

What Should Learning & Development Professionals Be Preparing for Next?



How eLearning is Transforming Training, Jobs, & Careers



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Introduction

What Should Learning & Development Professionals Be Preparing for Next? *How eLearning is Transforming Training, Jobs, & Careers* looks for the lessons behind the major disruptions of 2020, as Learning & Development (L&D) professionals plan for a future with-and-post COVID-19.

From the closings and isolation of the pandemic to its economic impact both individually and collectively in the workplace and community, professionals have all been forced into course corrections. How much of this “correction response” will be needed in the future?

For professionals charged with training, and the learning & development of others, learning how to surf the constant waves of change is now a critical competency for themselves as well as for those they develop.

“To create value as a social enterprise in today’s environment, organizations must reinvent themselves – with a human factor – on three fronts: the workforce, the organization, and HR.”¹

Changes are certainly nothing new. Some say they seem to be increasing as the personal world expands beyond the immediate geographic range to one continually impacted by global changes. The growing role of technology continues to surface as both a driver and a solution during these disruptions. **As we evolve in this world impacted by quarantines and globalization, the role of eLearning will escalate from a future need to a current requirement and as the predominant theme in the evolving world of L&D in the 21st century.**

What’s next? This has become an even more complex and important question for any company, its employees, and job seekers within the industry. With the extensive upheavals in home, health, work, environment, and regulation — every aspect of daily living has been and may continue to be subjected to disruption.

Following principles of innovation, such as lateral thinking from [Edward DeBono](#), professionals should learn to see these disruptions as opportunities to adjust and course correct. The path from A to B may not be as straight as the airport landing strip but can provide an interesting journey with twists and turns as the organization navigates the barrage of changes. Rather than seeing these as obstacles, agile organizations learn to read the current to find the optimal flow.

What Should Learning & Development Professionals Be Preparing for Next? *How eLearning is Transforming Training, Jobs, & Careers* provides and examines guidance from Learning and Development professionals as organizations plan for growth, development, and training at all levels of the organization.

¹ *Leading the Social Enterprise: Reinvent with a Human Capital Focus*; 2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends

How to Prepare for What's Next



Scan the organization/systems



Target the trends emerging and on the horizon



Optimize resources based on the trends most likely to have a critical impact; determine the optimal plan to develop and utilize resources



Proceed to execute on plans

As much as people may dislike the stop sign at an intersection when in a rush to a destination, it is a necessary safeguard — saving lives and preventing damage by forcing drivers to take a minute in dangerous areas to check out the environment and proceed cautiously.

With today's world packed with so many potential disruptions, it is a lifesaver for L&D and training professionals, as well, to designate periods to S.T.O.P.

S Scan Systems

“The health of any relationship, organization, or community is a function of the lag time between identifying and discussing problems.”²



Source: *Universalia Institutional and Organisational Assessment Model (IOA Model)*

Step back and map out which of the disruptions impact the L&D function and the organization the most and conduct a systems analysis. Such a review should include both an identification of these factors and a close look at where they intersect, as in this Venn diagram.

Identify critical impacts to the external environment in which the organization must survive, the internal organization capacity and engagement, and how these factors combine to affect the overall organizational performance. Avoid a lag between creating the scan, targeting trends, optimizing resources, and proceeding with the plan. *Do so as quickly as possible in order to maintain competitive advantage and success.*

Historically, organizations have engaged in five-or ten-year strategic planning – looking at current factors (external and internal) and mapping out a guide for future initiatives that optimize these situations to deliver on the mission. Even with this future-focused activity, the annual plan review remains a critical leadership task – during the pandemic, a 6-month review is not unreasonable.

Pay particular attention to how changes in the environment will impact the required competencies of existing and new staff, the skill sets available in talent pools, and desirable competencies on the horizon. Map out how these impacts may alter the design and deployment of L&D and training initiatives; in doing so focus on the trends most relevant to the organization.

² Joseph Grenny (*Crucial Conversations*), *Back to Business – 5 Strategies for Success in an Ongoing Pandemic, 2020*, VitalSmarts www.vitalsmarts.com

Target Trends

“Taken from language used by the military to describe the ‘fog of war’, VUCA (Volatility – Uncertainty – Complexity – Ambiguity) is an applicable description for the business environment of the 21st century.”

First used in 1987, based on the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, VUCA captures the environment of the U.S. Army War College in the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in the early 1990s. In a recent [white paper from JER HR Group](#), the VUCA model is used to categorize the areas impacting the L&D world. These factors remain critical in today’s workplace and serve as a way to categorize both the trends and the way in which they may affect the organization.

