THE LPI RESEARCH COMPANION

Guiding you through the maze of L&D research

Issue No. 5
Mar 2017
Research, research, research!

There are so many organisations issuing research into L&D trends and topics that it can be hard to keep up.

Where do you start? Which reports have the data you’re looking for?

This is where the LPI Research Companion can help, by cutting through the noise and giving you the most relevant highlights and action points from the very best research the L&D industry has to offer.

In this issue we look at the following reports, published recently:

- Unlocking Potential – 2016-17 Learning Benchmark Report - Towards Maturity
- Elearning Market Trends and Forecast 2017-2021 - Docebo
- 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer - Edelman
- The L&D Global Sentiment Survey 2017 - Donald Taylor

As a learning professional, if something catches your eye we would encourage you to explore these reports more fully.

So let’s delve in...
Towards Maturity’s annual benchmark report includes data from more than 600 L&D professionals who completed their benchmark between September 2015 and August 2016. It also includes data from 4,700 learners. The benchmark report has been published annually since 2003 and as such provides important longitudinal insights into how the profession is adopting and using technology-enabled learning.

This report is 95 pages long and packed with data. That means you are likely to find evidence to support your work as an L&D professional. It also means that it makes the job of identifying stand out data that much harder as there is so much to choose from.

However, the design of the report helps with this challenge. This year’s report groups the data around five learning outcomes. They are: influencing culture, cultivating agility, boosting performance, fine-tuning processes and improving efficiency. For each outcome, the study shows the tactics that are most likely to correlate with successful outcomes. That means the report provides practical tips on improving culture, agility and so on.

For example, L&D teams that are specifically achieving the goals related to improving efficiency, as highlighted in the report, use tactics such as integrating technology into face-to-face training (45% vs 21% of non-achievers) and regularly reviewing programmes to maintain relevance (66% vs 35% for non-achievers).

These insights are needed because the profession is struggling across all five areas. Only 17% of organisations are influencing culture, only 20% are cultivating agility, 26% are boosting performance, 33% are fine-tuning processes and 42% are improving efficiency.

L&D is also struggling to achieve business impact in the way it would like to. For example, 93% of L&D professionals want to integrate learning and work but only 15% are delivering on this. And 95% of L&D want to respond faster to changing business conditions, but only 19% are making progress.

(contd.)
Much of the data makes for sobering reading but all is not doom and gloom. The report shows that Top Deck organisations - those in the top 10% of the Benchmark – are succeeding, with 77% improving efficiency (versus 44%), 64% are fine-tuning processes (versus 33%) and 62% are boosting performance (versus 26%).

**What to act on**

This report provides a wealth of practical tips on how to create a greater impact from learning initiatives.

Organisations that are boosting performance deliver learning in time to meet business needs (71% vs 43% of non-achievers) and use activities to practice learning outcomes (66% vs 41% of non-achievers).

Efficiency gains are being made by allowing learners to access resources at any time (74% of achievers vs 53% of non-achievers) as well as regularly reviewing programmes to ensure they support organisational goals – 66% of achievers do this versus 35% who are not achieving efficiency gains.

The report also highlights the skills priorities for L&D teams. The top five priorities are: facilitating social and collaborative learning, data analytics, programme evaluation, supporting ongoing workplace performance and virtual classrooms/webinar delivery.

This report provides plenty of evidence-backed, practical tips on how to effectively use technology to deliver more performance impact through learning.
Learning technology company Docebo has aggregated a range of data on the learning market as well as insights from industry analysts to produce an in-depth report on the state of the learning market and future learning trends.

According to the data in this report, the elearning market is in good health. Technavio data suggest the global corporate elearning market is predicted to reach $31bn in revenue by the end of 2020.

This growth is being driven by organisations exploring new learning technologies and by employees’ desire to learn. The Pew Research Center says 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners and 63% of those who are working see themselves as professional learners, meaning they have taken a course or received additional training in the past 12 months to improve their job skills or expertise connected to career development. For millennials, the most coveted job benefit is training and development.

So far, so good. This is a growing market – driven by the needs of learners. However, there are some big challenges for L&D professionals looking to capitalize on employees’ desire to learn.

Providing a great user experience is a priority. Brandon Hall Group research shows that improving user experience (88%) is the top reason L&D professionals want to change their current learning management system. This is followed by the need to improve the administrative experience (74%) and the need for enhanced reporting (66%).

(contd.)
Recent research by CLO Magazine shows that only 20% of employees use the LMS for any non-compliance learning at all.

