From reactivity to agility - pivoting L&D into a post-pandemic world

Learning & Development Impact Survey 2022

INTRODUCTION

For many, 2022 is the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel - but this does not mean the disruption is over. Although organisations no longer have to react to lockdowns and enforced workplace closures, the world they now operate in is more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. It's a world which is more tech-centric and hybrid, where needed skills are harder to hire for, onboard and retain, and in-demand skills are changing. In this landscape, L&D have to deliver for employees and businesses in ways previously unthought.

Although L&D and HR teams have successfully navigated changes caused by COVID-19, pivoting to digital learning delivery, and creating more self-directed or remote functionality - 2022 will be the year to deeply embed and progress those changes further. L&D will have to become both more agile and more integrated, aligning with what individuals and businesses need, striving to use best-in-class technologies to create better data and outcomes, not just short-term digital means, in order to drive success in what will be another challenging year.

POSITIVITY AND UNDERSTANDING

In our recent survey, Learning Development Impact Survey 2022: The transformation of L&D and its role in achieving business success, we asked 462 L&D, HR and talent professionals from a wide variety of industries about what is changing in the learning and development landscape.

The survey looked at what challenges and new demands they have to react to, what new skills they need to deliver, how new structures of work impact learning delivery, what tools, strategies, support and resources are needed to create better, more agile cultures of learning, where technology has a role to play, and what L&D's relationship with the business is.

Unsurprisingly, as organisations begin to manage the long-term impact of a pandemic-changed workplace, L&D and HR have updated their learning playbooks. With work now more hybrid, digital-first and changeable, there is increased understanding of the necessity of soft skills, the central role an agile learning culture has to play and, seemingly, more enthusiasm to invest in necessary L&D changes, digital or otherwise.

To help deliver this, there is also more appetite for improvements to learning technology. These include looking at how the right digital solutions can deliver on upskilling and reskilling needs, where technology can improve accessibility to learning, and where learning management systems might be enhanced, as well as a look at where apps have a role to play.

There is also willingness to engage with how this supports demand for live and in-person as well as programmatic learning, balancing individual and business needs.

L&D seems confident it can step up and has the answers the business needs, likely boosted by clear evidence that the understanding of L&D's role has progressed. It is no longer seen as a function which solely delivers learning - consider that the most popular survey response to a question about what drives L&D strategy was its role in acquiring and retaining talent - but one that has a clear role to play in the business and talent strategy.

It will also have a role in delivering on individuals' new expectations from work, as well as providing the foundation for necessary business transformations.

Whilst this is encouraging for L&D practitioners, it means the pressure is on.

> *Emotional intelligence, leadership skills and technical ability are the future skills and behaviours most critical for our business.*

CHALLENGES FOR THE L&D FUNCTION

Clearly, L&D has the opportunity to play a more central role in the business strategy going forward. That is, partly, the result of some big challenges. As the business world grapples with the so-called Great Resignation, hiring struggles, and issues with legacy talent and skills development, CEOs are increasingly worried about securing the skills they need now, as well as for the long term. There are also question marks over development strategies with businesses needing agile talent for better business, DE&I and talent lifecycle outcomes.

In fact, business leaders need a whole range of capabilities for an ever-changing world where geopolitics, markets, technology and work structures shift, and shift quickly. To survive and thrive in this world, they'll need a workforce who are resilient and adaptable and digitally fluent; skills that need to either be bought, currently difficult and expensive, or developed. They'll also need their own leadership behaviours updating.

Skills delivery isn't the only challenge. Resource, budget, understanding how to deliver in remote and hybrid models and engagement were also crucial issues. In our survey, we asked: "Aside from COVID-19, what have been the main challenges facing L&D at your organisation this year?" Before the function can begin to plot a strategic route forward, it's a question that it must think about.

Posing it in our survey produced some illuminating results:

Our main learning resource was peer learning, this has diminished as we've gone hybrid.

Transforming the learning culture across the organisation.

The volume of requests for digital learning solutions.

Building a culture of continuous learning.

Prioritising learning.

Transferring face-to-face learning to a digital format.

Employee engagement with L&D, with lack of communication between managers and HR.

To overcome these challenges, and to support executives and workforces in this fast-evolving skills and business landscape, L&D must create the right kind of learning culture - alongside the provision of the right selection of digital learning tools, resources and methods - and understand the best way forward is to make this culture agile.

However, very few respondents said they have the agile learning culture they want in place - or the engagement and business alignment they need. Issues compounded by the fact that, much the same as 2021, getting the right backing from senior leadership and in the form of required budget and resources isn't always easy. It means there's work to be done.

MAIN CHALLENGES FACING L&D, ASIDE FROM COVID-19:

RECRUITMENT/ONBOARDING/
RETENTION
ENGAGEMENT
BUDGETS/
COSTS
ACCESSIBILITY/TECHNOLOGY
BUY-IN/RESISTANCE
BREXIT
EMPLOYEE
WELLBEING
TIME/
LEARNING CULTURE
NONE
RESOURCE
DIGITAL
LITERACY
HYBRID/REMOTE
WORKING/LEARNING
REORG/MERGER/GROWTH/
NEW MARKETS/RECOVERY

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGILE TALENT DEVELOPMENT

With businesses increasingly needing talent development strategies that can respond to uncertainty and pace, there is a need for a new approach to talent development.

DRIVING IMPROVEMENTS TO L&D

The first two years of the pandemic were a disruptive period of time for all business functions. In many cases, L&D had to be reactive or accept that its plans were pushed down the agenda. This is signified by the small number of respondents to the 2021 survey who expected to get budget growth.

However, with more L&D and HR professionals expecting to get financial backing in 2022, there is an opportunity to move forward in areas survey respondents said they wanted to drive improvements. These include: better engagement of employees in learning, creating better learning experiences, using L&D to underpin business transformation and to align better with the overall talent and business strategies, as well as delivering the skills the organisation needs to operate successfully in what is undeniably a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world. Many are already looking to make improvements: with almost two-thirds of respondents from 1001-5000 person firms, and almost seven in 10 respondents from 5000+ person firms noting the importance of creating a more agile learning culture.

And as the dust settles on what working structures will look like in the future - remote and hybrid are, largely, here to stay; for 1001-5000 person size firms 97% are using a remote or hybrid model - L&D can, once again, start to think about its long-term strategic position within them.

RESPONSE TO L&D CHALLENGES

Category	Percentage
INCREASED COMMS/COLLABORATION/ENGAGEMENT/FEEDBACK ACTIVITIES	24%
DIFFERENT TRAINING DELIVERY/APPROACHES	23%
PLANNING/REVIEWS/PRIORITISING/STRATEGY ADAPTATION	10%
INCREASE/NEW L&D RESOURCE	8%
FLEXIBLE/SHORTER LEARNING	7%
TECH REVIEW	6%
RECRUITMENT/RETENTION/TALENT INITIATIVES	5%
HAVEN'T/DON'T KNOW/UNDER REVIEW	5%
SAFEGUARDING TIME	4%
FUNDING/GRANTS/FREE TRAINING	3%

Here, there is a clear opportunity to create agile and blended approaches to learning that can better deliver for both users and the business. These methods can utilise tools like face-to-face coaching - one of the learning styles that respondents note they most wanted to use in 2022, and a key part of delivery in a hybrid working model - as well as digital tools. In this area, L&D can deploy technology that isn't just a sticking plaster but provides skills and metrics needed for continual individual and business improvements, helps drive better organisational alignment, and is digestible and usable enough to be engaging for today's increasingly flexible workers.

HOW MANY EXPECT THEIR LEARNING BUDGET TO INCREASE FOR THE YEAR?

2021 — 21%

2022 — 30%
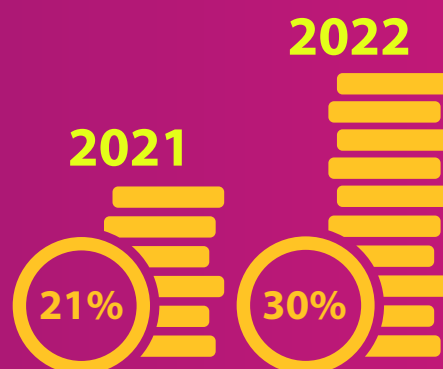
A BRIEF LOOK BACK TO OUR DIGITAL IMPACT SURVEY 2021

Whilst many L&D and HR practitioners are already making plans to deliver learning suited to a business landscape this is increasingly hybrid - using a mixture of digital and in-person methods - it's worth casting our minds back to the 2021 L&D Impact Survey to see what has changed.

Just a year ago, L&D was having to, largely using digital means, deliver technical skills training, such as giving leaders the ability to lead remotely. The digital disruption and digital-first way of doing was still fairly novel, and as a result, learning technology was under review, with digital being, in many cases, the only way learning could occur.

With so many blockers before the pandemic, digital learning went from being an aspiration to an accepted reality. And, with 2021 seeing so much change, the idea of agile learning was entering the conversation in a meaningful way - although nowhere near as much as it is now, the result of a greater acceptance that the VUCA world is here to stay.

