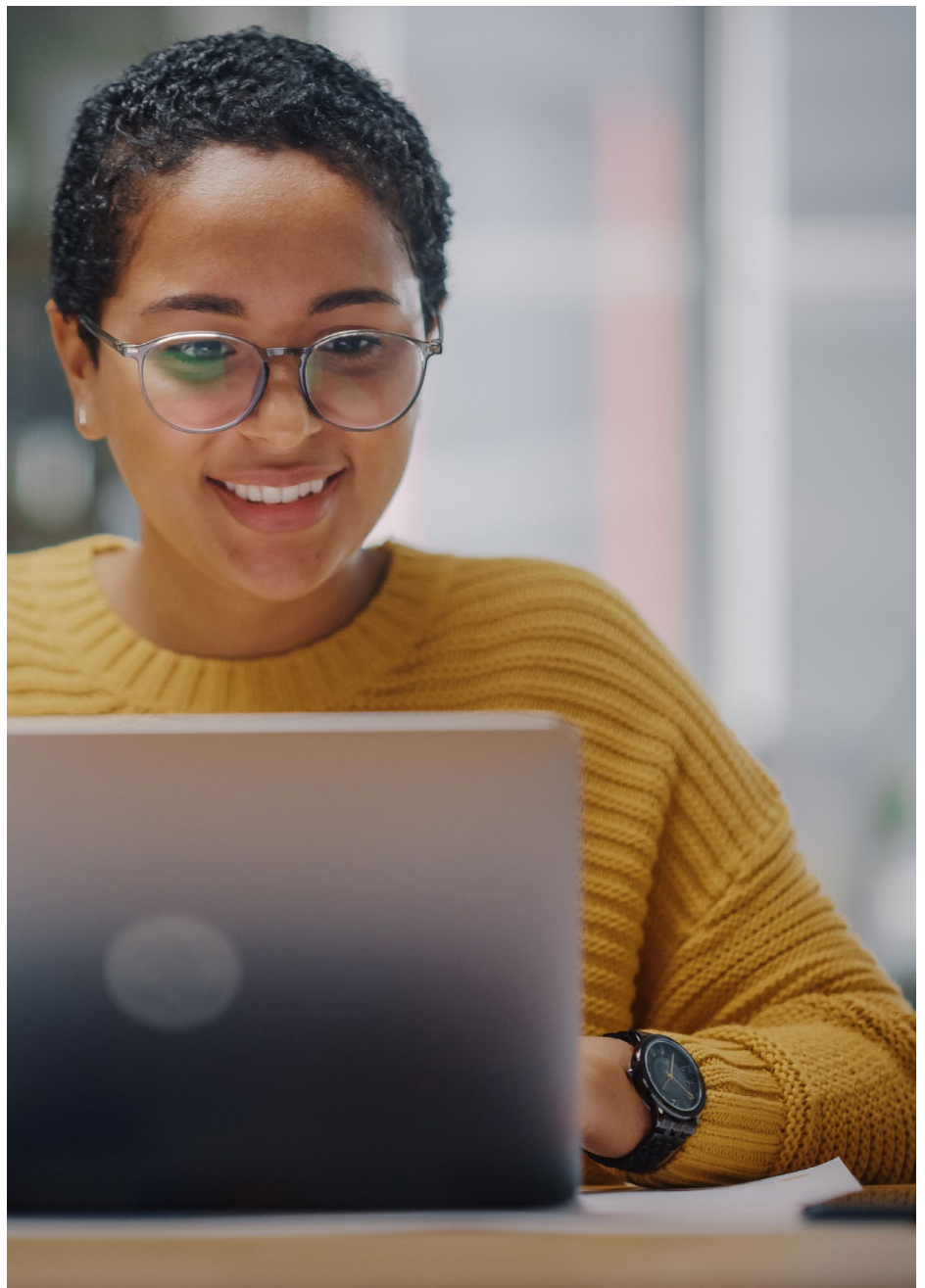
Organizations are looking for approaches to meet these new business requirements and challenges. Since expertise and discipline by themselves are not enough to work out solutions to challenges, organizations need to establish a culture in which it is possible to learn from mistakes and experiments, and thus to develop solutions step by step. A culture of learning flourishes when team members leverage synergies, when they can openly talk about their challenges, when setbacks are met with optimism, and when small success is appreciated.³⁴

