LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Fact Versus Fiction:

100+ HR and L&D Professionals Weigh-In on Learning Modalities

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You'd be hard-pressed to find a human resources or learning and development professional who doesn't love a good research study. But in a world where more than 2.5 million scholarly articles are published each year,[1] HR and L&D teams within corporations are finding out just how easy it is to be overwhelmed by new research and trends.

What's wrong with having more data? Nothing, as long as that data contributes to better decision-making. But when constant updates in the field promise that each featured training modality helps employees learn faster and retain more, it can be difficult to identify which strategy will actually be the most effective in achieving organizational goals.

In an effort to establish some firm ground in the ever-shifting environment of learning and training options, Schoox partnered with HR Dive's Brand Studio to survey 134 HR and L&D professionals on the topic of training modalities. The results point to an interesting dichotomy between industry trends worth implementing and those buzz-worthy trends that make great headlines but are too early in their infancy for the broader population to confidently implement.

About the Research

Schoox partnered with HR Dive's Brand Studio to survey 134 HR and L&D professionals on the topic of training modalities.
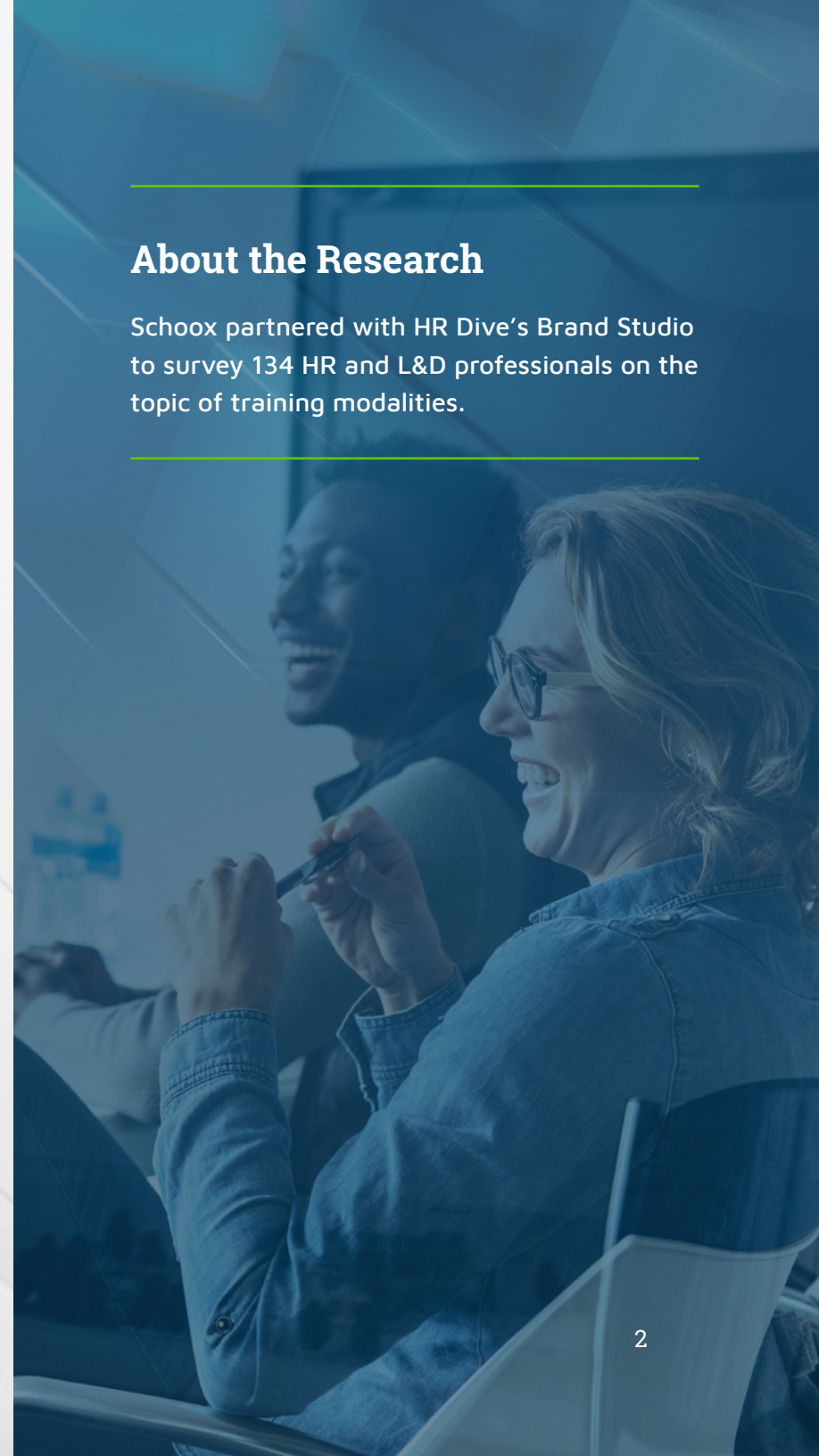
In this report, we'll pair these survey findings with actionable recommendations for identifying and implementing the most appropriate training modalities for your unique organization.