> " *L&D has had to shift its operating system from face-to-face to virtual.* "

MAIN CHALLENGES FACING L&D, ASIDE FROM COVID-19:

2021

1) Time/resource
2) Budget
3) Engagement
4) Technology and accessibility
5) Change in business structure

2022

1) Time/resource
2) Budget
3) Recruitment/on-boarding/retention
4) Hybrid working/learning
5) Engagement

USING TECHNOLOGY FOR GREATER LEARNING IMPACT

If 2021 was about investing in learning technology - 74% of 2021 respondents at companies of 1001 - 5000 employees were reviewing their technology during this period; compared to just over half of respondents at 1001 - 5000 and 5000+ employee companies in 2022 - 2022 is about using it in a way that measurably delivers for the business.

This means ensuring it is accessible, easy to use and delivers for the skills agenda. Technology will also need to deliver clear measurements and data to better align to the business strategy, whilst also engaging employees and other stakeholders in a meaningful manner. It's about giving them the learning tools which they can access as their wants, or the project and business needs, dictate. Simply put, **technology has to deliver better alignment, agility and integration.**

> "
> *Two-thirds of all respondents are experiencing at least two barriers to improving learning tech at their organisation.*
> "

CHANGE/MERGER

BUSINESS REVIEW/ RESTRUCTURE/ GAP ANALYSIS

ENGAGEMENT/ INTERACTIVE

ACCESSIBILITY/ EASE OF USE

ONBOARDING/RECRUITMENT/ RETENTION/TALENT DEVELOPMENT

EFFICIENCY/COST SAVING

NEW/REVIEW/ UPGRADE LMS

PERFORMANCE/ PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/ UPSKILLING/ RESKILLING

SUPPORTING HYBRID/ REMOTE WORKING/ LEARNING

NEW/REVIEW PLATFORM/SOFTWARE/ PROVIDER

LEARNING CONTENT

REVIEW/ALIGN OBJECTIVES/ STRATEGY/GOALS

NEW/REVIEW/ UPGRADE LXP

UPSKILLING/ CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT/ RESKILLING

TRACKING/MEASUREMENT/ EVALUATION

NEW LEARNING/ BLENDED APPROACHES

PERSONALISATION/ RELEVANCE

LEARNING CULTURE

With many L&D practitioners still relying on legacy content libraries, virtual classrooms and learning management systems (LMS) to deliver their learning, there is room for innovation to areas that could solve some of the engagement and communication issues that still exist for learning.

These include improving the learning experience by moving to platforms which are more friendly and personalised to the learner, and are more hybrid-ready. It should also include looking at ways to better personalise learning, ensuring that it is more targeted and aligned, delivering feedback and reward for learners. L&D should also consider implementing app-based delivery methods.

That isn't to say that the digitisation the function has already undergone over the past two years - regards the use of virtual training, use of digital learning portals, peer-to-peer support, and online content libraries - isn't something to be commended. Now, it's about taking the next steps, and it is clear to see L&D is ready with a clear appetite to move past a 'needs must' implementation of digitally delivered learning.

This is reflected in answers to the survey question **"why and how do you plan to review your learning technology next year?"** Responses included:

"We plan to make a significant investment in a system that will be app-based and allow colleagues easier access to learning resources."

"To improve our performance."

"Needs to be aligned with company objectives."

"Looking at LMS options to provide more remote and online learning options that make learning more flexible and accessible to our people."

"Procuring an LMS over the next one-to-two years - one that can be accessed 24/7, from mobile devices and we can curate relevant content on."

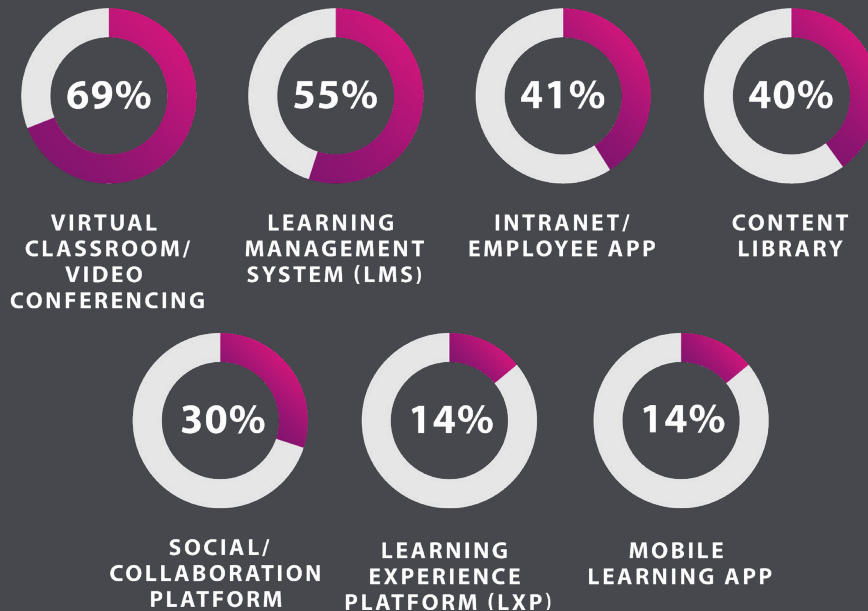"Addition of Skills AI and taking a skills-based view of all talent activities."

From the survey, we can see that integrating learning with the business is high on the agenda. Of course, budget will play a role in any decisions here - it always does - so L&D will have to think creatively about how to by-pass IT constraints and get buy-in, too, for any learning culture or strategy shifts.

What is clear is that L&D is in a much better place than just one year ago. Whilst problems with technology functionality and interoperability were front-of-mind just a year ago, there is a suggestion that these have been partly overcome, or at least better understood, after the initial pandemic pivot to digital delivery, and the function can focus on making more innovative and strategic forward steps.

56%
of organisations with 1000-5000 employees have said they plan to review learning tech

TECHNOLOGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNING

69%
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM/ VIDEO CONFERENCING

55%
LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

41%
INTRANET/ EMPLOYEE APP

40%
CONTENT LIBRARY

30%
SOCIAL/ COLLABORATION PLATFORM

14%
LEARNING EXPERIENCE PLATFORM (LXP)
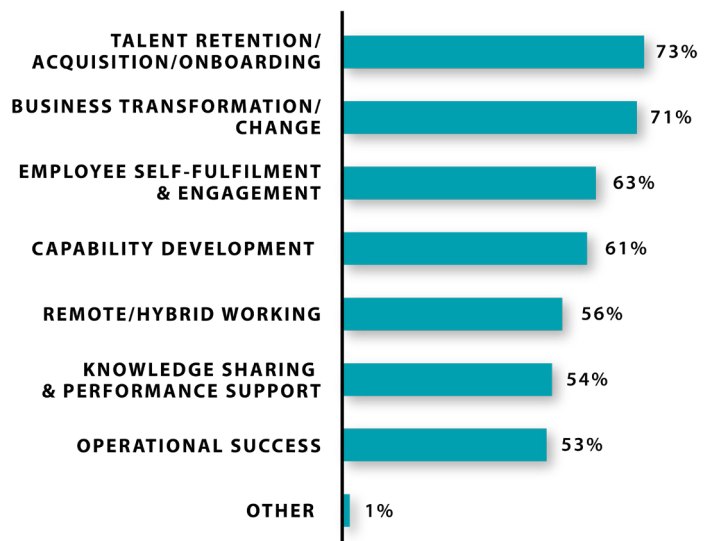
14%
MOBILE LEARNING APP

WHAT IS DRIVING LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

In our 2021 survey, learning strategy was mostly driven by a mixture of capability development and business transformation needs with employee self-fulfilment and engagement key components. All clearly the result of pandemic changes to organisational life, the centrality of digital ways of doing, as well as expectations around what work should deliver for individuals.

In 2022, this has evolved. Now, L&D strategy is primarily driven by an overarching need to better serve and align to both organisational and individual needs, underlined by the well-documented issues many businesses are facing regarding talent retention, acquisition and onboarding and a better understanding of the role learning can play. Additionally, transformation and capability needs are still significant driving factors.

To ensure that strategy develops in the right way, and isn't merely reactive, L&D will need to ensure it is agile enough to deliver for employees and is measuring outcomes effectively. For example, a cloud-based, and/ or subscription, service here could deliver. With budget still a major concern, this direction forward could deliver a real return on engagement, whilst offering better

LEARNING STRATEGY DRIVERS

Driver	%
TALENT RETENTION/ ACQUISITION/ONBOARDING	73%
BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION/ CHANGE	71%
EMPLOYEE SELF-FULFILMENT & ENGAGEMENT	63%
CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT	61%
REMOTE/HYBRID WORKING	56%
KNOWLEDGE SHARING & PERFORMANCE SUPPORT	54%
OPERATIONAL SUCCESS	53%
OTHER	1%

communication around learning, as well as metrics to show which learning is working.

In fact, metrics are a key area of concern, with a third of functions not measuring the impact of their learning. Half are only employing basic learner feedback, rather than looking at business impact or ROI when assessing what their L&D is delivering. It's an area that needs improvement if L&D is to show its central importance and get further investment.

EARLY DAYS FOR AGILE LEARNING CULTURES

Fulfilment of the firm's strategy is driving our agile learning strategy.

