



Creating an Agile Organizational Learning Culture in a Time of Economic Uncertainty

Using Your Learning Management System to Skill Workers and Pivot Quickly



OVERVIEW

What's inside

- L&D as a learning essential in a changing market
- What organizations are spending L&D budget on
- How to use L&D to be more agile
- Using L&D platforms to accomplish strategy

When the world rides different waves of market fluctuations, organizational leaders are forced to take a well-considered look at their growth plans and budgets. A familiar playbook is to slow or pause hiring and try to do more with less. Yet, maintaining the status quo is not an option. Many organizations accelerate fast-paced business transformation and digitize products, services, and customer interactions. At the same time, they strive to engage, train, and retain a workforce that grows increasingly weary in an ever-evolving world.

However, there is good news. Organizations have a powerful resource they can use to maintain momentum and align workforces in support of the business strategy: learning and development (L&D). L&D programs and platforms can be used to rapidly upskill & reskill workers to meet new business demands, create a culture of continuous learning, and engage workers in creating new career opportunities.

L&D Investments are Growing, as Business Change Accelerates

News flash: Many organizations are investing more in L&D, not less. In 2022, 49% of companies intend to increase L&D budgets, up 8% from the year before. That's especially true for businesses with higher turnover. Some 25% of these organizations are significantly increasing their L&D spending.

61%

of all employees consider upskilling opportunities extremely or very important in deciding to stay at their organization

*The American Upskilling Study Empowering Workers for the Jobs of Tomorrow
Gallup/Amazon²*

One caution is that small businesses are lagging in this regard. Some 49% of small-business employees said they hadn't developed any new work skills in 2021, likely due to their employers' fight for survival in a challenging economic climate.¹ Since 61% of all employees consider upskilling opportunities as extremely or very important in deciding to stay at their organization, small business leaders need to increase their focus on L&D to keep their top talent.²

For most organizations, the challenge is not securing budget – but narrowing it in on the right priorities to help their organization become more agile and responsive to business change. For this, L&D can also be a strategic weapon in retaining, growing, and nurturing the top talent who might otherwise depart.

Spend Where it Counts

The challenge with L&D budget is narrowing it in to target organizational priorities. In 2021, organizations reported the following L&D investments:



23% increased L&D staff in 2021, while 59% remained the same.

11% of budgets were spent on learning tools and technologies.

#2 tool expenditure was online learning and learning management systems (LMS), right behind authoring tools.

\$1,071 average spent per learner.

64 average hours of training received by employees.³

How Organizations Can Use L&D to Become More Agile

We repeatedly reflect on the pivot that happened in 2020: organizations rapidly transformed L&D initiatives to remote, and then hybrid learning. By increasing spending on platforms, developing new content, and adhering to L&D best practices, learner retention of key concepts and on-the-job performance improved.

“ If C-suite leaders set an example by promoting programs and even leading learning initiatives, employees will be more willing to get involved.

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- Organizations can flex that muscle to transform again when the economy creates budget constraints and hiring pressures. Here are some best practices organizations can use to increase L&D agility and unlock new sources of value.

Gain executive sponsorship.

Securing ongoing commitment from the C-suite is essential to launching and maintaining thriving L&D programs. C-level leaders will need to understand how L&D can solve critical pain points, such as regulatory compliance, partner enablement, new hire time-to-productivity, and more. L&D teams should prepare a business case with goals, budget, and target outcomes.

By implementing a learning platform, they'll also be able to report back with ongoing analytics, such as training completion ratios or online engagement patterns, as well as qualitative data such as which employees help and mentor others. Demonstrating a track record of success will help prevent the risk of budget pullbacks during economic downturns by presenting the ROI on learning.

Align content to areas of highest priority.

Organizational leaders know the skills employees must possess to do their job and typically have a clear vision of where their industry and business is headed. L&D teams, even as small as one or two staffers, should work with human resources and business strategists to develop reskilling and upskilling programs to close this skills gap. Working closely with leadership also enables L&D teams to pivot quickly if their organizations' needs change rapidly.

U.S. workers and their employers receive clear benefits from upskilling programs, including an additional 8.6% in annual income (about \$8,000 on average).

— The American Upskilling Study Empowering Workers for the Jobs of Tomorrow, Gallup/Amazon

Christian Brothers Automotive (CBA) supports 250 franchise locations in over 25 states. [When the pandemic started in 2020, CBA's L&D team shifted from in-person to hybrid learning, deploying a new program in just two months.](#) The team reformulated role-based training, used access codes to make learning materials more accessible, and improved communications. In addition, the L&D team deployed high-quality, short-form video training, skyrocketing user engagement.

Share the why of new L&D programs.

Employees want to know why they're being required to participate in new L&D programs – as well as what's in it for them. L&D coordinators should make a clear connection between organizational and individual objectives, new skills and behaviors, and any other outcomes the learning will enable. For example, if mastering new skills will make employees more marketable for jobs, increase their pay, or help move them into management, L&D teams should say so.

