



REDEFINING THE SPECTRUM OF LEARNING FOR THE AGILE ORGANIZATION

sumtotal³

WHITE PAPER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We're operating in the perfect storm of uncertainty — a global health crisis, economic destabilization, and, thanks to emerging digital technologies and automation, widespread changes in the very work that must get done.

Technology is advancing, but business performance isn't progressing at the same pace. Why the disconnect? It comes down to people.

“Most digital technologies provide possibilities for efficiency gains and customer intimacy,” noted [Harvard Business Review](#). “But if people lack the right mindset to change and the current organizational practices are flawed, digital transformation will simply magnify those flaws.”

Your learning and development (L&D) strategy is critical for helping people adapt to change and make the most of the opportunities that digital transformation presents. Think about it this way: Your approach to L&D has the potential to build a workforce with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities to overcome challenges and continually provide value to your organization.

In this white paper, you'll find a roadmap to redefine your organization's spectrum of learning, including:

- Proven tactics to align your employees' L&D goals with the goals of your organization
- A framework for infusing relevant L&D components at every stage of the employee experience
- Ways to support members of your workforce with an engaging and easy-to-use learning platform they love to use

With this information in hand, you'll be prepared to execute a plan that makes your business resilient and gives you a sustainable competitive advantage.

FILLING THE SKILLS GAP WITH PURPOSE

Skilled workers are in such high demand that organizations are bending over backwards to attract and retain them — including by offering flexible working conditions, attractive benefits programs, and ongoing skill development to make employees feel valued and supported. In fact, [research](#) shows 94% of employees would stay longer at a company that invested in their learning and development, with [retention rates rising](#) 30% to 50% for companies with strong learning cultures.

That said, it's important not to over-rotate toward meeting employee demands. When learning is focused entirely on employees' desire for skill development, you risk losing sight of the end goal: creating a sustainable, agile organization.

To deliver organizational value, employees need to:

- Understand their purpose
- Align their skills with required knowledge, abilities, and competencies
- Apply their skills in the context of the company's goals

While employees should be able to pursue a growth path that's unique to them, their growth must be purpose-driven and aligned to the culture and requirements of your organization. When that happens, employees feel their skills matter and become more engaged — which benefits everyone. With the whole company pulling together and moving in the same direction, your organization can thrive.

Read more: [How to Empower Employees to Own Their Learning Path](#)

3 STEPS TO UPSKILL AND RESKILL EMPLOYEES

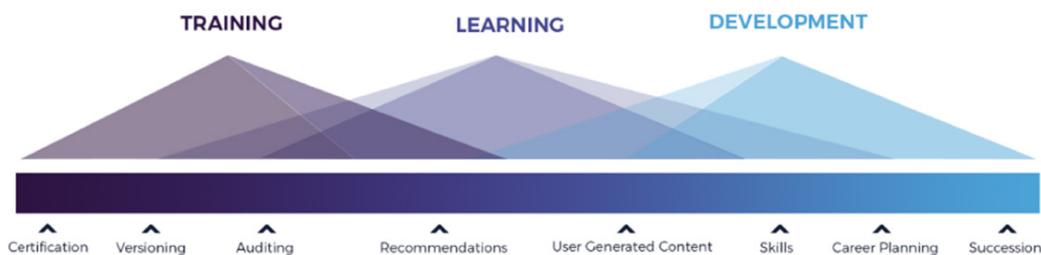
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REDEFINING THE SPECTRUM OF LEARNING

With the aforementioned goals in mind, L&D leaders must consider learning in a new way. Traditionally, organizations provided employees with practical training, with a smaller number offering some long-term development. Learning activities were often ad hoc and disconnected, rather than viewed as a continuous, connected program.

To create an agile organization, today's L&D programs must address the entire spectrum of learning, which is composed of a continuous range of activities and resources grouped into three areas of focus: training, learning, and development. All three areas are necessary to meet both employee and organizational goals.



SPECTRUM OF LEARNING

Each part of the spectrum has unique requirements and is supported with relevant strategies and toolsets. Next, let's look more closely at each of the three components.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Training is the bare minimum level of learning that an organization must provide its workforce. Commonly, some level of training is mandatory for companies to meet legal or industry requirements and avoid liability. Therefore, training can't be shortchanged or forgotten.

Types of required training include:

- Occupational safety and health
- Cybersecurity and data privacy
- Antidiscrimination, diversity, and ethics
- Sexual harassment
- Workplace violence prevention
- Industry-specific compliance (e.g., for highly regulated industries such as banking, manufacturing, and pharmaceuticals)
- Organizational protocols and standard operating procedures

Training can be very complex to manage, as it must be completed on schedule and refreshed when requirements change. Moreover, organizations must provide proof of training completion or certification for specific tasks, roles, business units, and geographies.

THE COST OF NOT FOCUSING ON TRAINING

The [average cost of noncompliance](#) has risen more than 45% over the past 10 years — even more when you consider the overt and hidden costs.