Almost nine in 10 respondents to the 2022 survey believe that building an agile learning culture is somewhat or extremely important - with more than 95% of respondents at 1001-5000 person firms thinking it to be crucial. Significant numbers of executives believe that the present and future business landscape is VUCA and that the pace of change won't relent. They're also having to deal with well-documented recruitment issues. Therefore, the need to upskill, reskill and develop talent in-house, often at short notice and in unexpected ways, is becoming more apparent.
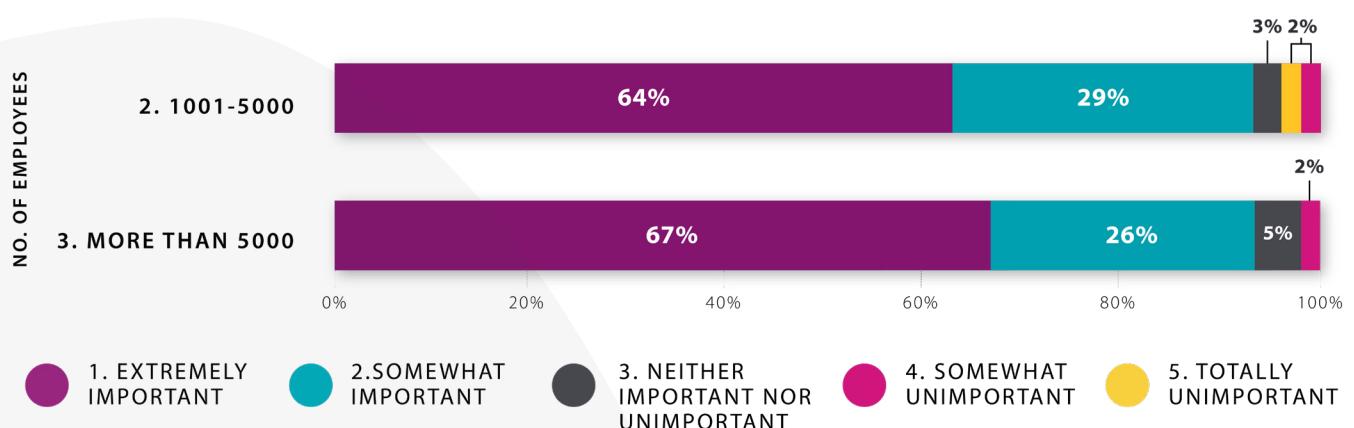
This is where agile learning - broadly defined as a collection of organisational conventions, values, practices and processes which encourage employees and organisations to develop knowledge and competence, using continual learning at its heart and a decentralised network of knowledge

- can come to the fore. This method of learning can be particularly effective if it is packaged in an agile talent development strategy, which can be adapted to any given organisational, team or individual learning, both now and in the future.

However, as it stands, there are serious stumbling blocks to agile learning being implemented. Despite L&D and HR understanding its importance, less than five per cent of organisations have fully implemented it, and almost half of 1001-5000 person size firms are still defining its scope. Over a fifth have no immediate plans to do so. Furthermore, over 85% of organisations still have, either wholly or partly, central control of their learning. A potentially serious impediment to agility if this isn't balanced, using the appropriate digital tools, with learner autonomy.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO YOUR ORGANISATION TO BUILD AN AGILE LEARNING CULTURE?

NO. OF EMPLOYEES					
2. 1001-5000	64%	29%		3%	2%
3. MORE THAN 5000	67%	26%	5%		2%

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

- 1. EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
- 2. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 3. NEITHER IMPORTANT NOR UNIMPORTANT
- 4. SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
- 5. TOTALLY UNIMPORTANT

Other barriers to an agile learning culture include: getting past leadership preconceptions regards what learning looks like, reticence to change, organisational culture not being ready for this (or not wanting it), distractions from changes elsewhere in the business and, sometimes, a lack of understanding regards what agile learning is from L&D itself.

This is despite almost all companies who have adopted agile approaches benefitting from them. For example, agile learning can help circumvent engagement issues, via delivery methods such as micro-learning, and can boost accessibility, which benefits other increasingly important agendas, such as DEI&B. For individuals, it allows them to

personalise their approach, too, properly democratising access. Furthermore, with the need for businesses to operate, as well as continually transform at speed, agile opens up non-hierarchical peer-to-peer learning and utilises, and thus re-embeds, newer methods of communication that were relied upon since the first lockdown of 2020.

To be able to deliver these benefits, L&D must work on getting buy-in from senior leadership teams, many of whom may think, by proxy of the recent increase in the digitisation of learning, that they've already been through a total transformation of the learning culture. Communication, engagement and mindset are also important points to consider here.
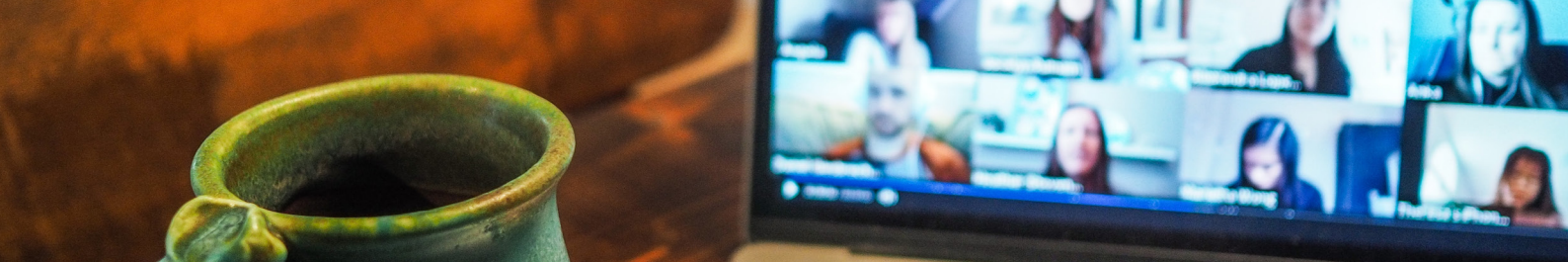
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RESPONDENTS WHO FIND BUILDING AN AGILE LEARNING CULTURE EXTREMELY OR SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT

2021 → **85%**   2022 → **89%**

DELIVERING SKILLS IN A HYBRID WORKING WORLD

Most in HR and L&D know that, over the last two years, organisations have struggled with getting hold of the skills they need. This is despite the same skills, soft skills as well as management and leadership capabilities, being the most in-demand now as well as nearer to the start of the pandemic.

Yet the impact of two years of disruption, and its follow-on effect on hiring and retention has only amplified issues with acquiring those skills. In addition, with the business landscape changing at a quicker rate, leaders are worried about the applicability of the skillsets their employees have for the medium-to-long term.

For many organisations, the skills they once hired for will now be built internally. This sounds simple enough, but is made more difficult when having to factor in skills fade. Here, an agile learning culture, or agile talent development strategy, can be the fixative. By allowing employees to self-direct their learning, or share knowledge with each other, within an adaptable framework that meets the business needs at any moment, organisations can allow learners to access learning in a way that best suits their team, personal and environmental (hybrid, remote, other) needs. Learning can also be shaped, and the strategy around it iterated, to whatever business needs and goals are currently front and centre - be they inclusion targets or financial goals.

And with access to budget always an issue for L&D, this kind of learning culture could reduce the need for resource-intense training and allow efficient personalisation and differentiation to both business and individual needs.

Agile learning could also help frame learning in a fully remote or hybrid environment, of which almost nine in 10 survey respondents said their organisation was currently using. We can already see that practitioners are using a wide variety of tools that would suit agile learning in this environment, from coaching and in-person training to self-accessible hubs of content. However, it's important that practitioners find a way to align learning delivery methods, what learners want and programmatic learning, balancing business and individual employee needs.

If they can do this they will be best placed to deliver the skills the business needs. Like 2021, soft skills, leadership skills, communication skills and digital fluency are high up the list of what organisations want. In fact, soft skills were also the learning innovation that respondents most wanted to see, an indication, perhaps, that L&D understands these are the skills necessary for success in a hybrid organisation, and the very skills that are, in themselves, likely to be able to reinforce successful learning cultures.

WHAT LEARNING INNOVATIONS WOULD YOU LOVE TO SEE IN 2022?