"Traditional approaches to learning were modeled after primary and secondary education, where learners consume content as part of an in-person learning experience led by someone with expertise on the subject. But in the past 20 years, organizations have experimented to create different types of learning experiences (elearning, microlearning, podcasts, virtual training, infographics, ebooks and more)—to such an extent that trainers are no longer required to be the sole SME responsible for creation of all content. Instead, they're content aggregators, communication experts and culture-builders. Learning and development has become talent development, and the tools you use for training need to reflect that evolution."

MATTHEW BROWN
Vice President of Learning and Brand Success at Schoox

Summary of Survey Results

The study asked respondents to identify the HR and L&D functions they feel industry headlines have emphasized as being critical to organizations like theirs, then asked them to select the HR and L&D functions they actually think are most important. The results showed a slight difference of order. Respondents feel recruiting and hiring (73%),

learning, development and engagement (65%), and employee onboarding and training (63%) are emphasized by headlines as being most important. In reality, learning, development and engagement (63%), recruiting and hiring (60%), and leadership effectiveness and development (57%) are most important.

Survey respondents rated the following HR functions as "most important":

According to <u>industry headlines</u>

73% **Recruiting and hiring**
65% **Learning, development and engagement**
63% **Employee onboarding and training**
51% Leadership effectiveness and development
51% Employee productivity and performance

According to <u>business initiatives</u>

63% **Learning, development and engagement**
60% **Recruiting and hiring**
57% **Leadership effectiveness and development**
50% Employee onboarding and training
47% Employee productivity and performance

Only the top 5 answers are shown.

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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The study then asked how prepared respondents feel to measure these functions. The results show that the majority of those surveyed either don't know or do not feel prepared to measure them—a sign that the majority of these learning professionals don't have the proper measurement strategies or technology in place to effectively track and measure their HR and learning goals.

When respondents were asked what's holding their organizations back from being prepared to tackle these priorities, three reasons stood out: Other priorities take precedence (53%), internal process bottlenecks (51%) and lack of budget and resources (49%), which all signal a lack of awareness around the importance of these priorities.

What's holding your organization back from being prepared?

53% **Other priorities take precedent**
51% **Internal process bottlenecks**
49% **Lack of budget and resources**
33% Lack of buy-in for learning and development as a driver of business development
32% Lack of alignment between HR and learning functions

Only the top 5 answers are shown.

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How prepared do you feel to <u>make</u> progress?

■ Prepared   ■ Not Prepared/Don't Know

Recruiting and hiring
Employee onboarding and training
Learning, development and engagement
Leadership effectiveness and development
Employee productivity and performance
Performance management
Talent strategy/ succession planning
Tying HR, L&D initiatives to key business objectives

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

How prepared do you feel to <u>measure</u> progress?

■ Prepared ■ Not Prepared/Don't Know

Recruiting and hiring

Employee onboarding and training

Learning, development and engagement

Leadership effectiveness and development

Employee productivity and performance

Performance management

Talent strategy/ succession planning

Tying HR, L&D initiatives to key business objectives

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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"Sometimes the learning and development team reports to HR, and sometimes it doesn't. So L&D teams need to be prepared to tackle this lack of training awareness at any level, having conversations about how effective employees can become when L&D is embedded within an organization's culture where everyone uses the same language and framework to identify and close knowledge and skill gaps."

