

BUILDING FUTURE-READY SKILLS

How HR leaders can strengthen L&D initiatives to bridge the skills gap

Thought Leadership



Learning and Development (L&D) has become a critical driver of success as businesses navigate a complex digital economy. Professional development isn't optional—it builds stronger leaders, high-performing teams, and organizational resilience.

Recently, Korn Ferry Institute surveyed L&D professionals worldwide and found that skills gaps are growing, especially in artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, and cybersecurity. Yet, many organizations struggle to tailor their L&D programs to meet their workforce's evolving needs. One HR leader noted that traditional training approaches were no longer sufficient as technology advances.

To stay competitive, HR leaders must rethink their L&D strategies, integrating personalized and measurable professional development initiatives. Investing in growth opportunities shows a company's commitment to employee advancement, which improves engagement, retention, and overall performance.

INVESTING IN FUTURE-READY CAPABILITIES

Professional development goes beyond individual skills—it strengthens leadership capabilities and equips employees with tools to succeed. With talent retention a priority, investing in continuous learning is critical.

Our survey findings show that employees prioritize professional growth over perks. Companies offering structured programs focused on future-ready skills are more likely to retain top talent, even in volatile job markets. These programs should include leadership development, business skills training, and curated learning journeys aligned with career paths and organizational goals.

Companies investing in targeted upskilling [see measurable improvements in organizational agility and employee performance](#), according to a recent *Harvard Business Review* article. These initiatives create a strong learning culture that drives long-term success.

Here are three key actions every Learning & Development director must consider today:

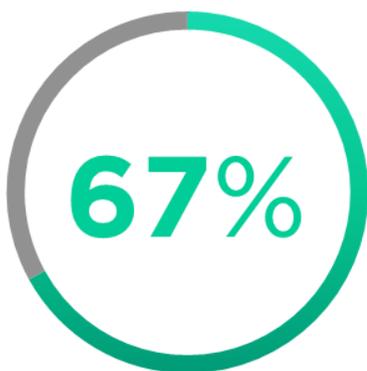
1. Personalize Learning to Individual and Organizational Needs

Tailored L&D experiences yield better outcomes, as employees are more engaged when training aligns with their roles and aspirations. Our survey found that employees whose development programs matched their career goals reported higher job satisfaction and productivity.

Customization requires identifying skills gaps and delivering targeted training. For example, mid-level managers benefit from leadership coaching combined with practical business skills like data analytics and project management.

This requires incorporating assessments into L&D programs to establish baseline skills and track progress over time. L&D leaders can also map individual skills that have been assessed to the organization's strategic priorities.

[Korn Ferry's 2024 Workforce Survey](#) found that employees are more likely to stay at organizations that offer personalized learning pathways. These pathways should be dynamic and adaptable, evolving with the employee's career journey.



of employees see on-the-job training as the most valuable learning resource

2. Bridge the Growing Digital and Technical Skills Gap

Digital transformation continues to accelerate, yet many organizations lack the digital and technical skills required to keep pace. To close this gap, companies should provide upskilling and reskilling in AI literacy, cybersecurity, data analytics, and other future-ready capabilities.

Our survey showed that 67% of employees see on-the-job training as the most valuable learning resource. Professional development strategies should focus on providing practical experiences that employees can apply immediately to their roles.

Curated learning journeys that blend technical training with mindset and motivation coaching can further strengthen these critical skills. For example, combining business skills training with tailored project performance modules empowers employees to manage strategic initiatives more effectively.

3. Measure the Impact and ROI of L&D Programs

Despite significant investments in L&D, many organizations struggle to quantify their impact. Our survey found that 41% of HR leaders lack clear metrics to measure the ROI of their training programs.

To secure future budgets and optimize L&D strategies, HR leaders need to adopt robust measurement practices that track both qualitative and quantitative outcomes. Key metrics like course completion rates, skills progression, and post-training performance gains are essential for evaluating skill development, identifying improvement areas, and maximizing the impact of L&D investments on business outcomes.

Advanced analytics tools can provide real-time insights into the effectiveness of professional development programs. For example, tracking behavioral changes of employees after training can help organizations determine if L&D initiatives have positively impacted team performance.

[LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report](#) shows that companies capable of demonstrating L&D ROI are three times more likely to secure increased funding for future initiatives. This highlights the need to embed measurement frameworks into development programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

The future of workforce development lies in personalized, future-focused, and measurable professional development programs. These initiatives will bridge the growing skills gap, foster engagement, and prepare employees for the challenges of tomorrow.

Organizations that prioritize leadership development and skills training show that they are committed to their workforce's growth. This, in turn, boosts employee morale, productivity, and retention. As the job market evolves, the question remains: Is your organization ready to evolve its L&D strategy?

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