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
32%

IMPROVED LMS
29%

IMPROVED CAPABILITY METRICS
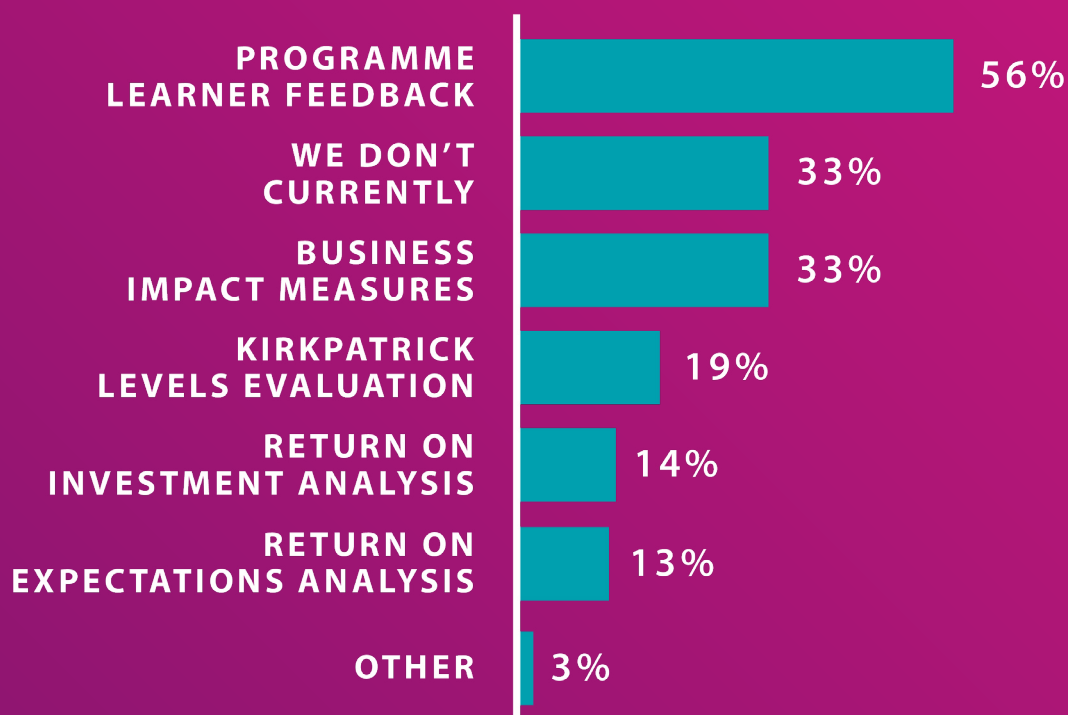**26%**

TIME TO REALLY MEASURE BUSINESS IMPACT

With organisations increasingly hybrid or remote-first, and where data plays an increasingly central role, over a third of respondents not measuring the impact of L&D efforts is an area of potential improvement. It's a figure that has risen since 2021.

With learning increasingly self-directed - comparing our 2021 and 2022 survey results, it is possible to see that self-directed learning modes are popular: use of free online services has remained high, whilst there is growth in the use of social learning and content libraries - L&D is less likely to be able to rely on in-person or classroom-based feedback to even roughly judge outcomes which makes measurement more of an imperative.

When many functions are struggling to get leadership buy-in for learning strategy transformations, it might become easier if L&D start a journey (this can take up to two years) to clearly show ROE of learning investment, using quantitative and qualitative evidence to showcase everything from where learning boosts the business and operations to how it was experienced by the learner.

HOW LEARNING PROVISION IS CURRENTLY BEING MEASURED

Measure	Percentage
PROGRAMME LEARNER FEEDBACK	56%
WE DON'T CURRENTLY	33%
BUSINESS IMPACT MEASURES	33%
KIRKPATRICK LEVELS EVALUATION	19%
RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS	14%
RETURN ON EXPECTATIONS ANALYSIS	13%
OTHER	3%

CONCLUSION

So, what can L&D take away from the findings of the Learning Development Impact Survey 2022? Firstly, it is clear that L&D and HR are in the next stage of an ongoing challenge: moving from the first phases of a global health crisis, which necessitated reactive changes in how and what it delivered as learning to the business and employees, into an environment where the structures of work have changed for the long-term. A place where both business leaders and employees are more accepting of the VUCA world we find ourselves in but need new strategies of learning to deliver the skills they need to succeed in it.

Nowhere is the need for new strategies of learning clearer than survey findings which show the vast majority of businesses are now using remote or hybrid models of work. For L&D, it means they will have to consider using highly-engaging digital modes of learning within a blended learning model - and not just digital sticking plasters, as was necessary during the earlier stage of the pandemic — as well as delivering important soft skills and agile talent to help the business and individual employees navigate this fast-changing world.

This needs to happen in order to be able to successfully drive business operations forward - both now and in the future. With our data also showing that L&D is increasingly intertwined with organisational talent strategies, it is obvious that the function has a clear role to play in the wider business. Something which also, unsurprisingly, will require new skills and capabilities. However, to show that L&D is delivering on organisational and talent goals, survey findings show that L&D must align better with the overall businesses and it must get better at showing that what it does do has clear benefits. Measurement and metrics will be key here.

Regarding the new skills, it must deliver, it is clear that having an agile talent development strategy will be central. Our survey shows that L&D and HR largely understands the importance of having an agile learning culture and strategy, and even has some of the technology in place to support it thanks to 2020's digital pivot, even if it isn't fully there yet. Survey results also show L&D understands where, and why, it needs to review both the learning technology it uses and how it integrates it with the business and learning needs. Answers also show an understanding of which barriers exist to creating agile cultures of learning and investment in it, such as leadership buy-in, cultural reticence and engagement.

In terms of actions, it results in three clear things. One: L&D must create, or rollout, learning strategies and tools that are more suitable for a world of work that is more hybrid, changeable, digital and uncertain. Two: these strategies must be agile, in order to deliver skills suitable for the new ways in which organisations and employees work, ways that will constantly update and change. L&D must also understand what skills are most needed (soft skills score highly here) and balance individual learning with business needs.

And, three: L&D has to align more closely with the business and show that what it does matters. Again, this should be done in an agile manner as the business will change rapidly, too. If it can display what it does works though, it can make better and evidence-driven arguments for investment in the coming months, which can help to reinforce the strategies it knows it needs to roll out.

THE RESULTS IN FULL

WHO TOOK PART?

1. Which of these best describes your role?

Over 460 respondents recently completed our 2022 Learning & Development Impact Survey - The transformation of L&D and its role in achieving business success.

Respondents were predominantly from L&D, HR, OD and other talent roles. Additional surveyees included those who had job roles related to: culture, people, workforce development, internal communications, employee health, wellbeing and engagement.

45%
HR

37%
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

1%
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

6%
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

6%
TALENT

5%
OTHER
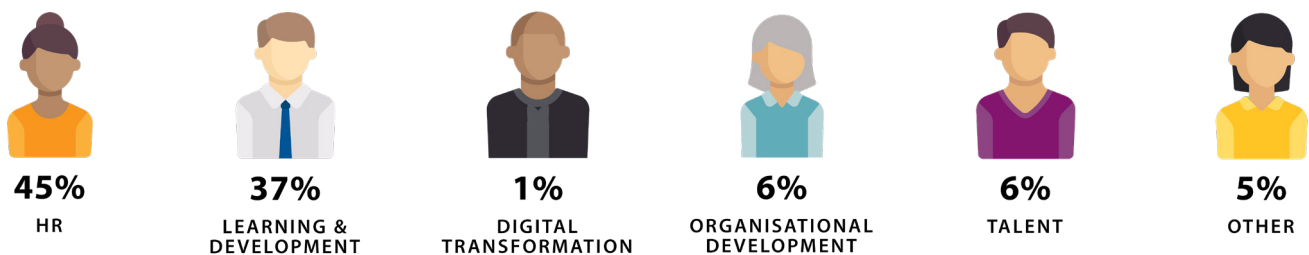
2. How many people does your organisation employ and how is the L&D function structured at your organisation?

Just over one-third of respondents came from very large organisations of more than 1000 employees (20% 1001-5000 and 16% 5000+ employees), with the rest a mix from small and medium and large-sized businesses ranging from <100 employees up to 1000. The largest organisations appear to have the more complex L&D structures operating a mix of centralised and decentralised decision-making and budget allocation.

EMPLOYEE SIZE

	MIX OF BOTH	CENTRALISED	DECENTRALISED	OTHER
1. LESS THAN 1000	26%	58%	11%	5%
2. 1001-5000	34%	54%	11%	
3. MORE THAN 5000	60%	28%	12%	

● MIX OF BOTH   ● CENTRALISED   ● DECENTRALISED   ● OTHER
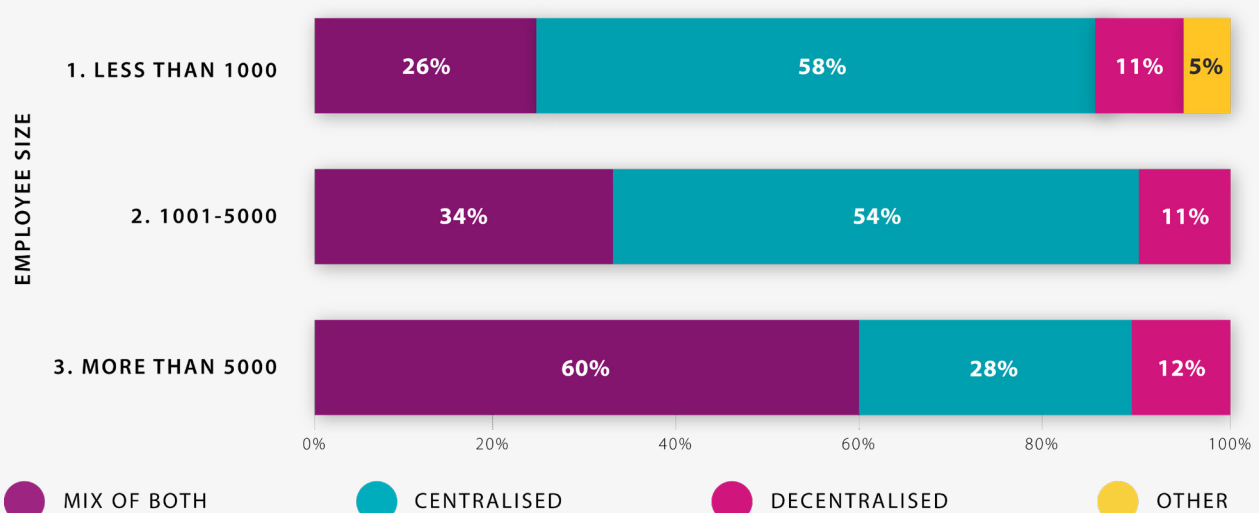
3. Structure our organisation currently uses:

Many of the organisations in the survey use a hybrid working model (82%) – this is more marked in organisations with 1000+ employees, with 91% adopting a hybrid working model vs 78% with 1000 or fewer employees.