Recommendations

Organizations need a holistic mindset for learners, HR and management that focuses on learners while aligning with business strategy and skills that will be requirement in the future

Make continuous and individual re- & upskilling in the flow of work the new normal

Having asked ourselves three guiding questions about the future of learning, the essence of the answer is obvious: We have to rethink learning, which is moving away from trainings and singular events towards an integrated experience where each interaction is a supplement for the individual learner's journey. To get fit for the future of learning, a holistic mindset is key. With such an approach, learners, HR as well as management all work together. They put the learner at the center of the process while ensuring close alignment with business strategy and future requirements. For this reason, we will highlight what we consider the most important aspects for the different target groups, namely for learners, HR and L&D, C-Suite and leaders within companies. The following recommendations result from our in-depth research as well as our close cooperation with companies of different industries and sizes:



The new reality of work demands that individuals as well as organizations can adapt quickly in order to keep up with the pace of change in the environment. This includes the rapid turnover of necessary capabilities to anticipate and respond to a diverse set of requirements. As a result, there is a need for continuous re- and upskilling with tailored offerings to a diverse and distributed workforce to ensure the right knowledge is available at the right time.

- **For Learners:** An open and explorative mindset guided by curiosity enables learners to embed learning on the job into daily life and to take (at least partial) responsibility for personal (career) development. Learning can take place anytime and anywhere, for example by using micro-learning opportunities that quickly qualify learners to tackle real-life tasks and focus on problem solving.
- **For HR:** With this learner-centric approach, the role of HR changes towards a supportive role with a focus on empowering workers to take personal and career development into their own hands while coaching and guiding them along this journey. To capture and build up knowledge, organizations must recognize that knowledge management strategies and their implementation play a crucial role in creating, spreading and managing the flow of knowledge across an organization.
- **For C-Suite:** To make sure that the right skills are available at the right place and time within the workforce, C-Suite must define strategic workforce planning. It should be one of the priorities to

regularly calibrate workforce demand and supply with business planning and current as well as future objectives of the organization. Taking the Great Resignation as an example, the massive talent movement is another reminder for organizations how important workforce issues have become. It is therefore essential that corporate boards not only react, but proactively address challenges of the future of work by seeking greater visibility into talent and development practices.³⁵

Use Case at a major German information & communications technology company

A lack of highly demanded IT-skills in addition to a low turnover-rate, a high average age of the workforce and an insufficient business performance forced the management team of an internal IT-supplier to kick-off a large-scale agile transformation that involved over 60 percent of its total workforce.

By re- and up-skilling existing staff into agile roles and adopting agile methodologies, the company not only significantly increased its business performance, but also developed a thorough learning culture within the organization that made learning in the flow of work a key-pillar of its strategy.

Get future-proof by centering learning around capabilities and skills that will be in high demand

Learning has become a strategic success factor in organizations to remain agile and flexible. A key to realizing the full potential of employees is to accurately track their current capabilities and skills and to match them with anticipated skills that are needed to perform their job in the future.

By establishing a standardized skills architecture within an organization, the capabilities, knowledge and skills of employees become transparent, feasible and thus manageable. With detailed insights into skills structures, companies are enabled to accurately plan the estimated demand of certain skills within their strategic workforce planning and easily identify potential (future) skill gaps which can again be translated into specific learning goals. Individual skills profiles form the basis of this framework. They allow matching broad organizational learning objectives as well as skills demand of an organization on the one hand with unique backgrounds, current skills, career aspirations and interests of individual employees on the other hand. A skills-based learning approach can facilitate a highly personalized learning experience and targeted employee learning.

- **For Learners:** All learning activities (e.g. trainings, courses, certifications, etc.) become part of a highly personalized and adaptable learning journey. That experience is composed of relevant learning content based on the organizational needs and on the individual background of each employee.

- **For HR:** Organizational learning is evolving from a best-guess-practise to an accurate workforce development instrument. HR can base its decisions on facts and utilize skills and capabilities to create a sophisticated data structure and enhance the efficiency of learning activities.