	DRIVERS	EFFECTS	DEMANDS
VOLATILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Nature • Change Dynamics • Change Rate & Speed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks • Instability • Flux 	VISION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take actions • Probe Changes
UNCERTAINTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictability • Potential Surprises • Unknown Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction Paralysis Due to Data Overload 	UNDERSTANDING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider Understanding • Different Perspectives
COMPLEXITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks Correlation • Multifaceted Effects • Influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unproductive • Dualities 	CLARITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Focus • Flexible • Creative
AMBIGUITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal vs. Actual • Misinterpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induce Doubt & Distrust • Lapses in Decision Making • Hurt Innovations 	AGILITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making • Innovation



Target Trends

Volatility

“Organizations must continue to monitor trends and disruptions and look for ways to leverage them for strategic advantage. As companies evolve to respond to disruption, leaders need to elevate the quality of their leadership. The challenges businesses face are adaptive: leaders need to change themselves and their organizations. We are facing problems that we can’t solve with our current thinking.”³

Disruptions in the Environment /the Organization/the Workplace

While chaotic and frustrating, the end result of these forced changes does not always need to lead to destruction. The goal of the STOP process is to provide a tool to enable leaders to move beyond the initial shock reaction to a more thorough analysis of the impact, the implications, and the opportunities inherent in disruption.

Pandemic related business shutdowns/ Unemployment/Impact to home and the workplace

As of September 16, 2020, CNBC reports permanent closures in the United States have reached 97,966, representing 60% of closed businesses that will not be reopening. While some businesses are reopening, many are at reduced staffing levels. At the same time, schools have also had to close their doors leaving many schools dependent on remote learning. This adds the role of distance learning teacher to parents already struggling with either reduced employment or having to work from home themselves. Maintaining job performance while taking care of home demands has added immense stress to professionals fortunate enough to remain employed.

Employee physical location

Remote work grew 44 percent over the past five years. And 80% of U.S. employees say they would turn down a job that didn’t offer flexible work arrangements.

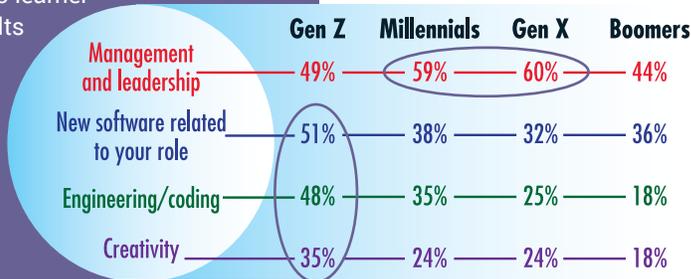
A growing number of new hires have been changing the workplace perception of remote work from that of “slacking off” to one of “enhanced engagement”. The COVID-19 closings made remote work—and online training—a requirement for many businesses attempting to remain productive amid closed offices.

Working remotely brings the added distractions of homelife as well as technical challenges of staying connected. From creating a home office setup to learning the business’s preferred virtual conferencing and meeting tools, to eLearning technology and platforms, staff are thrust into having to rapidly learn new tools, processes, and protocols. The capacity of people, resources and capabilities is addressed in the recent white paper from Training Network: [The Inequalities of Bandwidth: How Trainer, Culture & Technology Bottlenecks Impact Learning.](#)

³ Maureen Metcalfe, *Leadership Trends: Lead the Disruption 2020*; Forbes Online

Volatility

Employees of all generations want to learn, but their interests vary according to learner survey results



As examples of perceived discriminations surface, L&D professionals should focus on targeted management training specific to appropriate and inclusive principles.

Changing Demographics and Multiple Generations on the Job

For the first time in recent history, the majority of workers are no longer from the Baby Boomer generation - 25% (1946-1964), the workforce is now represented by Generation X - 33% (1965-1980) and the Millennials - 35% (1981-2000).

Entering the workforce are also those of the younger generation Z - 6% (2001-2020). Having grown up in the digital era, the latter two generations bring new skills and expectations to learning programs. The more experienced Traditionalists generation - 2% (1925-1945) have moved into retirement, becoming mentors or completely exiting the workforce, often taking their knowledge, culture, and experience with them.

Source: 2020 Workforce Learning Report, Linked In Learning

As Millennials and Gen X grow in management potential, they are focusing on leadership skills, while the newest generation to enter the workforce brings expectations to have technical skills, creativity, and innovation fostered. Planning for the development of such a mixed workforce will require flexibility and variation in training topics as well as approaches.

In tight economies and labor markets, evolving businesses have been forced to scale back during the COVID-19 pandemic, and hiring and retention policies risk the appearance (or reality) of discrimination as organizations choose to retain staff more compatible with management culture.