And according to Cierra Cedar, the adoption of social technologies to engage employees with learning is set to grow from 14% today to 22% in 12 months’ time. So, low levels of adoption and slow levels of adoption for the coming year.

Mobile adoption tells a similar story with 24% using mobile today and 37% predicted to be using it in 12 months’ time.

What to act on

The good news is that organisations are investing in technology to improve learning and performance.

The challenge for L&D teams is to provide a user experience that matches the consumer technology user experience that employees are accustomed to outside of work.

Speed is now of the essence. Can you afford to wait another year or two to provide an intuitive, mobile learning experience? I'm not sure your employees can.

ELEARNING MARKET TRENDS AND FORECAST 2017-2021
The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer is a survey of 33,000 people around the globe who are asked questions on their trust in institutions and organisations. This is the 17th year Edelman has published this report.

**About the research**

The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer is a survey of 33,000 people around the globe who are asked questions on their trust in institutions and organisations. This is the 17th year Edelman has published this report.

**Eye-catching findings**

You might ask, ‘What has this got to do with learning and development?’ Well, quite a lot!

The research reveals the largest-ever drop in trust across the institutions of government, business, media and non-governmental organisations. Trust in CEOs is also falling. Employees, on average, are trusted 16 points more than CEOs when it comes to messaging around employee/customer relations. Trust in business has dropped in 18 countries.

People are also worried that they will lose their jobs due to a lack of training or skills (60%) and automation (54%).

The research shows that there are factors that can help organisations build trust. These include treating employees well, offering high quality products and services, listening to customers, paying a fair share of taxes, conducting ethical business practices and having transparent and open business practices.

*(contd.)*
Employees have the most credible voice in the organisation. Across a range of areas - from the treatment of employees, to financial results and crisis handling - employees are more trusted than CEOs and senior executives to provide information. The least credible voice is a media spokesperson.

The research also provides useful insights into how employees like to be talked to. In actual fact, they prefer to be talked ‘with’ rather than ‘to’. That means they prefer spontaneous speakers (57%) over rehearsed speakers (43%), blunt and outspoken (54%) over diplomatic and polite (46%) and personal experience (51%) over data (49%).

What to act on

Employees increasingly care about how organisations operate. In uncertain times they expect employers to be more open and transparent in how they do business. They care about an organisation’s impact on local communities and society at large.

To build trust, employers must work ‘with’ their people, not for them. That means giving voice to employees to share company information. That means sharing and collaborating rather than telling. This is where L&D can make a difference – using authentic voices and enabling collaboration and sharing. Doing this will help build trust within organisations.
In this report, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reviews the best available scientific research on how goal setting and performance appraisals contribute to performance.

As well as looking at current discussions and debates on performance management, the report looks at the evidence on the overall impact of goal setting and performance appraisal and the main factors that influence the effectiveness of goal setting and performance appraisals.

The CIPD’s own research into performance management reveals that while half (49%) of the HR leaders questioned used annual appraisals in their organisations, most of them (55%) did not consider them to be ‘effective’. Six-monthly appraisals seem to work slightly better, but were still seen as ineffective in just over a third (37%) of cases. And senior leaders from outside HR were even more critical of performance management, with 73% considering annual appraisals ineffective and 46% considering six-monthly appraisals ineffective.

The report uses meta-analyses of research into appraisals and goal setting to provide insights in to what does and doesn’t work when it comes to performance management.

There is much data that shows that goal setting has a positive impact on performance. But goals can be counter-productive. High goals combined with economic incentives are less effective and included a diminished ability to control one’s feelings, thought and actions and unethical behaviour. This is more prevalent when people fall just short of reaching the goal. So, don’t put too narrow a focus on the target at the expense of other elements of the job, especially ethical conduct.

(contd.)
When it comes to appraisals, research shows that feedback (a central part of appraisal) doesn’t necessarily lead to improved performance. It only has a moderate impact on performance (measured at $d=0.41$, where 1 represents a perfect positive correlation). Good feedback at the right time is invaluable. Feedback given poorly can be devastating.

For relatively straightforward work, clear goals help improve performance more than non-specific goals such as ‘do your best’. Challenging goals are much more effective. They need to be realistic though – we need to feel they are achievable.

Specific and challenging goals work less well for complex tasks, however. These are tasks where people need to regularly do things that are new to them or where they have to process information which is unfamiliar. For these types of goals, ‘do your best’ outcome goals lead to higher performance.