- **For C-Suite:** Enabling a skills-based structure enhances learning as an accurate strategic instrument. Aligned with the cooperate strategy, strategic workforce planning and current skills-demands, it facilitates the organizational development internally and mitigates risks of skill gaps. Thereby, it becomes an essential top management tool.

Use Case at a Major German automotive manufacturer

Having identified the need to re-think workforce management and development, our client decided to tackle organizational learning differently in cooperation with Deloitte. Skills are utilized as a central element to shape a user-centric learning experience. To facilitate skills-based learning, a central part of the strategic realignment was the integration of a learning experience platform (LXP). This

LXP utilizes AI to create individual learning journeys based on users' skills-profiles and automatically updates internal skills-taxonomies by benchmarking external sources. It thus provides a state-of-the-art skills architecture. As a result, employees of the client experience personalized learning activities that are centered on their individual skills and background in line with the corporate strategic ambitions. That significantly increases overall learning efficiency.



Leverage your data

A key to successful organizational learning is to create, gather and analyze data that provides detailed insights about learning behavior of employees. In combination with a company's skills-architecture and a skills-based learning approach, this data can be used to better adapt learning activities to the company's skills-demands. It can be a powerful tool to enable intelligent learning. In combination with an AI-based learning ecosystem, that data can be utilized to create personalized learning journeys. Adapting those learning journeys to market dynamics and organizational demands, the underlying AI can benchmark internal data against external skills-information (e.g. job-postings, market trend studies, etc.), identifying potential skills-demands and developments. As a result, AI guarantees state-of-the-art learning within an organization. Embracing skills-data in line with skills-centered learning, organizations create ecosystems that centralize skills-data and provide numerous advantages. They enable organizations to sense potential skills demands, track and assess organizational skills available within the company's workforce, identify skill gaps and adapt learning portfolios to development needs.

- **For Learners:** Skills-data is created through every learner interaction in the learning process. It can be utilized to automatically curate and adapt learning journeys based on the individual employee's profile, skills, assignments and learning behavior. Thereby, it creates a highly personalized learning experience tailored to the individual background.
- **For HR:** Skills-data provides detailed insights into the current skills-structure within the company. That allows a transparent assessment of potential skill gaps and a kick-off of related countermeasures. HR can then design much more targeted and effective activities for learning and training. As a result, workforce development evolves from a best-guess-practice to a powerful and precise HRD instrument.

- **For C-Suite:** The generated transparency about organizational capabilities allows data-driven decision making to be utilized in strategic business decisions. To realize that potential, the top management has to commit to skills-literacy and foster the integration of a skills-based ecosystem to generate, gather and analyze workforce data.

Use Case at an Austrian company in the public service sector

By implementing and establishing a Learning Experience Platform, our client managed to make their company-wide and complex onboarding process more efficient, transparent and standardized. By using the available manager dashboards within the software, leaders can now track progress concerning different measures. Namely, they can monitor how much time their direct reports have already dedicated to onboarding and their

own development and which skills they are interested in. At the same time, they can also assign specific learning resources to their direct reports. As a result, leaders can easily track progress of the onboarding of new employees, where support might still be needed, but also what skills employees have in addition to the standard onboarding. In short, it provides an optimal overview of the skills available in the workforce with only one click.

Level Up your Learning Culture

A lot has changed within the last years of exceptional circumstances, shaping how we live, work, lead, collaborate and also how we learn – and some of these changes are here to stay. We have learnt that skills-based learning in the flow of work, new technologies and the use of data shape the future of learning. But are individuals, teams and organizations ready for it? Is the learning culture in organizations targeted on what the workforce actually needs, using the human power to adapt and acquire new skills? Do the keywords agile, continuous, life-long, social and collaborative accurately describe this culture?

