



LEARNERS OF THE FUTURE


Taking Action Today to Prevent Tomorrow's Talent Crisis

ATD Research:
WHITEPAPER

LEARNING IS *UNPREPARED*

 **38%** of learning functions are ready for 2020

 **37%** are preparing for changes in how employees learn

 **39%** of learning staffs are building new skills

THE PARTICIPANTS

405 talent development professionals

90%
managers and leaders

Take Action
NOW!

Assess and improve effectiveness today.

Collaborate with business leaders.

Imagine the future.

Educate learning staff.



**DEAD
END**

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A NOTE FROM OUR SPONSOR



A Note From Klick Learning Solutions

As learners, the technology available to us is changing on a daily basis. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences we have creates a complex and unique challenge. The needs of businesses around the world are evolving at a speed never before seen. Staying relevant and competitive means staying on top of what is coming in crucial areas. One of the most mission critical areas is learning. Preparing as an organization for those shifting priorities and maintaining a strategic approach rather than a reactionary one is no easy task. A nimble and forward-thinking approach will become a mission-critical element for the learning organization of any successful business. Gone are the days of seeing learning as a cost of doing business. We continue to leap forward in understanding the powerful value that learning has on a business's bottom line. The *Learners of the Future* report will seek to shed light on what the future has in store for learning and where the focus should be to ensure we have established the greatest environment possible for our most important assets—our people.

As an organization that takes pride in delivering forward-thinking custom learning solutions every day, Klick Learning Solutions is happy to sponsor the *Learners of the Future* report. We hope that it brings insight and inspiration for your future learning programs!

About Klick Learning Solutions

Klick Learning Solutions (KLS) creates interactive and engaging custom learning solutions that strategically drive performance improvement and sustainment for some of the world's leading corporations. KLS's proven in-house expertise in learning strategy, design, development, and unparalleled technical execution ensures that digital programs are unique, globally scalable, and provide measurable, repeatable, and transformational results.

As a company, all of Klick Learning Solutions staff are experts in the field of leading-edge learning solution creation. As a part of the Klick family, KLS has the added benefit of access to the wider Klick team of talented individuals when projects require a level of acceleration where even more resources would add value. Our cross-industry expertise gives clients access to the widest selection of innovations and solutions to choose from to best suit their learners' needs.

With its roots in technology, Klick Learning Solutions's deep expertise allows the KLS partners to access the customized technological solution that best suits their unique needs.

In KLS Labs, the in-house team of technical explorers test new ideas and learning technologies that may provide clients with a competitive advantage, equipping KLS's partners to take on the future of learning.

For more information on KLS, visit us at www.klicklearningsolutions.com.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No organization can be successful without the engaged talent it needs. Position yourself as a talent leader more than a learning leader—and think of learning as just one vehicle for providing talent that can get the job done.

—Frank Persico, Vice President of Learning, IBM

Envisioning the future of talent development, and the workers who will need training in 2020 and beyond, calls on talent development leaders to artfully apply business savvy, learning know-how, and sheer imagination. A backward glance at the extensive changes seen during the past decade alone in world markets, organizational operations, and learning design and delivery methods portends a rapidly approaching future that is both exciting and daunting to anticipate.

Indeed, when the Association for Talent Development (ATD) and the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) partnered to explore *Learners of the Future: Taking Action Today to Prevent Tomorrow's Talent Crisis*, a robust 59 percent of talent development leaders surveyed said that in 2020, “learning will take place in ways we can’t imagine today.”

This latest ATD and i4cp research collaboration found that a majority of respondents believe that readiness to capably serve whatever learners the future might bring is seriously lacking. Only 38 percent said their learning functions would be ready to effectively meet their organizations’ learning needs five years from now.

Alarming, those same talent development leaders acknowledged that they are missing the mark in learning effectiveness *now*. Also lacking are the capabilities L&D functions need to capitalize on the array of technologies that are evolving to support greater efficiency and flexibility in learning design and delivery. In an age of unprecedented globalization, reaching workers worldwide with learning content when and where it is needed is a critical component in competitive capability and organizational capacity. It will be even more important in the coming years. Learning functions can’t afford to be left behind.

59%

of respondents believe that learning in 2020 will take place in ways we can’t imagine today.

38%

of respondents believe their learning functions will meet organizational learning needs in five years.