Disruptions in Performance

As the number of staff working remotely increased in 2020, remaining connected with management and other team members has become increasingly challenging. A quick walk down the hall becomes a call or visual conference check-in. Rather than grabbing lunch or coffee together, teams now must also depend on virtual gatherings. *Not only do these new modes of connecting require learning additional technical skills, but also new interpersonal skills.* For years professionals have included 'communications' training among key competencies – focusing on the importance of nonverbal communications and on two-way communications. In a world in which staff are physically disconnected, these key skills take on ever more importance.

The increase in global expansion has created the foundation for the use of virtual team connections, but the rise of remote staffing during COVID exponentially surfaced these needs throughout the workplace. Clear directions and continual feedback are key to ensuring successful performance.

Staff may also need management and training support in adapting to all the disruptions thrust at them. Modeling agility in shifting with the demands and requirements of the environment have become a key aspect of employee performance. It is human nature to feel anxiety when the world seems to be shifting all around. Becoming aware of emotional reactions, accepting them as normal responses, and learning to read and adjust reactions affectively is at the core of instilling an EQ, or emotional quotient ability.

While volatility speaks to the frequency of disruptions and changes that are transforming training, jobs and careers, **uncertainty** represents the confusion resulting from constant adjustments. As organizations, industries, and regulatory guidelines are in continual flux in an attempt to appropriately react to evolving environments, business entities are truly navigating critical decisions while in a fog.

Lack of Global Guidelines; Customized by Locality

As growing technology platforms bring accessibility, organizations become more dependent on market, customer, workplace, operations and employee data. As a result, businesses are now confronted by a new wave of regulatory concerns. In May of 2018 as the European Union implemented the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). While primarily focused on countries within the European Union, the policies in this regulation have created added complexity and uncertainty globally. Similarly, workplace policies regarding use and monitoring of social media and political activism in the United States are challenging business vs. individual privacy rights and protections.

Safety Guidelines Change as Information Becomes Available

COVID-19 guidelines continually evolve as scientists gain new knowledge and as politicians push for return to a more robust economy. Issues of safe distancing, mask use, group sizes, etc. seem to change weekly as businesses open—or re-open, bring back employees, and struggle to survive amidst emerging waves of the virus. For L&D and training professionals charged with understanding, managing and executing safety compliance in the workplace, the fluidity of training content, learning programs and effective platforms to meet the speed of changing regulations can create a challenging environment for trainers and learners.

Businesses /Supply Chain Disruption

With the exponential growth in the global supply chain, American businesses have become increasingly dependent on the stability of regions outside of the country. One of the crucial lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the negative impact on the nation's economic and physical health when supply chains dry up as nations around the world compete for the same resources. Such disruptions in supply reinforce the need for management insight and workforce flexibility and subsequently, the need for speed in redirecting training content and eLearning programs.

Target Trends

Complexity

68% of employees prefer to learn or train in the workplace

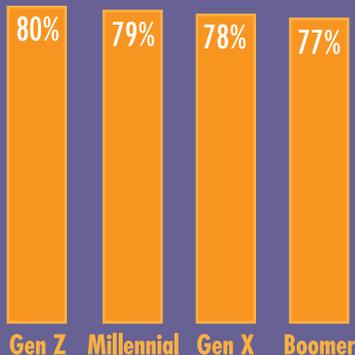
58% of employees prefer to learn or train at their own speed

49% of employees prefer to learn or train when necessary

Source: LinkedIn Learning, 2018

The majority of professionals want learning experiences that are...

Personalized



Source: 2020 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

As organizations seek to chart their own path through today's VUCA environment, they are creating unique solutions matched to their needs. As the variation in solution options grows within an industry, the complexity grows too, forcing employers and employees to learn additional techniques, tools, and processes for training and learning & development.

eLearning

The 2020 [Workplace Learning Report](#) (LinkedIn Learning) indicates that of the 1,675 L&D Professionals queried, 57% indicate they spend more time with online learning than they did three years ago and 37% spend less time with instructor-led training than they did three years ago.

Today's HR, Learning & Development and Training teams are flexing to include remote laptops, tablets, and mobile devices; virtual reality; streaming video and cloud-based LMS platforms. Blended learning includes face-to-face, virtual, and on-demand, and [cloud-based systems that support blended learning](#) are increasingly in demand. User integrated content is rapidly becoming part of content strategies to support the learner's experience and retention as well.

The 2020 [Workplace Learning Report](#) from LinkedIn Learning shows that learners prefer learning in the time and place that fits their work and learning style. "One of the biggest frustrations about learning in the workplace is the amount of time that employees — and sometimes managers — feel they're wasting in a traditional learning or talent system. Employees just want to get work done and do it right. In fact, a recent study by CEB (a division of Gartner) noted that 57% of employees expect just-in-time learning to ensure they're proficient in their jobs."