All transformation, including the shift towards a state-of-the-art learning culture, is ultimately about changing human behavior in order to close the gap between intention and action. A deep understanding how learning takes place includes several facets, such as understanding how underlying beliefs shape the way we learn, being aware of what incentivizes learning behavior and how relationships, stories and tools can influence and drive learning. The established learning culture must be based on a set of shared values, goals and practices and be in accordance with the environment, industry and area of operation of an organization. Adapted to the specific environment and circumstances, a healthy learning environment should be characterized by openness, agility, as well as learner-centricity and should also incorporate a certain culture of failure, where employees can learn through experimentation and from unsuccessful endeavors.

- **For Learners:** In most professional fields, learners will not escape from integrating learning into the flow of work to be prepared for volatile environments. This does not only mean that in the future explanatory videos and easily accessible learning nuggets might displace some in-class trainings. It also comes with a necessary change of behavior and mindset – proactive behavior and individual initiative for one's individual development might still feel unfamiliar to some, but it will be impossible to avoid.
- **For HR:** To convey and accompany a transformation towards new learning cultures, HR must take a leading role in empowering employees to learn. HR must act as a partner of the business and highlight the strategic importance of new ways of learning for the businesses' success – costs of learning and development must be seen as an investment, not as an expense. Further, HR should act as a change agent who really understands learning on an individual, team and organizational level to spread this learning culture within a company, identifying drivers, enablers as well as barriers that foster or prevent the desired learning culture.
- **For C-Suite:** The top management must set the tone and lead by example to visibly reinforce the (learning) culture of an organization. C-Suite shapes the company culture with their (un)conscious actions and should therefore show self-awareness to understand cultural dynamics and how to actively influence those. Make Learning & Development a priority and align it with the company's strategy as well as the teams to foster resilience and innovation.

Use Case at a major telecommunication IT company

Facing a variety of significant challenges, the company's management board decided to execute an agile transformation, significantly pushing internal re- & up-skilling to reshape the organization. Embracing a culture of learning, employees were encouraged to join academies and to prepare themselves for entirely new job roles. Following the introduction of the agile concept, the transformation included bottom-up input, enabling employees to actively engage in shaping the new organizational framework. By making employees an integral part of the agile transformation and creating a culture of learning, the company was able to increase employee satisfaction and fill major skill gaps, which led to significantly better performance results.

Talking about future trends and technology, one can't miss the term Metaverse. Being hyped as the new game-changer along web 3.0, its blockchain-framework and NFTs (Non-fungible tokens), it seems to offer unlimited digital potential for customers, businesses and their employees. But what exactly is it and what are the benefits for organizations?



Deep Dive Metaverse

The Metaverse is a simulated network of 3D virtual environments based on Virtual and Augmented Reality technology. In its digital worlds, multiple users are able to interact with each other, enabling a completely new level of virtual communication and collaboration. In academics, the Metaverse is described as “(...) an interconnected web of social networked immersive environments in persistent multiuser platforms (...)” that enable “(...) seamless embodied user communication in real-time and dynamic interactions with digital artifacts.”³⁶

So, what exactly are potential use cases? At first, the Metaverse enables a completely new level of gaming experience on both, perceptual and social level. From a consumer’s perspective, it is the next step of shopping online. Customers are able to walk into digital stores and interact with virtual items (e.g. trying on a digital pair of jeans). Next to private use cases, it has also deep impacts on the way we work and communicate within the workplace. Virtual collaboration is brought to a new level, enabling new kinds of communication within an immersive digital environment.

Realizing the potential of this development, key-players like Microsoft, Nvidia, Amazon and Facebook (which on 29th Oct 2021 rebranded itself to Meta, becoming the company’s new strategic focus) are fighting for developing and dominating metaverse solutions, thus shaping a very dynamic market. Being estimated with an actual market volume of \$38.85 billion USD, the market is expected to grow tremendously to \$678.8 billion USD worldwide in 2030, becoming a serious business opportunity.³⁷

How could the Metaverse impact organizational learning? Fostering collaboration within the workplace, the Metaverse is enabling a new level of digital learning by creating an immersive surrounding. In the Metaverse, learners can join simulated virtual classrooms and interact with peers, including all benefits of digital learning and real-time-interaction. In those remote settings, the participants experience a high-level of immersion that’s close to being in a physical classroom. With hybrid and remote working on the advance, the Metaverse could become a real alternative to physical classrooms within the next five to seven years.

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