MATTHEW BROWN
Vice President of Learning and Brand Success at Schoox

Next, the study asked respondents to identify the training modalities they feel industry headlines have emphasized as being critical to organizations like theirs, then asked respondents to select the educational modalities they actually think are most important.

Once again, the results show a slight difference of order. Respondents feel live learning (such as onsite workshops, offsite seminars, conferences, etc.) (56%), predictive, AI and machine learning (36%) and mobile learning (44%) are emphasized by headlines as being most important, when in reality, live learning (69%), social and independent learning (43%) and mobile learning (38%) are actually the most important.

Learning modalities emphasized by industry headlines as important

56% **Live learning (onsite workshops, offsite seminars, conferences, etc.)**

36% **Predictive, AI and machine learning**

44% **Mobile learning**

29% Micro-learning

29% Independent learning (Lynda.com, LinkedIn Learning, etc.)

29% Social learning

24% Agile learning

20% Scholarship and higher-education programs

19% AR and VR learning

17% Gamification

Only the top 10 answers are shown.

Learning modalities reported as actually important

69% **Live learning (onsite workshops, offsite seminars, conferences, etc.)**

43% **Social and independent learning (Lynda.com, LinkedIn Learning, etc.)**

38% **Mobile learning**

30% Agile learning

29% Micro-learning

28% User-generated curriculum development

21% Scholarship and higher-education programs

21% Predictive, AI and machine learning

13% Gamification

10% AR and VR learning

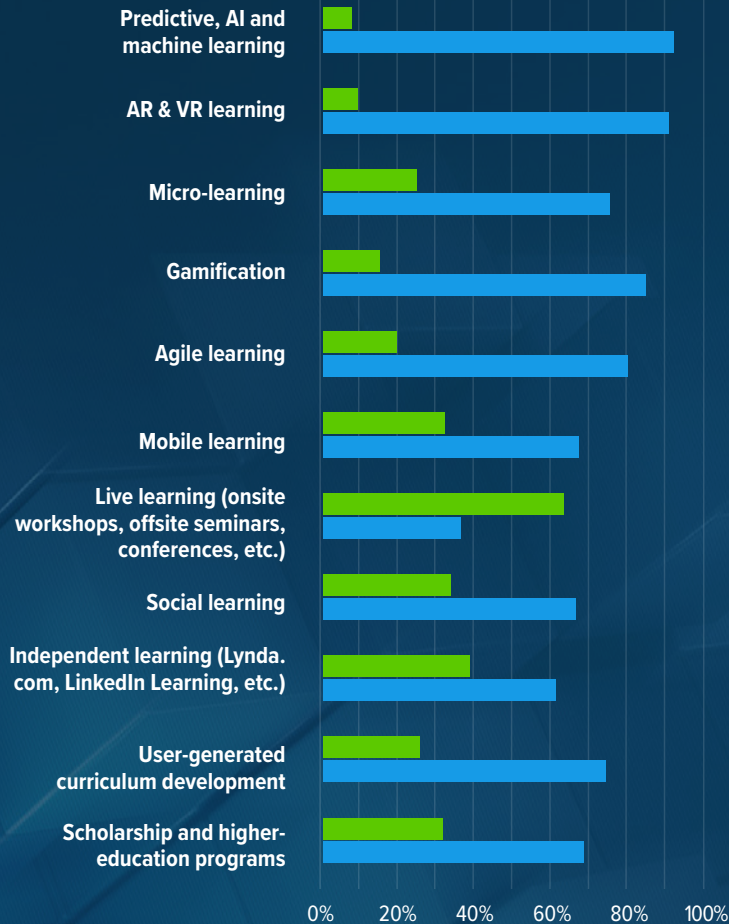Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