"Modern learning platforms will be design to eliminate wasted time and let employees learn in the flow of work. Tying into the enhancement in learner experience, employees will take advantage of just-in-time learning, which will enable them to improve efficiency and gain new capabilities with hands-on, just-in-time and just-for-me information."⁴

With the trend in learner demographics moving away from Traditionalists and Baby Boomers to Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, the workplace learner will continue to demand state-of-the-art technology and personalized learning experiences.

The knowledge-base and decisions required by training and L&D professionals continue to expand as platforms, delivery modes, content requirements—and suppliers, grow exponentially. The days of face-to-face, in-classroom training as a single delivery method will not survive post-pandemic. The asynchronous delivery of content (self-paced learning delivered electronically) and the virtual delivery of content in real-time (synchronous) are here to stay.

⁴ *The Future of Learning: Top Five Trends for 2020*, Jeff Carr, Forbes Human Resource Council, March 2020.

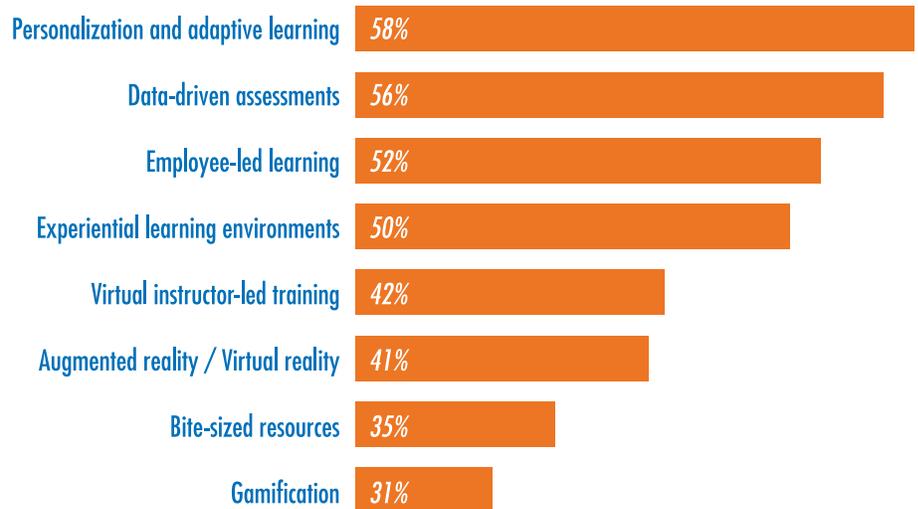
Complexity

Content – Build vs Buy

In a recent industry survey by LinkedIn Learning, talent developers indicate that of the many activities of the job, the largest chunk of time is spent on building or sourcing learning programs and content (29%)⁵

The decision to buy rather than build—or to use a subscription or licensing model versus own—becomes increasingly relevant as the speed of information, demand for compliance, and regulatory updates increase.

Emerging Technologies and New Approaches L&D and Training Professionals Want



Source: CompTIA Workforce and Learning Trends 2020

All of these trends indicate a move away from the more traditional models to more adaptive, technology driven delivery models. The transition may be causing uncertainty but the pace of adaptability will most likely quicken as we move through and post-pandemic.

Remote Work - Increasing Collaboration and Team Cohesiveness

In spite of the 2020 phenomena of the virtual workplace in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, L&D professionals will need to intentionally provide opportunities for social engagement and collaboration. This need for social connection is even more critical in times of physical separation. Learning collaborative tools is an essential new skill.

Teamwork continues to be essential in the VUCA environment. To expect any one function, much less one individual, to be able to address all the expansive issues in the current global environment is a set up for failure. The leadership and management expectations of L&D and training managers will continue to grow. With this, the added complexity of generations, remote work, and global cultures adds an even greater level of challenge to organizations utilizing teams as a critical success factor, making organization-wide team-building training essential.

⁵ 2020 Workplace Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

With constant change, plans often in flux, and a growing range of potential solutions – the path forward is often not a clear choice. This can lead to a lack of commitment by organizations in making decisions as to the next step – broadcasting an ambiguous mission directive.

Challenges to Watch

1. Length of Planning Cycle – anticipating the next change in requirements

With such a volatile environment, it is far too easy to get lulled into “analysis paralysis” – always watching and afraid to act. Just as in best practices for individual performance reviews, conduct frequent check-ins. These may not need to be done for all elements impacting the organization, but instead focus on the more fluid ones.

2. Decision Making – when to be loner or a collaborator

Getting ‘approvals’ to proceed can often be a challenge. Identifying who needs to be involved and who has the authority to make final decisions can be vague in some organizations (especially those not very hierarchical). Learn to ask about the decision making process early in a project, to target decision-makers, and build buy-in through involvement.