If you don't meet training requirements, you may lose business if you don't have the proper licenses and certifications, along with potentially failing audits, receiving fines, or facing lawsuits for noncompliance. Without safety training, you increase the risk of injury, and without quality training, your products and services don't meet expectations, which could impact customer experience, brand reputation, and sales.

Read more: [The Ultimate Cost of Noncompliance on Your Business](#)

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

Unlike mandatory training, learning isn't required — but it's essential for organizations that want to keep employees motivated. Learning allows people to unleash their own potential, meet personal goals, and achieve individual career aspirations.

Providing employees with learning opportunities can increase employee engagement. According to [Gallup](#), higher engagement tends to correlate with higher profits, lower absenteeism, better productivity, and increased innovation.

THE COST OF NOT FOCUSING ON LEARNING

Unlike with poor training, you may not see the cost of insufficient learning right away. That's because the costs are pervasive throughout your organization and can thus be hard to measure.

When you don't provide the learning opportunities that people want, they may look elsewhere. The more employees leave, the more your workplace culture deteriorates — plus, you lose institutional knowledge, which impacts productivity and quality. Replacing talent is challenging, not to mention time-consuming, as it may take months to recruit and hire the right people and even longer for you to regain momentum.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

Training is required, learning is focused on individuals, and development is purpose-driven. More specifically, development supports both the individual and the organization, thereby putting the skills, knowledge, and competencies of employees into operational context to achieve a larger purpose.

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THE COST OF NOT FOCUSING ON DEVELOPMENT

Beyond impacting individual employees, teams, and product areas, lack of development also impacts your organization as a whole, making it less productive and less able to adapt to changing business conditions. Leaders can't move the organization forward without an aligned team behind them, so a business that doesn't focus on development is more likely to fail.

CRITICAL MOMENTS THROUGHOUT THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

Timelines for training, learning, and development activities can vary based on many factors, including compliance requirements, employee motivation, organizational goals, and business conditions. Next, we'll look at the critical times when employees need the most support.

ONBOARDING

Training is particularly important during the early phases of an employee's journey, as workers must understand technical and behavioral requirements if they're going to do their jobs well while representing company values. Similarly, contractors, partners, resellers, franchisees, and any other members of an organization's extended network must meet these baseline requirements.

Read more: [The Power of Involving New Employees in L&D from Day One](#)

ROLE CHANGES AND PROMOTIONS

As employees take on new roles, they'll likely need to learn new skills, competencies, and behaviors. Along with hard skills that build their financial or technical prowess, they may also need softer skills for effective communication and leadership.

SCHEDULED UPDATES

In addition to following employees' personal timelines, training schedules may be dependent on compliance requirements and industry updates. For employees who don't know about or keep track of these types of L&D needs, a nudge from a manager can go a long way, and establishing quarterly or annual performance goals related to learning helps ensure L&D actually happens.

TIMES OF ORGANIZATIONAL VOLATILITY

Mergers, acquisitions, changes in leadership, restructuring, or other internal shifts are important times to double down on training, learning, and development. During periods of organizational volatility, employees feel the strain of the new circumstances and are likely trading or taking on some responsibilities. Additionally, organizational goals will likely be in flux, and it'll be important to consider how employees' individual learning paths will map onto them.

MOVING FROM SCHEDULED TO JUST-IN-TIME

Regularly scheduled training or the occasional course is better than no L&D investment at all — but it's not nearly as effective as providing relevant L&D content that's available whenever employees need it.

Learning in the flow of work is a relatively new idea; it recognizes that learning must fit around and align itself to working days and working lives in order to truly happen. Employees who can access on-demand content at the point of need are more likely to use what they learn right away, which can help them retain the information.

Read more: [Integrating Learning in the Flow of Work](#)

TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT THE SPECTRUM OF LEARNING

So, how can you create an L&D program that meets both individual and organizational goals? The simple answer is that any technology you employ must be simple, accessible, and engaging.

SIMPLE TO ADOPT

Typically, employees consider learning to be “important but not urgent.” In practice, this means they aren't engaging with or retaining as much information as they should. In fact, a study by [Corporate Compliance Insights](#) revealed that half of the workforce admits to skip-reading or not listening to mandatory training in detail.

Beyond mandatory compliance training, employees rarely use their organization's traditional learning management system (LMS), and it often takes many clicks to find what they need. On average, they carve out **just five minutes a day** for formal learning because they're “too caught up in the inexorable flow of work.”

In terms of supporting the spectrum of learning, if your L&D technology is too complex, you can be all but sure employees won't adopt it.

50%

of respondents in a recent study by [Corporate Compliance Insights](#) admitted to not paying close attention to mandatory training.

ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The workforce is increasingly diverse and distributed, thanks in large part to the fact that millions of employees became remote workers during the pandemic — possibly never to return to the office.

According to [Emergence](#), 80% of workers are "deskless," meaning they work in the field or behind a counter instead of at a desk. It's important for these employees to be able to access learning content relevant to their jobs and delivered in a format that works for them.

With this in mind, your L&D resources must be available for asynchronous learning that meets flexible work schedules. Moreover, they should be accessible from multiple devices — and even offline — to ensure access for remote workers.