Getting the L&D function ready for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead involves many considerations: Will tomorrow's learners arrive in workplaces with the solid knowledge and skills employers need? Can organizations act now to influence what educational institutions teach those future workers?

How will learning be delivered in 2020? As social media and mobile technologies help the spread of social and informal learning, how can L&D support and leverage that? Or even track it? Will the future see learning management systems go away?

Some respondents are actively and enthusiastically working to understand what L&D might look like in the coming decade, and they are preparing their organizations and learning professionals to embrace that future confidently and capably.

Frank Persico, vice president of learning at IBM, believes that the very concept of organizational learning needs to expand, emphasizing its role in driving business success. "I think we need to stop characterizing ourselves as 'learning people' and elevate the conversation to one based on talent . . . the acquisition of talent, the development of talent, the recognition of talent," he says. "No organization can be successful without the engaged talent it needs. Position yourself as a talent leader more than a learning leader—and think of learning as just one vehicle for providing talent that can get the job done. Now and in the future, our discussion has to be broader than education."

WHITEPAPER

Talent development is racing toward the future at a rapidly accelerating rate. Talent development includes building the knowledge, skills, and abilities of others and helping them develop and achieve their potential so that the organizations they work for can succeed and grow (Bingham 2014). A key path to achieving this is employee learning and development (L&D) programs. Five years ago, ATD published books explaining how to deliver synchronous online training and offering ideas on social networking for business. Consider the evolution during the past half-decade in those two areas of organizational learning alone. Then imagine the challenges and the possibilities for meeting learners' needs in the decade ahead. Will today's L&D functions be ready?

With shifts in learning methodologies and audiences already under way, ATD and i4cp set out to better define the anticipated future learning landscape and assess the strategies learning professionals are using to prepare for challenges and opportunities in the years ahead. The organizations' collaborative *Learners of the Future: Taking Action Today to Prevent Tomorrow's Talent Crisis* (hereafter, the Study) began with a survey in July 2015 that returned 405 responses.

Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents were talent development professionals with managerial and leadership responsibilities. Participants represented national, multinational, and global organizations across a variety of industries; 56 percent of those were organizations with workforces of 1,000 or more employees. Using interviews with talent development leaders to augment the survey findings, ATD and i4cp combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore L&D's vision of learning and learners of the future.

405

talent development professionals
were surveyed for this report.

Key Findings

- ▶ **Learning functions are not making the kind of progress future learners' needs will demand.** L&D ratings are mediocre when it comes to helping organizations achieve both business and learning goals, and in delivering learning. Most troubling: More than 70 percent of participants acknowledge that L&D's abilities to leverage technology effectively are largely lacking.
- ▶ **Nearly two-thirds of organizations could fail future learners.** Only 38 percent of survey respondents said their learning functions will be ready to effectively meet the needs of learners in 2020. Further, only 37 percent of L&D functions are purposefully trying to understand and prepare for changes in the ways employees learn.

Most Organizations Won't Be Ready for Future Learners

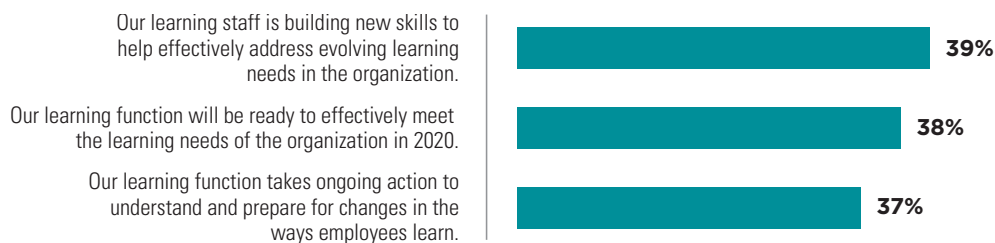
The LEI shows that most learning functions are not adequately preparing for the shifting needs and expectations of future learners. Survey respondents further affirmed that conclusion when only 38 percent said their learning functions would be ready to meet organizational learning needs in 2020 (Figure 3).

Figure 3 reflects the positive news that at least some organizations are actively working to build the skills they need to keep pace with changing learning needs; however, only 39 percent of those surveyed are doing so. Clearly that leaves behind more than 60 percent of L&D practitioners. Further complicating readiness is the fact that most learning functions are not engaging in continuous improvement efforts to build understanding about future learners and the evolution of their learning needs.