3. Blurred Lines - balancing home and work responsibilities

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call to organizations, serving as a strong reminder of the way in which learners can be torn between work and personal commitments. Providing a culture accepting of staff as workplace team members AND as caregivers outside of the workplace will demonstrate organizational commitment to their well being as well as to that of the organization. With the increased availability of virtual platforms, on-demand modules, and learning system tracking capabilities, it is possible to provide access to training and development programs beyond the traditional 8-hour day or the geographic boundaries.



O Optimize Resources

1. Getting Buy-in

Especially in turbulent times, it is critically important to have support from management and learners. While charging ahead with a plan may seem expeditious, should the targeted stakeholders push back, any time saved by a quick decision will be lost. More importantly, losing the trust of the organization in the ability to deliver success for projected initiatives can be damaging to careers.

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey describes the Relationship Bank Account (RBA) as very much like a checking account at a bank: "You can make deposits and improve the relationship or take withdrawals and weaken it. A strong and healthy relationship is always the result of steady deposits made over a long period."

Jumping ahead without taking the time to communicate, interview, solicit input to build buy-in can result in a withdrawal from your organizational trust account. To be seen as a key strategic contributor, L&D and training professionals should position themselves as a champion for innovation and excellence in development of workplace knowledge capital.

2. Understand Management Concerns

L&D – as well as training professionals – may not need an MBA to be successful as leaders in the organization, but it is critical to learn to speak to the key performance indicators (KPI) of a successful business. Learn what key measures the organization monitors, identify and communicate the impact the L&D and workforce training programs have on those indicators. Setting up a system to track success is an intellectual capital asset, and a critical component when speaking of programmatic impact on critical business and human resource initiatives.

3. Teach Others How to Learn

Given the pace of change, successful professionals need to focus on developing the ability to *learn continuously*. The era of a one-time delivery of skill training is disappearing, replaced now with a focus on building content modules that can be accessed when and where as needed. The new aptitudes require understanding how to determine learning needs, to locate knowledge sources, and to evaluate content for accuracy and relevance, and, in developing a personal growth mindset.

This may include the need to understand technology and navigate the many options appropriate for content, delivery, tracking and reporting. In a 'systems-oriented' organization, the L&D and workforce training function is integrated into organizational processes and capacity. The tracking of content and delivery within and throughout the organization is required to integrate learning activities as well as performance and knowledge growth.

Optimize Resources

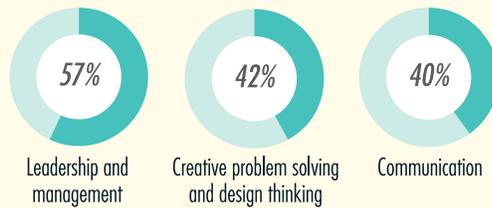
4. Competency Evaluation and Model

L&D and workforce training is growing as an important element for the organization's success. In a recent *Business News Daily* article, training was cited as one of the four functions critical to human capital management.

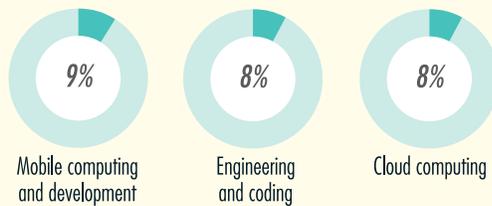
Areas important to an organization, and therefore a focus of education, include:

Percentage of L&D pros who are focused on developing these skills

Highest priority skills



Lowest priority skills



Source: 2020 Workforce Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

5. Capabilities vs Skills

"Highest priority skills" from the 2020 *Workforce Learning Report* from LinkedIn Learning identifies the most critical areas of competencies: leadership/management, problem solving/creative thinking, and communications. Areas typically more indicative of "skills" such as computing, technical, and engineering fall into lower priorities. These interpersonal areas of development and training are essential to the organizational success.

6. EQ – Adaptability

Among interpersonal areas of development, two capabilities stand out as particularly important in the age of VUCA. Learners, especially leaders and managers, will be expected to remain productive in the midst of volatile times. Staying above the fray of disruptions requires an ability to recognize automatic emotional reactions as they surface and to be able to call on proven and appropriate strategies for rising above the emotional distractions, enabling the learner and the organization to evolve. This is often described as an individual's EQ, or emotional quotient.

In addition to a developed EQ and as a result of this awareness, learners will also need to acquire an ability to be agile and to adapt as situations vary. One solution will not always be the answer for all events. Instead L&D professionals can help learners to develop skills in critical analysis, decision-making, and how to learn-on-the-fly. Adaptability includes the ability to quickly assess impacts and to determine best approaches forward.

Optimize Resources

7. Learning & Development Competency Models

Several professional organizations have created Learning & Development Competency models (such as ATD Talent Development Capability Model™) and a variety of certification programs. L&D and training professionals should access these resources to aid in the identification and development of essential skills, and increasing demand for certifications to advance pay grades.