Finally, the survey asked how prepared respondents feel to implement and measure these training modalities. The results reveal a wide range of sentiment, with respondents feeling very prepared to implement and measure some modalities and very unprepared to implement and measure others. Notably, respondents feel most prepared to implement and measure more traditional and familiar modalities like live learning, social learning, independent learning, and scholarship and higher education learning, and less prepared to implement and measure more complex or technological modalities like predictive, AI and machine learning, AR and VR learning, and gamification.
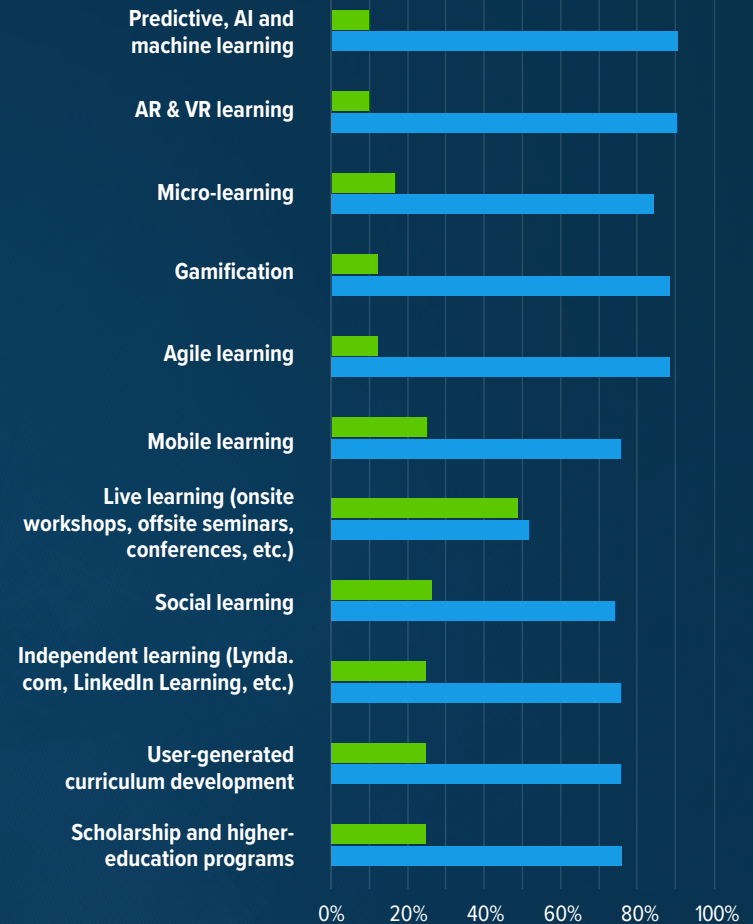
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How prepared do you feel to implement these modalities?

■ Prepared ■ Not Prepared/Don't Know

Modality	
Predictive, AI and machine learning	Prepared ~7%, Not Prepared ~92%
AR & VR learning	Prepared ~9%, Not Prepared ~90%
Micro-learning	Prepared ~25%, Not Prepared ~75%
Gamification	Prepared ~16%, Not Prepared ~84%
Agile learning	Prepared ~20%, Not Prepared ~80%
Mobile learning	Prepared ~33%, Not Prepared ~67%
Live learning (onsite workshops, offsite seminars, conferences, etc.)	Prepared ~63%, Not Prepared ~37%
Social learning	Prepared ~34%, Not Prepared ~66%
Independent learning (Lynda.com, LinkedIn Learning, etc.)	Prepared ~40%, Not Prepared ~60%
User-generated curriculum development	Prepared ~26%, Not Prepared ~74%
Scholarship and higher-education programs	Prepared ~32%, Not Prepared ~68%

How prepared do you feel to measure the impact of these modalities?

■ Prepared ■ Not Prepared/Don't Know

Modality	
Predictive, AI and machine learning	Prepared ~9%, Not Prepared ~90%
AR & VR learning	Prepared ~9%, Not Prepared ~90%
Micro-learning	Prepared ~16%, Not Prepared ~84%
Gamification	Prepared ~12%, Not Prepared ~88%
Agile learning	Prepared ~12%, Not Prepared ~88%
Mobile learning	Prepared ~25%, Not Prepared ~75%
Live learning (onsite workshops, offsite seminars, conferences, etc.)	Prepared ~48%, Not Prepared ~52%
Social learning	Prepared ~26%, Not Prepared ~74%
Independent learning (Lynda.com, LinkedIn Learning, etc.)	Prepared ~24%, Not Prepared ~76%
User-generated curriculum development	Prepared ~24%, Not Prepared ~76%
Scholarship and higher-education programs	Prepared ~24%, Not Prepared ~76%