FIGURE 3:

LESS THAN 40 PERCENT OF LEARNING FUNCTIONS CLAIM FUTURE READINESS

To what extent do the following statements describe your learning function?



Percent of respondents indicating high or very high extent.

Learners and Learning Methods in 2020

From changing workforce demographics and employee learning preferences to shifts in learning design and delivery, many factors are converging to transform the organizational learning landscape. Given the pace of change and the ever-accelerating evolution of technologies, many talent development leaders understand that projecting ahead as few as five years can paint a significantly different picture of workplace learners and learning.

Amy Rouse, a director at AT&T's corporate university, describes her vision for 2020 as "a matter of more and more of what we're already seeing today." For learners, she characterizes that as an "I-want-it-when-I-want-it-and-how-I-want-it" mindset, heralding a greater need for learning to be easily consumable and readily mobile.

"It is going to have to be mobile in ways that accommodate whatever our mobile devices look like in the future," Rouse continues. "We're playing now with wearable technologies like HoloLens [Microsoft's version of a see-through holographic computer] and Google Glass. Also, there is a technology that is a thin, flexible, transparent screen with 3D that can literally be your 'desktop' anywhere you are. You could set it down on a table or on the refrigerator—wherever—and continue working or viewing. So surely the future will bring something other than holding a device in your hand and consuming mobile learning that way."

The future will be less about traditional classroom training
and more about how we can design experiences from
which people can pull learning.

—Laura Asiala, vice president of client relations and public
affairs, PYXERA Global

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to imagining what learners of the future will expect from organizational learning functions, no one has an infallible crystal ball. ATD and i4cp found many talent development leaders and their organizations foundering even to achieve the levels of effectiveness they need currently. In that climate, visualizing the plethora of possibilities for learning, even only five years in the future, seems daunting at best.

Actively preparing now to serve future learners and their changing needs is beyond the reach of many L&D functions. Some are hampered by insufficient budgets; others lack the technologies and IT support systems to create and deliver content in ways likely to engage learners who expect their employers' technologies and capabilities to mirror those readily available outside the workplace.

While government agencies and nonprofit organizations face their own unique challenges, most commercial enterprises aren't progressing much faster in trying to understand and prepare for the future learning landscape. Still, the outlook is far from completely bleak. Many L&D functions are well on their way to understanding what future learners are likely to need and how to provide them with engaging and relevant content in innovative ways.

Recommendations

Regardless of organizational structure, operating sector, and challenges, astute talent development leaders are starting on the uncertain road to the future by moving to align learning strategy with business strategy, recognizing that the fundamental mission of L&D will continue to be what it has always been: developing the skilled workforces organizations need to succeed in a competitive and volatile world.

Along with the detailed examples of approaches talent development leaders shared for the Study, ATD and i4cp recommend the following foundational steps for organizations aspiring to effectively engage learners in 2020 and beyond.

- **Take action now to improve learning effectiveness.** Until the learning function operates effectively in the present, it cannot expect to provide optimal experiences to future learners. Organizations lagging in learning effectiveness can begin to make improvements by first establishing a baseline assessment of the L&D function's operational capabilities. The baseline can serve as a gauge against which progress can be measured.

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The ATD Forum, a consortium of more than 50 companies, provides a confidential environment for the exploration and sharing of innovative talent development practices to generate business results for our members. We co-create innovative learning and foster exclusive relationships that affect organizational results, while leading and giving back to the profession. The Forum partners with member organizations to host learning labs to explore and collaborate on challenges and opportunities faced by the industry.

The ATD Forum's 2015 Spring Lab focused on learners and the learning landscape of the future. One collaborative activity was devoted to crowdsourcing relevant questions for the research. Additionally, content and discussions shared during the lab assisted with developing a foundation for this report and providing case studies.

The ATD Forum would like to thank its members at the 2015 Spring Lab for their thought leadership, candid discussion, and contributions. We are especially grateful to Kara Laverde and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Matthew Valencius and IBM.

More information about the ATD Forum is available at www.td.org/forum.