FULLY IN THE OFFICE
10%

FULLY REMOTE WORKING
8%

HYBRID WORKING
82%

LEARNING APPROACHES

4. Which learning approaches do you currently use in your organisation?

Organisations are using an average of six different approaches in their learning mix, which is consistent with 2021 findings.

Digital and blended learning approaches still dominate: 76% offer virtual classrooms, 68% blended learning, 67% free online resources, 56% online content library, 52% learning hub/portal and 29% curated resources.

Coaching and facilitated learning continue to be a significant part of the mix. Perhaps, the biggest change in the last 12 months is the re-emergence of in-person/face-to-face training, now used by two-thirds (67% of organisations) vs 38% in the 2021 findings.

Learning approach	Percentage
VIRTUAL TRAINING	76%
BLENDED LEARNING	68%
FREE ONLINE RESOURCES	67%
IN-PERSON TRAINING (ADHERING TO COVID RULES)	67%
COACHING	65%
SOCIAL/PEER LEARNING	56%
ONLINE CONTENT LIBRARY	55%
LEARNING HUB/ PORTAL	52%
FACILITATED LEARNING	45%
PERFORMANCE SUPPORT	41%
CURATED RESOURCES	29%
AR/VR	7%
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	2%
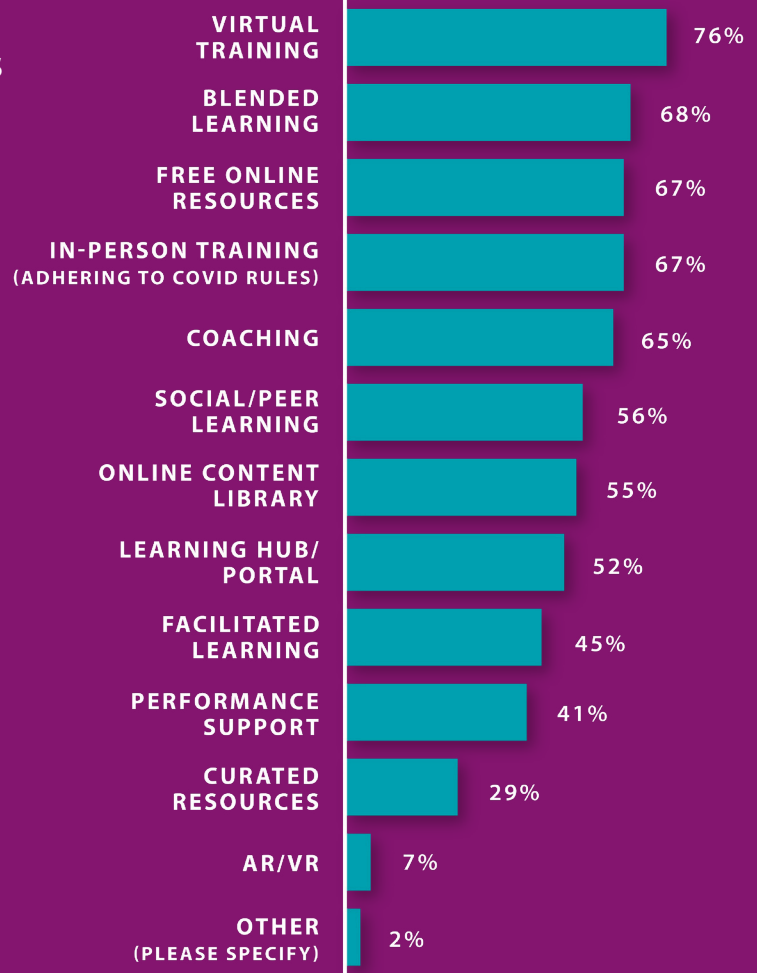
LEARNING TECH

5. Which technologies do you currently use to support learning in your organisation?

Over two-thirds of organisations use virtual classrooms and video conferencing to support learning. Over half (55%) utilise Learning Management Systems – this tech is more widely used at larger organisations – 77% with 5000+, 72% 1001-5000 and 48% under 1000.

TECHNOLOGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNING

69%
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM/ VIDEO CONFERENCING

55%
LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

41%
INTRANET/ EMPLOYEE APP

40%
CONTENT LIBRARY

30%
SOCIAL/ COLLABORATION PLATFORM

14%
LEARNING EXPERIENCE PLATFORM (LXP)

14%
MOBILE LEARNING APP
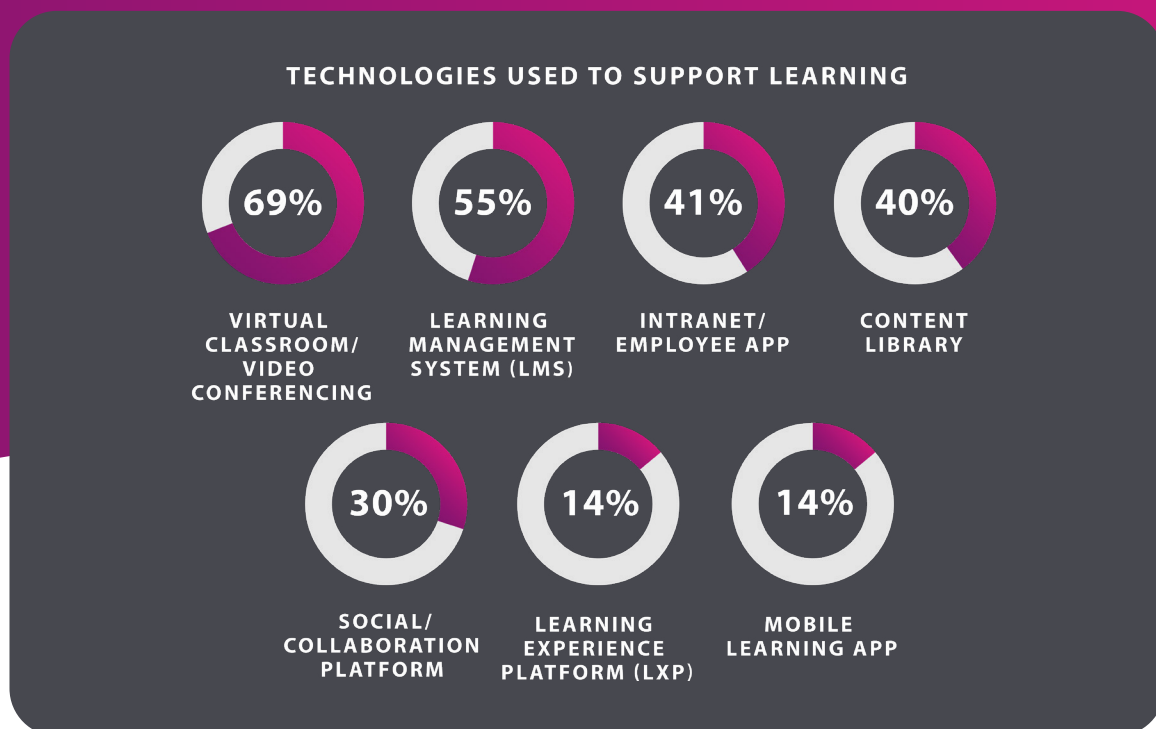
6. Given the events of the past 18 months do you plan to review your learning technology in the next year?

60% of organisations plan to review learning technology in the next 12 months – less at very large organisations stated they were planning a review (56% at companies with 5000+ employees).

60%
of organisations have said **YES**

RESPONDENTS THAT SAID YES BY EMPLOYEE SIZE:

66%
LESS THAN 1000

57%
1001-5000

56%
MORE THAN 5000

NO. OF EMPLOYEES
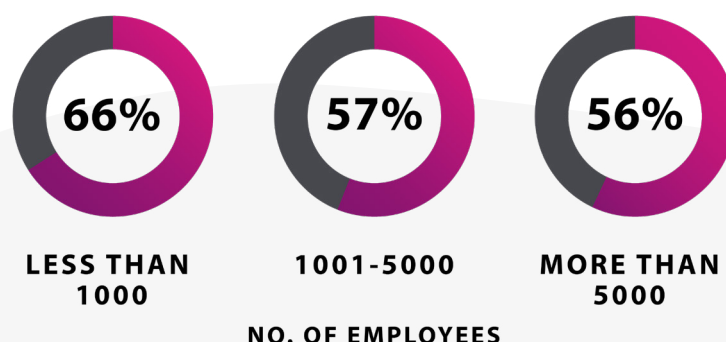
7. Please specify why and how you plan to review your learning technology in the next year.

Approximately 25% of respondents said they would be looking to review, upgrade, implement or replace their LMS. An additional 4% said they would be looking at moving to or implementing an LXP. Other respondents cited that they would be looking at apps and external providers to support learning and other software needs.