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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Exploring Data Trends:

Short-Term Thinking, Educational Awareness and the Live Learning Pendulum

The survey data revealed significant differences between those priorities featured in industry headlines and those priorities practiced within organizations. It also uncovered three major trends in how HR and L&D teams approach learning and development:

1. Companies prioritize short-term thinking over long-term thinking

Survey respondents indicated that the top three most important HR functions are learning, development and engagement (61%), recruiting and hiring (59%), and leadership effectiveness and development (57%). These are worthy priorities, of course. But it's interesting to note that they're all relatively short-term priorities: the learning, hiring and leadership needs of today. Whereas long-term, investment-style HR functions such as talent strategy/succession planning (38%), performance management (37%), and tying HR, L&D initiatives to key business objectives (28%) fall to the bottom three spots on the priorities list.

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The challenge of competing with other business demands is a common theme throughout this report. In this case, however, it's worth pushing against the grain to move long-term initiatives closer to the spotlight because working on functions like talent and succession planning and alignment with business objectives impact your company's ability to recruit, hire and retain employees—it's all interconnected.

2. Awareness of L&D value is a challenge

When asked what's holding their organizations back from being prepared to tackle these priorities, the top three selections were that other priorities take precedence (53%), lack of budget and resources (49%), and internal process bottlenecks (52%). Roughly translated, all three of these selections might as well be "other things seem more important"—indicating a lack of awareness of how learning and development can impact an organization.

In reality, learning and development can have a powerful impact on all of a company's most crucial metrics like profitability, productivity, engagement and retention. It's vital that L&D professionals raise awareness for their role in the company's short-or-long-term strategies and take action to build appreciation for a learning culture by capturing the results of their learning and training initiatives.

Getting a seat at the proverbial "executive table" and using data to raise the strategic importance of the team's contribution will increase their chances that HR and L&D team goals, objectives and contributions are prioritized and funded appropriately.

"If you're a learning manager in today's working world, it's difficult to sift through all of the resources at your disposal. And it's even harder to look back on what you've implemented and analyze the results. A learning tool that can show you the business impact of what you're doing is invaluable."

RICHARD FLETCHER
Talent Development Executive at The Krystal Company

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3. The pendulum is swinging back to live learning

At a time when digital is king, the survey revealed an interesting trend. Live learning opportunities ranked the #2 most important in headlines and the #1 most important in reality. Live learning was also ranked significantly higher than other training modalities when it comes to how prepared companies feel to implement it and measure its impact.

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This reflects the trend over the years of live learning acting as a swinging pendulum, coming into favor in some decades and out of favor in others. It's impossible to point to a single instigating factor to explain why live learning is in demand again, but learners and educators in the workforce may appreciate the familiar setting, expectations and visible attention that come with a classroom. It's also much easier to validate and measure the efforts associated with a form of training that so many feel has stood the test of time.

"With an employee base of 6,000 people, we're training as many as 1,900 people at a time. But as challenging as it can be to create training for a diverse and distributed workforce, a modern LMS makes it easier. It gives us a central source of training, which allows us to do more with fewer resources, even with the added complexity of the way our industry is changing."

RICHARD FLETCHER
Talent Development Executive at The Krystal Company

Identifying the Best Training Modality for a Given Learning Objective

The process of determining the best modality for a given learning objective is challenging at best and overwhelming at worst. There are so many options to choose from and so many examples of a modality delivering results that it can be hard to understand which will be the best investment for your organization. This is complicated by the fact that the best investment may change over time, especially as your company's goals and employee demographics change, too.

When you first approach the selection process, TJ Coyle, Chief Operating Officer at Pharmazam, LLC. and former Chief Learning Officer at Alphanumeric Systems, recommends focusing on four criteria when making a decision: purpose, budget, time frame and the end user. For the process of selecting the best modalities to drive organizational results, Coyle says it's important to consider details such as how much time and money you have to select and deploy a modality, as well as who is receiving the training and what they'll be trained for.