ENGAGING TO USE

People now expect the same usability from workplace tools as they do from consumer tech. To keep employees engaged, your L&D program must consistently deliver relevant content to workers in ways they want to consume it.

The problem is that trainers and instructional designers often don't have enough time or subject matter expertise to do this — plus, traditional L&D technologies are difficult to configure and manage, especially with complex requirements in the mix.

While new solutions such as learning experience platforms (LXPs) present modern interactivity, personalization, and social learning capabilities, these standalone platforms may add to the burden of L&D pros who are already struggling to keep up.

TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS

What if you could find an efficient, sustainable way to deliver engaging content for the entire spectrum of learning without adding to your workload?

There are many L&D technologies attempting to address these goals — but to date, the available options have been complex and disconnected.

The LMS has been the workhorse focused on compliance training, with administrative capabilities for assessment, reporting, documentation, etc.

The learning experience platform (LXP) supports the other end of the spectrum — learning and development. LXPs are designed with modern content and delivery models to recognize that learners have greater ownership, accountability, and engagement when they are active participants in every aspect of their own learning. An LXP enables learners to plan, discover, consume, experiment, connect, and perform.

One type of platform doesn't replace the other, as each serves a different purpose and both are needed to meet your goals. But managing two or more platforms is untenable for everyone — L&D teams and employees alike.

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COMPARING THE LMS AND LXP

LMS	LXP
Mandatory training	Voluntary L&D
Organization selects and/or creates approved content	Employees can discover and contribute content on their own
Organization assigns content to users	Employees choose content
Scheduled	On-demand, just-in-time
Generic – everyone in a particular role/ geography/career stage gets the same content	Personalized – employees get content relevant to their goals and career path
Traditional formats – mainly documents	Modern formats in addition to documents – blogs, webinars, podcasts, videos, quizzes
One-way delivery, passive consumption	Multi-directional collaboration, active engagement
Content is mostly fixed, with periodic updates	Content is continually changing
Formal reporting – testing, tracking, and documentation for certification or CE credits	Informal reporting – mainly for use by employees and managers
Success is measured by completion and successful certification	Success is connected to job performance and career goals

THE LMXP™: A SINGLE SOLUTION FOR THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF LEARNING

Now you can bring the traditional LMS and the modern LXP together in one seamless platform.

SumTotal's LMXP (learning management experience platform) is an all-in-one solution built for the new way of working. It's easy for administrators to manage and learners to adopt, giving you essential tools to align employee and organizational goals and achieve sustainable growth in the face of rapid change.

BENEFITS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Having one solution means less time creating, curating, managing, assessing, measuring, and reporting.

A common user authentication/authorization model allows administrators to track skills and competencies with ease. Because you can consolidate all learning history data to get a full picture of your entire workforce and drill down as needed, it's easy to see who consumed what content, the skills and competencies they gained, and what gaps you need to fill.

By integrating LMXP with your human resources information system (HRIS), you can segment reports by geography, business unit, or demographics to make sure your organization is investing where it should, which will help you meet targets for diversity, equity, inclusion, and other organizational goals. Instead of dealing with administrative tasks, you can make room in your schedule for creating the types of learning experiences people really want.

Because learners find LMXP content more engaging and relevant, they get used to visiting it and find more value in it — and all the learning content you've worked so hard to provide gets more use.

BENEFITS FOR LEARNERS

With LMXP, learning becomes part of people's daily work lives rather than an ad hoc, check-the-box activity to meet requirements or annual reviews. Employees can see the path forward and take control of their career trajectory, while managers can create plans to keep members of their teams motivated and on target.

Its consumer-friendly interface removes friction so there's no more hunting for content — employees have only one place to go and one interface to learn. As a result, they have more time to use the information they learn on the job.

IN CONCLUSION

The success of your business hinges on your organization's ability to adapt to rapid change. By addressing the entire spectrum of learning, you can ensure your workforce has the necessary skills and capabilities and is aligned to organizational goals. When training, learning, and development activities happen on a central, easy-to-use platform, engagement skyrockets. Employees are more excited about where they work, and the organization becomes stronger and better prepared for the future.

To learn more about the power of an LMXP, [let's talk](#).

ABOUT SUMTOTAL

SumTotal provides a unified, comprehensive Learning and Talent Development suite that delivers measurable impact across the entire employee lifecycle. With SumTotal, organizations can build a culture of learning that is critical to growth, success, and business sustainability. SumTotal's award-winning technology provides talent acquisition, onboarding, learning management, and talent management solutions across some of the most innovative, complex and highly regulated industries, including technology, airlines, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, and pharmaceuticals.

Skillsoft and SumTotal are partners to thousands of leading global organizations, including many Fortune 500 companies. The company features three award-winning systems that support learning, performance, and success: Skillsoft learning content, the Percipio intelligent learning experience platform, and the SumTotal suite for Talent Development, which offers measurable impact across the entire employee lifecycle.

Learn more at sumtotalsystems.com.

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