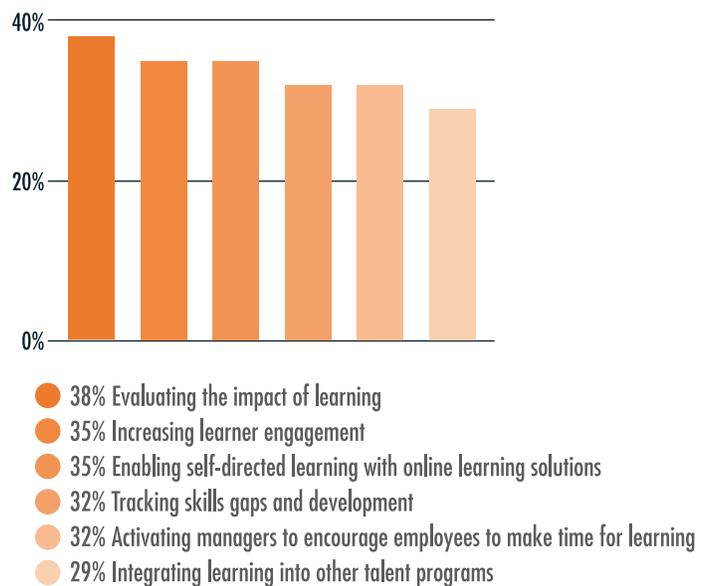
8. Capacity

As external requirements evolve for an organization and as job markets tighten, a recent Deloitte survey reported 90% of respondents indicated that their organizations are redesigning jobs, and thus the required competencies. Deloitte also found that “improving L&D is a critical initiative to 86% of companies. The 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos reported that more than half of all employees will require reskilling or upskilling to address the changing requirements in their jobs over the next three years.”⁶

Fostering the development of organizational capacity includes the molding of future employees and management. Champion an environment in which staff find joy and reward in development programs and are able to easily access the resources.

TOP STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS GLOBALLY

% of L&D pros who identified their top 3 strategic priorities



Source: 2020 Workforce Learning Report, LinkedIn Learning

⁶ *The Future of Learning: Top Five Trends for 2020*, Jeff Carr, Forbes Human Resource Council, March 2020.



Proceed with a Plan

Embrace Disruptions to Drive Innovation

Moving beyond the disappointment and fear of disruptive events and instead looking for innovative solutions is key to surviving the VUCA environment and to thrive. Creative approaches such as lateral thinking can help L&D and training professionals to follow through with alternate solutions beyond the next most obvious step. It often takes chaos to force organizations out-of-the-box into being innovative. By continually cultivating innovation, organizations, L&D and training professionals can develop skills to enable survival beyond such disruptions.

Partner for Success: Collaborate with SME, Peers, Learners

Given the varied skills, content, and competencies determined to be essential for any organization, L&D professionals often depend on SME's (subject matter experts) to aid in training delivery. By also developing peers (even from other functional areas) as well as being learners themselves, L&D can expand the organization's capacity for development and training. Those who are charged with content delivery are often the ones who gain the most understanding as they learn by teaching others.

Design and Delivery

Meet on their turf

Learners are more dispersed geographically, work varying shifts, are in different time zones, different cultures, and with differing technology environments. Forbes finds that "Employees just want to get work done and do it right. In a recent study by CEB (a division of Gartner), 57% of employees expect Just-in-Time learning to ensure they're proficient in their jobs."⁷

Vary modalities

In identifying optimal delivery modes for content, also consider learning styles and preferences of the target audience. Best practices of classroom training – using activities to engage as many aspects of the brain (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) – remain key to virtual delivery as well. Most platforms provide options for the use of break out rooms, use of whiteboards, polling, quizzes, and other audience engagement. Target the use of any platform for the optimal learning experience given the content to be delivered and the nature of the learners.

⁷ *The Future of Learning: Top Five Trends for 2020*, Jeff Carr, Forbes Human Resource Council, March 2020.

Proceed with a Plan

“Companies track mission-critical content outside of their LMS and move it to systems that help them run the businesses, which requires learning and operations teams to form critical partnerships.”

*The Future of Learning:
Top Five Trends for 2020,
Jeff Carr, Forbes Human
Resources Council,
March 2020*

Accountability in a virtual world

What does skills demonstration look like? Consider centralized tracking with KSM -Knowledge Management System and/or an [LMS](#) - Learning Management System.

Organizations with a high risk for safety incidents must manage all learning event systematically. With the expansion of many businesses across regional, national, and global boundaries, just maintaining records critical to tracking training completion can become a challenge. As the training industry and [providers](#) offer an increased number and variety of compliance training programs, they have incorporated an ability to assign courses for employees and to track completion. Enhanced Learning Management Systems allow learners to provide content and to add activities. Pass/fail rates, times to complete, and device optimization can further improve the users learning experience.