The main reasons provided for these changes were: accessibility/ease of use, supporting hybrid/remote working/learning and supporting more blended/different learning approaches. Engagement was also a cited reason.

Others stated they would be reviewing/investing in learning content as part of the tech review. Some organisations are looking to support other strategic changes such as mergers, growth and acquisition or address challenges such as recruitment, onboarding and retention through developing talent.

8. What are the biggest barriers to you improving your learning tech?

Two-thirds of all respondents are experiencing at least two barriers to improving learning tech at their organisation. Budget was the greatest barrier at 69%, often selected alongside another response. Stakeholder buy-in and IT constraints were next at 36% and 33%, respectively. Other reasons cited were time, resources and language/translation requirements.

BIGGEST BARRIERS TO IMPROVING LEARNING TECH

Barrier	%
BUDGET	69%
IT CONSTRAINTS	36%
STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN	33%
USAGE/ENGAGEMENT OF LEGACY SYSTEMS	28%
OTHER	14%
INTEROPERABILITY	11%
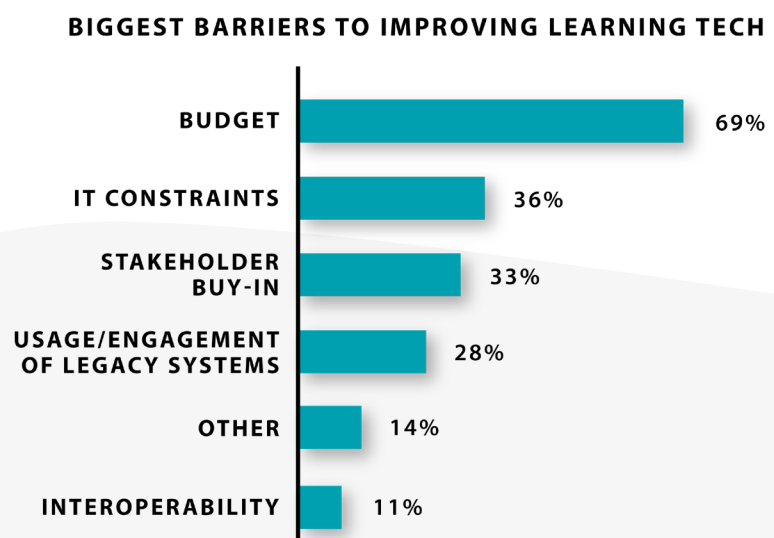
THE PANDEMIC AND OTHER CHALLENGES FACING L&D

9. Aside from COVID-19, what have been the main challenges facing L&D at your organisation in the last year?

Respondents said that time/resource was the top challenge aside from Covid19 – this replaces budget/costs, which was the biggest challenge in the 2021 survey. Challenges related to recruitment, onboarding and retention have become prominent this year. Also of note are challenges with hybrid working/learning, engagement, and business changes, restructures, mergers, new markets and recovery.

RECRUITMENT/ONBOARDING/
RETENTION   ENGAGEMENT
BUDGETS/   ACCESSIBILITY/TECHNOLOGY
COSTS   BUY-IN/RESISTANCE   BREXIT
EMPLOYEE   TIME/   LEARNING CULTURE
WELLBEING   RESOURCE   DIGITAL
NONE   LITERACY
HYBRID/REMOTE   REORG/MERGER/GROWTH/
WORKING/LEARNING   NEW MARKETS/RECOVERY

10. How have you responded to these challenges?

Communication, collaboration and engagement with the business were a key focus in response to the other challenges facing L&D. This includes promoting the value, benefits and availability of learning, working with stakeholders, and initiatives to drive engagement. A number of respondents also talked about evaluation and feedback activities to help gain insight into the needs of the business.

INCREASED COMMS/COLLABORATION/ENGAGEMENT/FEEDBACK ACTIVITIES	24%
DIFFERENT TRAINING DELIVERY/APPROACHES	23%
PLANNING/REVIEWS/PRIORITISING/STRATEGY ADAPTATION	10%
INCREASE/NEW L&D RESOURCE	8%
FLEXIBLE/SHORTER LEARNING	7%
TECH REVIEW	6%
RECRUITMENT/RETENTION/TALENT INITIATIVES	5%
HAVEN'T/DON'T KNOW/UNDER REVIEW	5%
SAFEGUARDING TIME	4%
FUNDING/GRANTS/FREE TRAINING	3%

Organisations continue to review and evolve training delivery and approaches to learning. This included virtual and online learning, bite-size sessions, facilitated sessions, coaching and mentoring. Others have looked at grants, Apprenticeship Levy funding and free courses/resources to enhance what they could offer to employees. Key drivers include the need for more flexible and shorter learning. Some said that time had been safeguarded specifically for learning. Other activities and initiatives focused on recruitment, retention and development of talent.

> *We have broken training into smaller bite-sized chunks to engage learners and had extremely good feedback as a result. Some courses are far better for the change, others would still be better delivered face to face in classrooms. However, it's fantastic to now have the choice given the complete cultural shift to remote learning.*

THE SKILLS GAP

11. What future skills and behaviours are most critical for your business?

Soft skills and management & leadership capability development dominate the agenda for those surveyed. Soft skills needed include: agility, resilience, adaptability, flexibility, growth mindset, collaboration, communication, innovation, commercial skills. Management & leadership capabilities include: hybrid leadership generally and other more specific areas such as change management and coaching.

Niche skills include: sales, marketing, supply chain, data and project management.

Technical skills include: engineering, IT, AI, software development and programming.

SOFT SKILLS

OTHER SKILLS
NICHE SKILLS
TECHNICAL SKILLS
DIGITAL SKILLS
INDUSTRY SPECIFIC
MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP
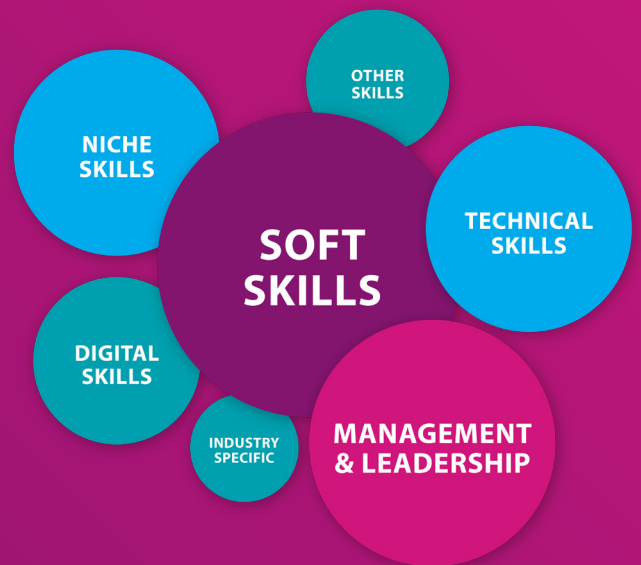
LEARNING STRATEGIES

12. Which of these is driving your learning strategy?

At least three factors drive the learning and development strategy at 86% of organisations. Talent retention/acquisition/onboarding (73%) was the most predominant, followed by business transformation (71%). Employee self-fulfilment (63% vs 61% in 2021) featured higher up the agenda than 2021, switching places with capability development (62% vs 68% in 2021).

TALENT RETENTION/ ACQUISITION/ONBOARDING	73%
BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION/ CHANGE	71%
EMPLOYEE SELF-FULFILMENT & ENGAGEMENT	63%
CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT	61%
REMOTE/HYBRID WORKING	56%
KNOWLEDGE SHARING & PERFORMANCE SUPPORT	54%
OPERATIONAL SUCCESS	53%
OTHER	1%
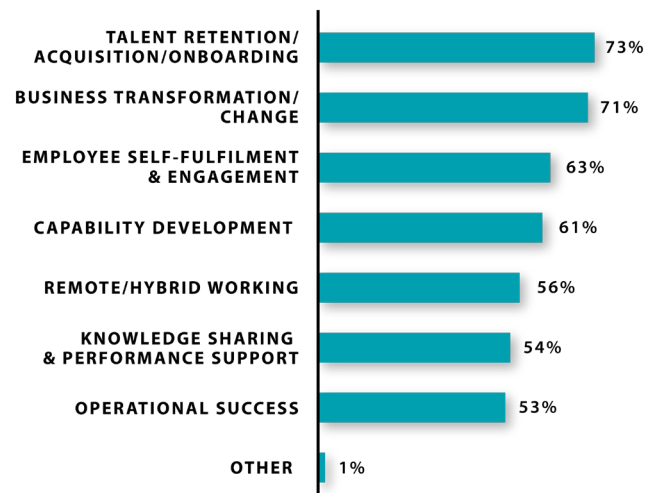
At larger organisations, business transformation/change continues to be the biggest driver, followed by talent retention/acquisition/onboarding.