With that framework in mind, the next section is intended to offer HR and L&D teams recommendations for best practices that can be taken and leveraged as-is or adapted to your company's specific strategy:

1. Purpose
What performance metrics do you want to change?

2. Budget
What kind of budget do you have available for this project?

3. Time Frame
How quickly does this need to be implemented?

4. End User
Who will use the end product and what are their unique needs?

Live Learning

As the most traditional form of learning, live learning or traditional classroom-style learning stands out as the training modality most used by survey respondents. It is also the training modality survey respondents felt most prepared to implement and measure. From testing educational material on small groups to featuring the expertise of an individual, live learning is an excellent way to engage employees with meaningful, community-building learning and development opportunities.

"As live learning gains momentum, companies are seeing that employees really value being able to learn from the best within an organization," explains Coyle. "The top sales person with a record-breaking year, the rising star who created a new software—being able to meet that person and learn from them builds emotion and connection into the learning experience, and employees crave that."

Live learning is more important to organizations than reported in industry headlines.

Emphasized in headlines as important	**57%**
Actually important	**68%**

Live learning is the #1 learning modality survey respondents feel prepared to both implement and measure.

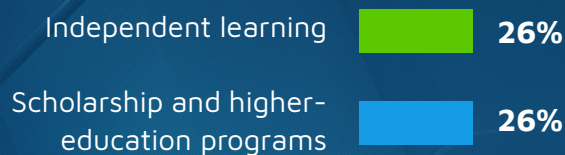|	
Prepared to implement	**63%**
Prepared to measure	**49%**

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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Independent learning and scholarship and higher-education programs are the #2 and #3 learning modalities survey respondents feel prepared to both implement and measure, respectively.

Prepared to implement
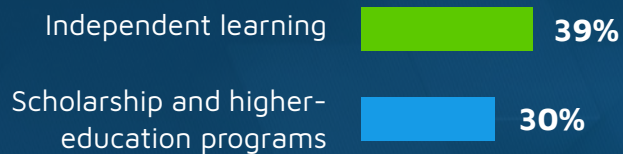
Independent learning	39%
Scholarship and higher-education programs	30%

Prepared to measure

Independent learning	26%
Scholarship and higher-education programs	26%

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Independent Learning and Scholarship and Higher-Education Programs

The next two popular modalities represent another segment of traditional educational opportunities preferred by the companies surveyed. Independent learning (online learning programs such as LinkedIn Learning, Udemy, etc.) has been available since the early 2000s when Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) first gained prominence,[2] and scholarship and higher-education programs (such as a traditional MBA or training certificate) have been a cornerstone source of knowledge and training for hundreds of years.[3]

Because of the ease of access to these programs, they remain go-to options for a significant number of employers that want specific skills or experience, such as an MBA or doctoral program, or a niche subject such as accounting, data analytics or any of the sciences.

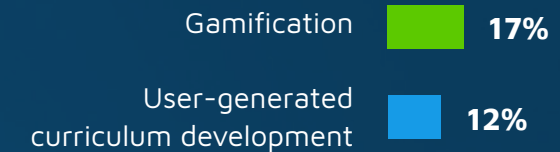# Gamification and User-Generated Curriculum Development

Gamification (applying the elements of a game to instruction and learning goals) and user-generated curriculum development (tapping employees to share their expertise in formal learning programs) bring a social element to learning and development that form strong connections between employees.

While these technologies can often be too resource-heavy to develop independently, many learning technology providers include these options as standard features. This is excellent news for L&D professionals, as gamification and user-generated curriculum are perfect for situations in which leaders want to build a culture of engagement, inclusion, collaboration or healthy competition through leaderboards or gamification tools.

"It may be 2019, but people still need and want to work and learn with other people," says Richard Fletcher, Talent Development Executive at The Krystal Company. "It's very powerful when you make learning social. If you can make learning social and build a culture of learning within your organization, your people are going to feel more valued and they're going to stay longer."

Emphasized in headlines as important

Gamification — 17%

User-generated curriculum development — 12%

Actually important

Gamification — 13%

User-generated curriculum development — 27%

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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Microlearning and mobile learning are equally emphasized as important to learning and development strategy industry headlines and real execution.

Emphasized in headlines as important

Microlearning �-- 29%

Mobile learning �------ 44%

Actually important

Microlearning ▬▬ 29%

Mobile learning ▬▬▬ 38%

TRAINING MODALITY #4:

Microlearning and Mobile Learning

Microlearning (serving educational content in short segments of five minutes or less) and mobile learning (making educational content available on tablets and smartphones) often go hand-in-hand as they speak to today's learner's need for quick, accessible and timely learning—which also makes them perfect for employees with limited time for training, such as retail associates.