In the rapidly evolving world of adaptations, many industries are now moving to the addition of AI (Artificial Intelligence) to incorporate ‘system learning’ and data analytics to determine what learning events are the most effective, and leverage best practices.



How eLearning is Transforming Training, Jobs, & Careers

Niche Career No Longer Exists - Flex to the Needs

Whether providing support in the development of staff or for your own career, flexibility and adaptation are key. In this age of VUCA, workers may need to reinvent themselves multiple times in the life of their employment cycle. The workplace of the Traditionalist or even of some Baby Boomers has evolved. Gone are the retirement pensions and guaranteed healthcare. Organizations are no longer prioritizing loyalty among staff, instead looking to workers who can bring the new skills and mindsets required by the changing environment.

The greatest asset future employees can bring to an organization is the ability to navigate and to continually leverage interests and competencies to expand and evolve as organizational requirements do. Jobs change often and a lot; from skilled worker to those who can create and deploy automation; from full-time staff to those who can work part-time or as a contractor to a variety of organizations, while no longer depending on the hiring agent to provide basic benefits such as healthcare and retirement planning. The job seeker who can continually learn and adapt and can be self-sufficient will find greater success in the volatile workplace of the 21st century.

This is also true of Learning & Development functions. From the impacts seen in the environmental scan and the identified trends, L&D professionals will be most successful by taking the time to implement the S.T.O.P. program to move forward in an informed fashion, optimizing organizational resources and proceeding to grow the L&D function with a well-developed plan.

Download the supplemental **S.T.O.P. Checklist & Worksheet** at JERHRGroup.com.

Sandie Bateman, MBA, CPTD, is the Director of Learning & Development with JER HR Group, a leading human resource firm that helps organizations large and small to be their best, and Training Network, a global distributor of safety, management, technology and human resources training content and learning platforms. Our teams work collaboratively with clients to develop effective solutions tailored to, and aligned with, the client's work culture, business strategy, and organizational learning and development needs.

Sandie is an expert in organizational development, designing and implementing customized L&D courses for organizational development initiatives. She is a Certified Professional in Talent Development (CPTD), and certified in Everything DiSC®, Profiles XT®, Profiles Check-Point 360®, Profiles Sales Assessment® and Profiles Managerial Fit®.

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We develop real-world learning solutions based on what human resource, L&D, and training professionals tell us they need to effectively deliver training programs.

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BONUS

S.T.O.P. CHECKLIST & WORKSHEET

What Should Learning & Development Professionals Be Preparing for Next?

STOP

S.T.O.P. Checklist & Worksheet

S

SCAN To evaluate the current state of an organization consider these factors

External Environment	Internal Environment		Organization Performance
	Organization Capacity	Organization Motivation	
Economy	Right People in Right Place	Workplace Engagement	Ability to Adapt
Regulatory/Legal	Space & Equipment	Collaboration	Productivity/Efficiency
Supply Chain	Technology	Staff Buy-In	Sustainability
Marketplace/Competition	Finances	Agreement on Mission/Goals	Financial Stability
Political	Partners	Total Rewards Program	Succession Success
Cultural	Optimal Operations/ Programs		
Environmental			
Shareholders/Stakeholders			

T

TARGET TRENDS Consider how these trends may impact your organization

Volatility	Uncertainty	Complexity	Ambiguity
Disruptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Shutdowns & Reductions • Increased Unemployment • Strains on home life and in the workplace • Opportunities? 	Lack of global guidelines	Moving to mobile & virtual	Length of planning cycle – anticipating the next change in requirements
Changing Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generations on job • Potential for perceived discrimination 	Safety guidelines change as info becomes available	Content update: Build v Buy	Decision-making: when to be a loner & when to collaborate
Disruptions in Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation and Agility • Soft skills for dealing with disruptions-EQ 	Business & supply chains disappear	eLearning is here to stay	Blurred lines – balancing home & work responsibilities
		Remote work – increasing collaboration and team cohesiveness	

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OPTIMIZE RESOURCES For each area, list resources available

Getting Buy-In	L&D Professionals learn to speak the language of decision-makers	Teach other how to learn/Lifelong learning	Competency Evaluation/ Models for L&D and for Learners	Capacity Use- Leverage Teams

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PROCEED WITH A PLAN For each area, identify actions

Embrace Disruptions to Drive Innovation	Partner for Success Collaborate with SMEs, Peers, Vendors, Learners	Design & Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet on their turf • Vary modalities 	Accountability/ Centralized Tracking	Career Adaptation - Flex To Needs

Download the accompanying eBook, *What Should Learning & Development Professionals Be Preparing for Next?* at JERHRGroup.com.