79%	70%	63%	58%	53%	51%	42%
BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION /CHANGE	TALENT RETENTION/ ACQUISITION/ ONBOARDING	CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT	REMOTE/HYBRID WORKING	EMPLOYEE SELF-FULFILMENT & ENGAGEMENT	OPERATIONAL SUCCESS	KNOWLEDGE SHARING & PERFORMANCE SUPPORT
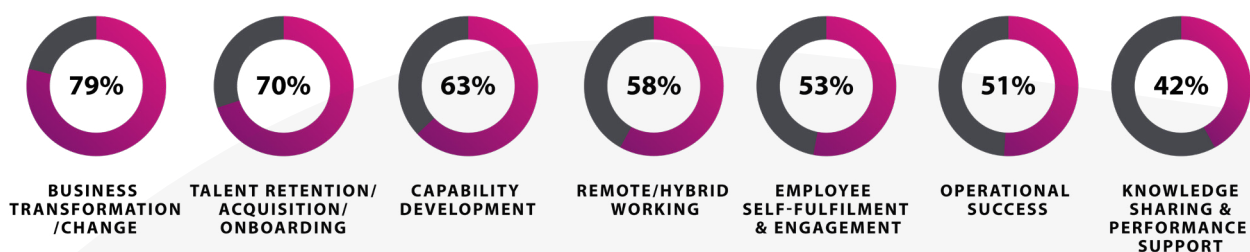
LEARNING STRATEGY DRIVERS AT LARGER ORGANISATIONS (5000+ EMPLOYEES)

13. How do you currently measure the impact of learning provision in your organisation

Programme learner feedback is the most commonly used measure of learning provision, with more than half of organisations using this approach. Around one in three use business impact measures and 20% use Kirkpatrick levels evaluation.

Measure	Percentage
PROGRAMME LEARNER FEEDBACK	56%
WE DON'T CURRENTLY	33%
BUSINESS IMPACT MEASURES	33%
KIRKPATRICK LEVELS EVALUATION	19%
RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS	14%
RETURN ON EXPECTATIONS ANALYSIS	13%
OTHER	3%
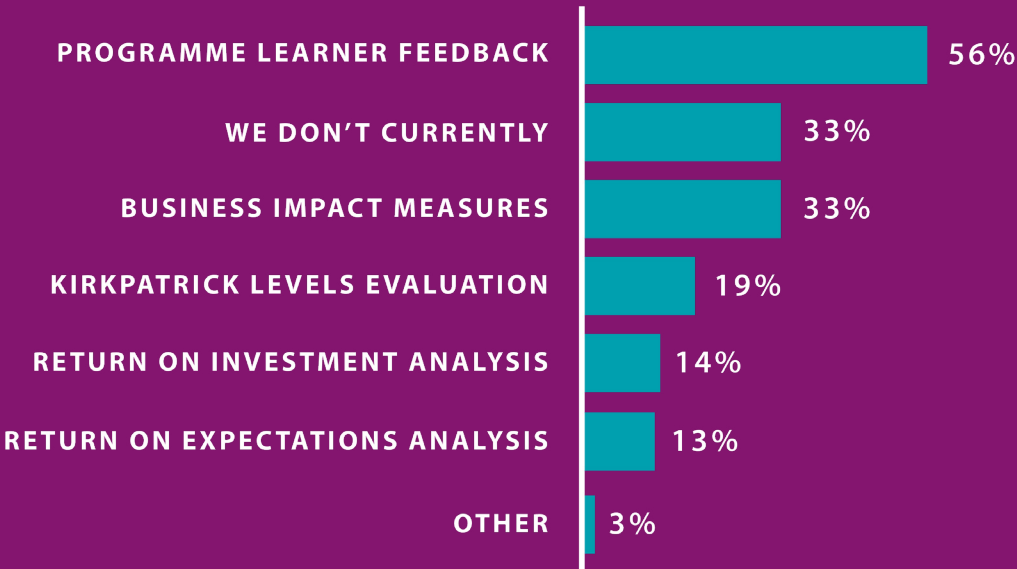
One-third of those surveyed do not measure the impact of learning and development compared to 25% in 2021. The lack of measurement is more pronounced at smaller organisations.

41%
LESS THAN 1000

13%
1001-5000

19%
MORE THAN 5000
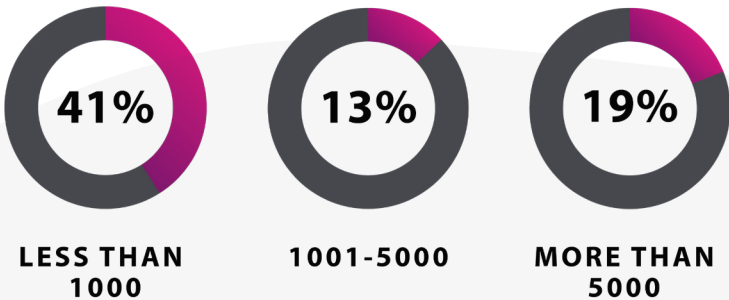
ORGANISATIONS WITH NO OR LIMITED MEASURES BY EMPLOYEE SIZE

14. How important is it to your organisation to build an agile learning culture?

Building an agile learning culture has become increasingly important year-on-year, with 90% citing this as either extremely important or somewhat important vs 85% in the 2021 survey. Again, this was more marked in larger organisations at 93% (up 1% YOY).

NO. OF EMPLOYEES

1. LESS THAN 1000	52%	35%	11%	1%
2. 1001-5000	64%	29%	3% 2%
3. MORE THAN 5000	67%	26%	5%	2%

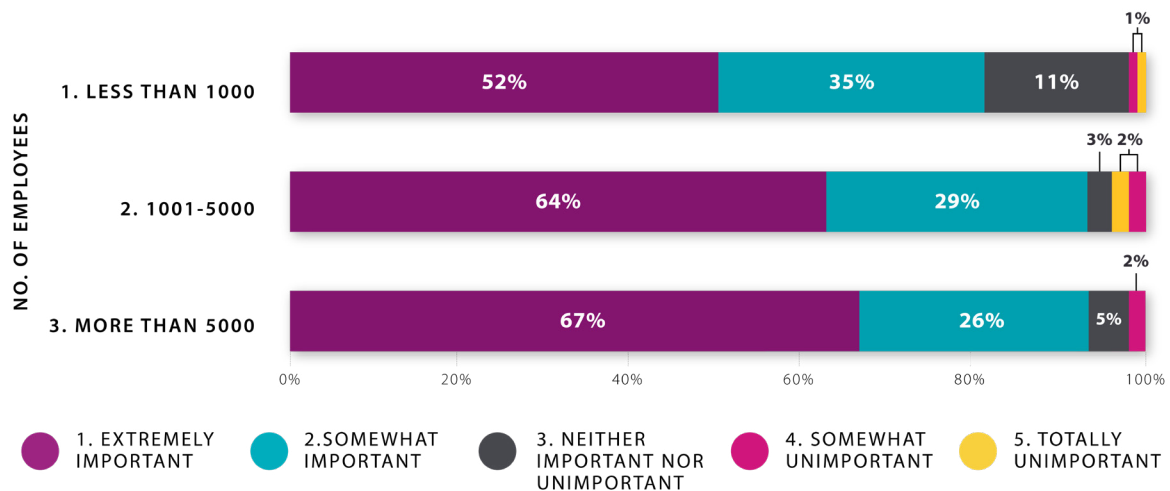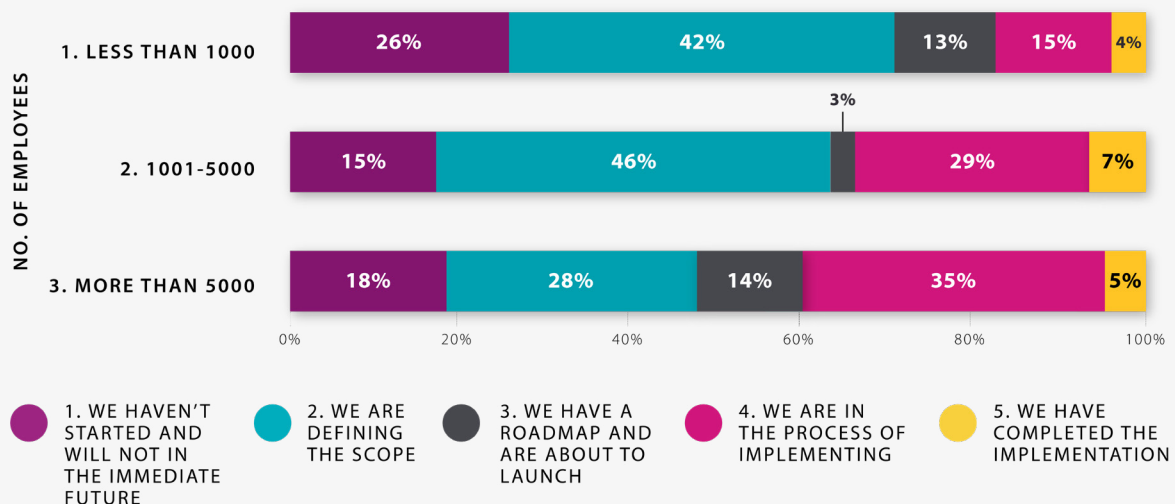0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

- 1. EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
- 2. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 3. NEITHER IMPORTANT NOR UNIMPORTANT
- 4. SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
- 5. TOTALLY UNIMPORTANT

15. Where is your organisation on the roadmap to building an agile learning culture?

Overall, 25% of organisations have either completed or are in the process of implementing an agile learning culture. This seems to be more pronounced at either the largest or smallest organisations. A further 25% haven't started and have no immediate plans to do so, a proportion which is much higher at smaller organisations.