And make sure you distinguish between outcome goals and behavioural and learning goals – the latter are more effective in complex tasks (they focus on the way someone behaves and what they have learned on the task).

Short-term goals to help transfer learning into action – it is effective in learning new skills or learning a new job role.

And don’t think self-set goals are more effective than goals assigned to a person. They are not. The research shows that assigned goals are more potent.

When it comes to feedback, the report urges organisations to use managers’ evaluations rather than self-assessments as they are more powerful motivators. Focus on strengths-based feedback and ensure managers involve employees in in appraisal discussions. Finally, follow up with employees after appraisal meetings to see if it was fair and useful. This helps develop more positive feeling around the appraisal process.

(contd.)
What to act on

This research report is packed with evidence-backed insights into the role of targets and appraisals in performance management. Some of the insights will serve to support and reinforce what L&D and HR professionals are already doing but some will challenge current approaches.

For example, allowing colleagues to set their own goals is not more effective than having goals assigned to them. Organisations must set goals based on the type of tasks that are being carried out. More straightforward, routine tasks are good for specific and challenging goals but complex tasks aren’t. The reality is that most jobs feature a mix of complex and routine tasks so goal setting should reflect that.

Interestingly for L&D professionals, there should also be a focus on behavioural and learning goals. This is an area where L&D has an opportunity to embed learning into the culture of the organisation.

COULD DO BETTER?
ASSESSING WHAT WORKS IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The L&D Global Sentiment Survey for 2017 is a piece of research run by Donald Taylor, chairman of the Learning and Performance Institute.

Now in its fourth year, the research poses one question for the year ahead: What will be hot in workplace L&D? Some 885 people from 60 countries cast 2,364 votes for their choices of up to three of 16 available trends.

The trends are: artificial intelligence, collaborative/social learning, consulting more deeply with the business, curation, developing the L&D function, games/gamification, micro learning, mobile delivery, neuroscience/cognitive science, personal knowledge mastery, personalisation/adaptive delivery, showing value, video, virtual and augmented reality.

The number one trend in workplace L&D is personalisation/adaptive delivery with 12.4% of total votes cast. This is followed by collaborative/social learning (11.6%) and micro learning (10.5%).

So the focus for L&D in the coming year is on providing learning experiences that relate directly to the employee’s need and on enabling more social and collaborative approaches to learning. That means helping people to learn from, and with, each other.

Technology is also very hot. Following micro learning in third place is virtual and augmented reality (8.2%), mobile delivery (6.5%) and artificial intelligence (6.1%). These technology options represented more than 30% of the overall vote.

And respondents are also prioritising business impact. Consulting more deeply with the business (7.2%) and showing value (6.7%) are fifth and sixth in the list respectively.

(contd.)
What to act on

According to this research, technology is very much ‘on trend’. That means that L&D teams are interested in seeing how virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence can improve the learner experience. This is something to consider getting up to speed on.

Rather alarmingly, respondents say that working more closely with the business and showing value are increasingly important but developing the L&D function is not - languishing in 13th place with 3.8% of the vote. How will L&D embrace new technologies and deliver more impact without developing their own skills?

For all the hopes and aspirations represented in this research, the reality is that without developing the skills of the L&D team it is hard to see how these trends will become a reality.
Although these five reports cover a diverse range of topics, there are some common threads that run through them. And it is these common threads that L&D professionals need to pay attention to.

First, **technology is driving corporate learning**. The elearning industry is reportedly growing and is worth tens of billions of dollars. The technology trends highlighted in Don Taylor’s research represent more than 30% of the overall votes cast. No one in L&D can doubt the role and significance of technology in learning. The challenge is this: to understand what technology will work in your organisation. What performance challenge will it overcome?

The second theme is that **learning is being driven by the people who need it** – your employees. They see themselves as lifelong learners. They want to develop themselves. They also trust the information shared by colleagues and peers more than they do the information shared by the company and its senior managers. L&D professionals need to reframe their approach based on this new dynamic. Employee-led, peer learning represents a fundamentally different approach to tradition top-down, pushed learning content.

And finally, this research puts the spotlight on the skills and impact of the L&D department. Towards Maturity shows that L&D is not having the impact it would like and that needs to be addressed. Don Taylor’s research shows that developing the skills of the L&D team comes way down the priority list and the CIPD research challenges current thinking and practices around performance management – the bedrock of L&D. The message here: **L&D professionals need to concentrate on their own learning and development** too.