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Two Recent Examples of Organizations Mining the Disruptions of the Pandemic to Deliver Innovative Solutions

A Unique National Nonprofit for Adult Learners

Case Study

Situation:

One of the nation's largest nonprofit organizations, charged with providing ongoing learning experiences for intellectually curious adults 50 year and older, confronts the loss of face-to-face connections between presenters and elearners because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, the organization had to reimagine the social and engaging experience in the classroom for the virtual world.

"Two of the overarching themes for the Osher Network in 2020 might aptly be adaptation and creativity," wrote Steve Thaxton, Executive Director of the Osher National Resource Center, in a recent edition of Osher's national newsletter. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) is a network of university-based educational programs, funded in part by the Bernard Osher Foundation, financial gifts, and membership fees. OLLI classes are open to anyone and do not require academic tests or other qualifications. There are more than 130 OLLI member program at colleges and universities across the United States. That figure continues to grow despite—and because of—COVID-19 interruptions.

OLLI has a culture of matching those with a skill/expertise/story of interest with curious adults—lifelong learners. OLLI locations annually query members for those interested in adding to the curriculum or volunteering in other ways. With COVID-19 surfacing as the summer sessions of 2020 was in the planning stages, many OLLI organizations used those same channels of volunteer support to develop an ongoing program that could be delivered virtually.

By organizing interested volunteers into a Distance Learning Team, OLLI of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) focused on support for instructors, session hosts, and members as they navigated the new video conferencing/online meeting technology.

A unique and challenging environment requires an adaptive and innovative plan of approach. The S.T.O.P. style of analysis provided an opportunity to Scan, Target, Optimize and Proceed with a new approach.

OLLI sent out a call to action, asking for volunteers from their core membership and UNCW faculty members to provide background information. Then, with those skillsets, they set up three different areas of distance elearning to target three different populations: to create instructors, program hosts, and more members.

They instituted a virtual learning environment using the popular ZOOM video-conferencing application. "In our membership, we have done a lot of training to use the virtual environment for the first time," says Susan Williams, Program Coordinator. "As we've gone through the months with ZOOM, the experience has become social again."

Williams says that one of the hallmarks of the new virtual environment is having peers teaching peers. "We have trusted our volunteers to help lead us to have quality programs. Ultimately, one of the big outcomes is that we're always going to need to provide online classes for our OLLI members. Previously we had never seen ourselves offering online classes," Williams said.

For the UNCW OLLI program, the COVID-19 disruptions became a chance to S.T.O.P.; to innovate, learn new things, and to thrive in the virtual elearning world.

NBA Fan Experience

Case Study

Situation:

With COVID-19 exploding across the U.S. in the spring of 2020, the National Basketball Association was facing a 2020 season about to be abruptly shut down. Here's how using a S.T.O.P. style of analysis helped with Disruptions in the Environment, Organization & Workplace, demonstrating how a large organization and those companies in its influence adapted to reinvent the NBA fan experience, while protecting from sickness the most critical asset—players & coaches.

No U.S. professional sports franchise garnered more publicity from fans and the media in 2020 than the NBA with its COVID-19 inspired "bubble." By isolating its players, coaches and support staff within a large compound in Florida, the NBA kept almost everyone health and ready to play.

But along with the challenge of keeping COVID-19 at bay, the NBA still faced the unprecedented problem of playing without on-site fans. Few things sound more forlorn than a basketball bouncing and players' shoes squeaking in a huge, empty arena.

The solution turned out to require a remarkable collection of digital studio and video technologies and a creative rethinking of the fan and player experiences.

The NBA sought help from several leading AV production companies to setup audio systems at several NBA venues. Hundreds of audio clips of crowd noise, cheering and booing—virtually every noise that might make the playing and watching over television more like the real face-to-face experience, including banks of video screens featuring videoconferencing fans watching and cheering were added. The resulting carefully curated crowd sounds helped motivate the players and create viewer involvement as they watched remotely.

From the league's head of next-generation telecasts, Sara Zucker, *"We're in such a different scenario now, with the way everyone is consuming media and watching sports. We knew this would be something different. I don't think we could have predicted the response. I'm thrilled to see how popular it is."*

The NBA's success helped promote similar efforts by the NFL, the NHL, and other professional sports organizations.

This ability of an entire sports enterprise to pivot and respond with such innovation and creativity demonstrates the potential gold to be mined from perceived disruptions. Also, of note, the successful programs resulted from expansive collaboration across vendors, stakeholders, team assets, and fans.

"Organizations must continue to monitor trends and disruptions and look for ways to leverage them for strategic advantage. As companies evolve to respond to disruption, leaders need to elevate the quality of their leadership. The challenges businesses face are adaptive: leaders need to change themselves and their organizations. We are facing problems that we can't solve with our current thinking."

Maureen Metcalfe

Leadership Trends Lead the Disruption, 2020, Forbes Online



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