[Some 57% of U.S. workers are interested in participating in an upskilling program, with two-thirds citing career advancement as their motivation.](#)

They know that their organizations are transforming in real-time, and that they need to update skills to stay relevant. In addition, upskilling is also linked to higher job satisfaction and greater worker retention.

Using L&D Platforms to Accomplish Strategic Priorities

Organizations can use digital LMS platforms to accomplish objectives such as:

- Pivoting to address emerging new market dynamics
- Executing longer-term reskilling and upskilling initiatives
- Equipping remote and hybrid workforces well
- Improving employee motivation and engagement
- Personalizing training to specific roles
- Accelerating new hire time to productivity

“ The top three ways employees find out about L&D programs are internal employee communications, email campaigns, and manager and executive communications.

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Use marketing and communications to drive adoption.

L&D programs need to be well-marketed internally to drive adoption, and externally to serve as an attractor to new talent. L&D coordinators can harness different tools to alert staff to L&D programs and new offerings. These tools include email marketing campaigns, newsletter articles, and manager and executive updates.

Many organizations give leaders key messages to share about L&D at team meetings and performance reports, so that employees are aware of their commitments and how acquiring new skills can positively influence their career progression and bonuses. In addition, branding the L&D program and platform can give it a strong, memorable identity with staff that encourages active participation.

Provide a central communications hub.

Many organizations have challenges sharing and maintaining content, resulting in outdated and little-used SharePoint sites. Other alternatives, such as Microsoft Teams, aren't well-curated, making it difficult to find content.

Organizations can use their LMS platforms to create a single version of truth and easily push out, manage, and curate content.

The global nonprofit Cancer Support Community (CSC) needed a better way to share content with 50 affiliates and staff at 175 locations. CSC uses its LMS to deliver its system, the Community Hub, which provides tools to communicate and train affiliates, partners, and volunteers. Partners and staff can easily pull content from the site, increasing the consistency of work processes and ultimately improving patient care.

Use creative techniques to support diverse learning styles.

Most organizations use blended learning, which features a mix of both in-person and virtual training, to share new content. Organizations are increasingly using such techniques as delivering micro-learning, gamifying online learning, and creating rewards systems to increase learner engagement. They're also delivering role-based training to increase the relevance of content to staff in specific roles, such as customer service and sales.

Many find success with short-form content, breaking new skills or concepts into videos as short as two minutes and 36 seconds. [Bagel Brands for instance, which supports four brands and 1,000 franchises, uses short video training to connect with Gen Z learners, who have been raised on YouTube and TikTok.](#)

Employee retention rates increase on average 30%-50% at companies with a strong learning culture.

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● **Create a thriving online community.**

Peer-based learning is among the most effective learning styles, enabling employees to collaborate in person and virtually on problem-solving, mentor each other, and master new skills. Organizations can use learning platforms to promote peer-based learning in a structured way. They can also use LMS system functionality to increase user-generated content and create social proof. Users can contribute their own content, strengthening the value the platform provides, while also liking and commenting on content and sharing it with their networks. By utilizing social capabilities, L&D teams increase the likelihood that content will become even more engaging.

Use analytics to fine-tune L&D strategies.

When companies roll out new learning in person, they typically monitor learners for engagement and use surveys to see if content has met or missed the mark. However, these tools are a blunt instrument. LMS platforms, on the other hand, provide real-time analytics that L&D teams can use to evaluate the success of content and make fast tweaks if content isn't resonating with users.

barre3 is a fitness company that wanted to create an online community where it could research, test, and release new moves, postures, and music to its instructors. The company had used mass emails and Facebook messages but wasn't sure if information was received or put to use. barre3 now uses its LMS to deliver video and interactive training and measure results.

"The sharing of this new theory or posture used to take weeks, if not months. Now we can post a video, run the analytics on who watched it, then decide whether we need to do more outreach - all within one week!" said Heidi Waltermine, Master Training and Small Business Development Leader.

Learn by doing.

Completing training or digesting content is just the first step on a learning journey. As a result, it's essential to not just focus L&D on these core competencies, but also ensure these skills transfer. L&D teams should work with managers to ensure that employees use new skills in the days and weeks after training, such as on one or more projects. By doing so, they can lock in new insights and skills.

Using an LMS or LXP for More Than Just Learning

L&D organizations and the workers they serve are fatigued. Now more than ever, teams are facing more challenges and being asked to do even more. Organizational budgets are tightening, hiring is slowing or freezing, and companies are seeking new sources of efficiencies.

The good news is that L&D platforms can help organizations become more agile. L&D teams can design programs that help workers develop new skills, engage them proactively in creating and sharing content, and work more creatively and productively.

Wisetail clients have used our LMS and LXP platforms to pivot organizational learning in as little as two months. They also benefit by measuring results in real time, enabling a culture of continuous improvement.

Create an agile learning culture this year.

Your LMS or LXP can do so much more than just provide training. Want to learn more about how Wisetail can help your organization be more agile?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT WISETAIL](#)

Sources

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