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Carol Morrison is a senior research analyst who has spent more than a decade with i4cp exploring many topics affecting human capital and business performance, including learning, leadership development, strategy and execution, workforce planning, organizational change, and talent management. She has researched and authored more than a dozen studies for ATD on learning issues ranging from gamification and mobile learning to instructional design and MOOCs. In addition to her work for ATD and i4cp, Carol has contributed extensively to projects for the American Management Association and HR People & Strategy. Feature articles by Carol can be found in *TD* magazine, *Talent Management* magazine, *Chief Learning Officer*, *HR Executive*, and in other leading print and online media. Contact Carol at carol.morrison@i4cp.com.



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The Association for Talent Development (ATD), formerly ASTD, is the world's largest association dedicated to those who develop talent in organizations.

These professionals help others achieve their full potential by improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

ATD's members come from more than 120 countries and work in public and private organizations in every industry sector. ATD supports the work of professionals locally in more than 125 chapters, international strategic partners, and global member networks.

Started in 1943 as the American Society of Training Directors, this organization evolved to become the American Society for Training & Development. As the scope and the impact of the training and development field has grown, the profession's focus has broadened to link the development of people, learning, and performance to individual and organizational results.



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APPENDIX: SURVEY OVERVIEWS

Target Survey Populations

The target survey population of the *Learners of the Future: Taking Action Today to Prevent Tomorrow's Talent Crisis* study were industry professionals from organizations of various sizes and industries. Participants represented organizations worldwide; 56 percent had workforces of 1,000 or more. Overall, 405 people responded to the survey.

Survey Instruments

In this survey, multiple questions used the customary 1–5 Likert-type scale, with a 1 rating generally indicating a “not at all” response and a 5 rating indicating a response of “to a very high extent.” The survey was composed of a total of 21 questions, including those geared toward the demographics of respondents.

Procedure

Research took a blended approach, combining survey results with subsequent interviews of learning leaders experienced in applying technologies to support their organizations’ learning programs. A link to an online survey was emailed to the target population in July 2015. Telephone interviews were also conducted in August and September.

MORE FROM ATD RESEARCH

What Does Talent Development Pay?: ATD's 2015 Compensation and Benefits Report



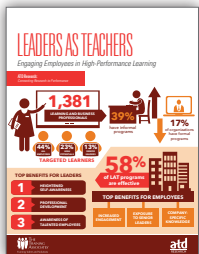
The median annual salary in talent development is between \$70,000 and \$79,999, a number that has remained flat since ATD last measured the industry pulse in 2011. But which factors command higher salaries? How prevalent is incentive pay? And what about paid benefits such as time off and medical coverage? In the new research report, *What Does Talent Development Pay?*, ATD Research surveyed 2,050 talent development professionals at all corporate levels to uncover the data. For more information, visit www.td.org/SalaryReport.

Global Trends in Talent Development



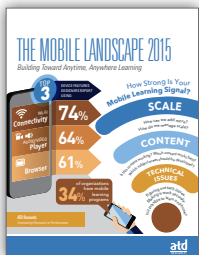
The Association for Talent Development has completed its first truly global assessment of talent development outlooks, resources, and practices. The findings from this research are presented in *Global Trends in Talent Development*. By looking at key metrics (including learning hours, budgets, and delivery methods) and top trends and challenges for talent development by global regions, this research will aid talent development professionals in benchmarking their practices against those of their peers in their own region. For more information, visit www.td.org/GlobalTrends.

Leaders as Teachers: Engaging Employees in High-Performance Learning



Many organizations leverage their leaders as teachers. Unfortunately, most of those companies struggle to gain traction and truly profit from the time and effort leaders invest in teaching. In *Leaders as Teachers: Engaging Employees in High-Performance Learning*, the Association for Talent Development (ATD) and the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) partnered to identify and explore what high-performance organizations are doing to derive the greatest benefits from leaders-as-teachers programs. For more information, visit www.td.org/LAT.

The Mobile Landscape 2015: Building Toward Anytime, Anywhere Learning



Widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets has fueled extensive interest among learning professionals about the use of mobile devices for training delivery. To explore the state of mobile learning in 2015, ATD and i4cp sought insights from learning leaders and professionals worldwide in *The Mobile Landscape 2015: Building Toward Anytime, Anywhere Learning*. Their views, experiences, and strategies offer valuable guidance and examples for those just beginning the mobile learning journey. ATD and i4cp found that 34 percent of organizations have mobile learning programs. For more information, visit www.td.org/MobileLandscape.

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