NO. OF EMPLOYEES

1. LESS THAN 1000	26%	42%	13%	15%	4%
2. 1001-5000	15%	46%	3%	29%	7%
3. MORE THAN 5000	18%	28%	14%	35%	5%

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

- 1. WE HAVEN'T STARTED AND WILL NOT IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE
- 2. WE ARE DEFINING THE SCOPE
- 3. WE HAVE A ROADMAP AND ARE ABOUT TO LAUNCH
- 4. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING
- 5. WE HAVE COMPLETED THE IMPLEMENTATION

16. What are the main barriers / challenges to becoming more agile in your learning culture?

Almost half of the respondents cited time, operational challenges, resources, capability or budget – many said that meeting the operational demands of the business took priority over time for learning.

Another challenge faced by L&D teams was buy-in and leadership understanding as a result of the operational priorities and a legacy mindset to learning.

| Barrier / Challenge	%
TIME/OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES	25%
RESOURCES/BUDGET/CAPABILITY	23%
LEADERSHIP BUY-IN/UNDERSTANDING	17%
MINDSET/MOTIVATION/BEHAVIOURS	14%
CULTURE CHANGE/CHANGE MANAGEMENT	13%
SIZE/STRUCTURE OF THE BUSINESS/LEGACY	10%
TECHNOLOGY/ACCESSIBILITY	10%
OTHER	7%
NONE/NOT SURE	5%
CLEAR UNDERSTANDING/LEARNING/BUSINESS OBJECTIVES	5%
ENGAGEMENT	4%
TURNOVER/RECRUITMENT	2%
SPEED	2%

17. What are the top three drivers of a truly agile learning culture for your business?

1 Employee engagement and meeting individual needs to help develop careers and meet personal goals

2 Skills and capability development and knowledge sharing to meet business needs and drive performance

3 Cultural drivers including a learning culture & mind-set, embedding values & diversity, equity, inclusion & belonging

Other drivers mentioned in order of frequency were recruitment and retention, pace and agility, business continuity and succession planning, change and transformation, communication and collaboration, customer and market needs, efficiency and time, tools and tech, accessibility, strategy/leadership alignment, buy-in, scalability and consistency, budget and cost, feedback and measurement, innovation and hybrid working/learning.

18. Will your organisation plan to increase its learning budget for the year ahead?

2022 has a more positive outlook, with 30% planning an increased budget in the year ahead vs 21% in the 2021 survey. Almost half were not sure, suggesting that there is still some uncertainty.

30%
SAID YES

26%
SAID NO

44%
SAID NOT SURE
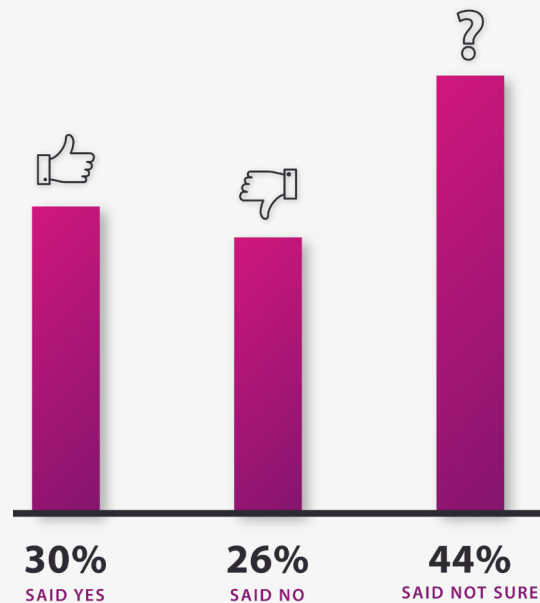
19. Thinking about the next 12-18 months, what do you think will accelerate the impact of your learning strategy on business success?
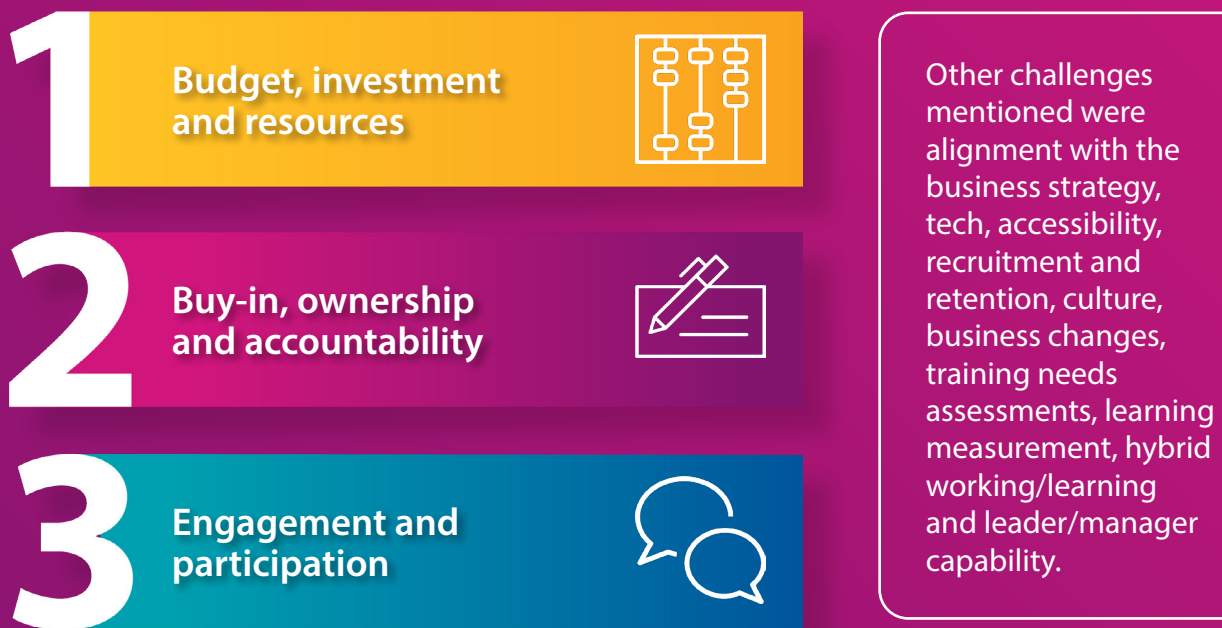
There were two clear learning strategy accelerators: better overall experience for learners (71%) and better alignment to organisational goals (71%). It showcases the understanding that learning should meet both individual and organisational needs. Better communication strategies and engagement (65%) were third, and better blended/hybrid learning fourth (55%) – both underpin business goal alignment and learner experience.

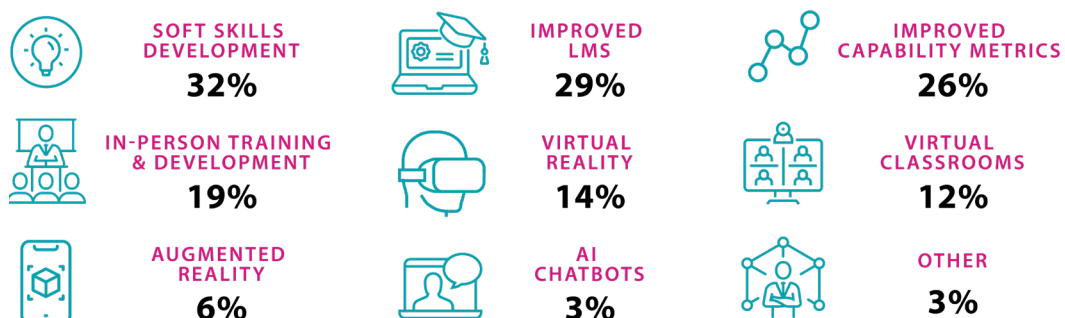|	
BETTER ALIGNMENT TO ORGANISATIONAL GOALS	71%
BETTER OVERALL EXPERIENCE FOR LEARNERS	71%
BETTER COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES	65%
BETTER BLENDED/HYBRID LEARNING	55%
BETTER MEASUREMENT OF LEARNING IMPACT	54%
BETTER LEARNING AND SKILLS/CAPABILITY PROVISION AGILITY	52%
BETTER LEARNING IN THE FLOW OF WORK	45%
BETTER ALIGNMENT TO THE ORGANISATIONS DEI&B INITIATIVES	24%
BETTER SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING DELIVERY	17%
BETTER ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING DELIVERY	16%
OTHER	1%

20. What are your top three L&D challenges for 2022?

Respondents cited a diverse array of challenges. **The top three overall related to :**

1 Budget, investment and resources

2 Buy-in, ownership and accountability

3 Engagement and participation

Other challenges mentioned were alignment with the business strategy, tech, accessibility, recruitment and retention, culture, business changes, training needs assessments, learning measurement, hybrid working/learning and leader/manager capability.

21. What learning innovations would you love to see in 2022?

The top three areas for learning innovation are soft skills development, improving learning management systems and improving capability metrics. In-person training and development also featured, with 43% saying they would like to see innovation, perhaps recognising that this mode of learning would not simply go back to the pre-pandemic approaches.

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	IMPROVED LMS	IMPROVED CAPABILITY METRICS
32%	29%	26%

IN-PERSON TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	VIRTUAL REALITY	VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS
19%	14%	12%

AUGMENTED REALITY	AI CHATBOTS	OTHER
6%	3%	3%

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