"Microlearning may have been a trend five years ago, but today it's foundational to the way employees learn," says Coyle. "It captures the attention of employees with short attention spans, and, since everything is recorded in two or three-minute bytes, it makes it easy for employers to update their content quickly. Especially for frontline workers in retail, restaurant and other service industries, microlearning combined with mobile access is the new norm."

Micro-learning and mobile learning are particularly effective for content that must be accessed in the flow of work. It allows learners to frequently reinforce the information they're learning, avoiding the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve in which a learner forgets as much as 50-70% of the information they learn within 24 hours if it is not reinforced.[4] But both microlearning and mobile learning deliver value outside the service industry. Busy professionals of all ranks and industries appreciate it when information is broken into useful, easy-to-absorb segments—especially when it can be delivered "just in time" to apply to an employee's workday.

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Predictive, AI and Machine Learning + AR and VR Learning

Predictive, AI and machine learning (programs and tools that can process and respond to information quickly) is quite different from AR and VR learning (visual technologies that digitally re-create environments and experiences), but the topics are grouped together here because they represent some of the most advanced and futuristic types of learning available—and often the most murky in terms of how to build a program and implement it using the new technology.

These are two of the newest modalities in the learning industry, so it won't be too surprising to learn that relatively few survey respondents are prioritizing predictive, AI and machine learning (19%) and AR and VR learning (10%). But it's worth reconsidering that prioritization, as these technologies are proving to be extremely valuable at the enterprise level where being able to repeat examples and experiences at scale without adding to expenses saves massive costs.

For example, Walmart has been using VR and VR headsets to help train entry-level employees since 2017, which cuts down on travel costs and allows the new employees to make the most of their training time, no matter what hour of the day they're training.[5] And KFC deployed a VR training simulation to help trainees learn how to prepare the "secret recipe" chicken and employees mastered the five steps in 10 minutes compared with 25 minutes of conventional training.[6]

Not Yet Comfortable with Predictive, AI and Machine Learning + AR and VR Learning

A large majority of survey respondents indicated that they do not feel or do not know if they're prepared to make or measure progress with predictive, AI and machine learning + AR and VR learning.

Do not feel or know if prepared implement

Predictive, AI and machine learning	93%
AR & VR learning	91%

Do not feel or know if prepared to measure

Predictive, AI and machine learning	90%
AR & VR learning	90%

Source: HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey†

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Selecting, Implementing and Measuring L&D Performance for Organizational Excellence

Today's learning and development landscape grows in complexity every year. L&D and HR professionals are overwhelmed by more data, technology and learning strategies than they could ever hope to make use of within the day-to-day of their organizations—and yet they're under enormous pressure to choose one that will quickly and efficiently execute their corporation's performance-oriented strategy.

But there's also a challenge: there's no one best modality for every company and every learning goal. Selecting, implementing and measuring the L&D programs that will deliver the best results for your organization requires a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each modality—and a delivery system that works with your organization, not against it. If you're tasked with this responsibility, your first step should be to take a nuanced look at your organization's goals and demographics to see which styles of education will deliver the most powerful results.

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Sources

† HR Dive's Brand Studio 2019 Survey: L&D Trends Versus Reality: What's Driving Real-World Organizational Results?

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[5] "Walmart Revolutionizes Its Training with Virtual Reality," Society for Human Resources Management, https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/technology/pages/virtual-reality-revolutionizes-walmart-training.aspx

[6] "Real learning in a virtual world How VR can improve learning and training outcomes," Deloitte, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/how-vr-training-learning-can-improve-outcomes.html

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Founded in 2012, the intelligent, innovative and unified platform combines six core solutions including, Learning Engagement, Content Curation, Social Collaboration, Performance Management & Succession, Career Development, and Business Impact. Today, Schoox empowers excellence in learning and talent development for over 9.2 million users across 120 countries in companies like Subway, Kia, Phillips66, Red Lobster, Celebrity Cruises, First Watch, Hopdoddy, Flix Brewhouse, and more.

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