



# PUTTING EMPLOYEES FIRST:

## ASSESSING THE MATURITY OF LEARNING CULTURES

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## INTRODUCTION:

In today's economy, fostering a strong learning culture directly impacts organizational success. According to Aptitude Research, 67% of companies are increasing their investments in learning and development initiatives this year. Companies recognize the role that continuous learning plays in staying competitive and agile in today's business environment. However, less than half express confidence in the effectiveness of their learning cultures, and only one in three are satisfied with their providers, exposing a critical gap between investment and perceived value.

The significance of a strong learning culture impacts both organizational growth and the employee experience. A company's commitment to nurturing a learning-centric environment encourages its adaptability to change and also empowers employees to acquire new skills, stay engaged, and improve performance.

But despite these benefits, most companies are behind in their approach to learning and development. They are thinking of learning as a benefit to the business rather than a tool to empower individuals. As companies assess their learning cultures and drive change, they must shift their mindset and reevaluate the value of learning and development.



According to  
Aptitude Research,  
**67%**  
of companies are  
increasing their  
investments in learning  
and development  
initiatives this year.

### Quantitative Research:

386 responses for Learning and HR Director Level and above

#### Company Sizes:

18% (250-999), 22% (1,000-4,999)

28% (5,000-9,999), 32% (10,000+)

### Qualitative Research:

Interviews with over 25 Learning and HR leaders in 2023 and 2024



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## KEY CORPORATE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

This study unveils the changing dynamics of corporate learning and development (L&D), highlighting how companies at various stages of maturity are making do, exploring the future, or actively reshaping their strategies to foster cultures of learning and innovation. Below, we present the top 10 findings from our study, each offering a comprehensive look at the opportunities and challenges within L&D.



### Investments in L&D Continue to Increase:

**67% of companies are increasing their L&D investments**, highlighting the growing recognition of learning as a pivotal factor in maintaining competitiveness and agility in today's dynamic business environment. This trend underscores the importance of investing in employee development to navigate the complexities of the modern marketplace.



### There is a Gap Between Investment and Confidence:

Despite the increased financial commitment to L&D, **less than half of companies are confident in the effectiveness of their learning cultures, and only one in three are satisfied with their tools**. This discrepancy points to a critical need for organizations to reassess and realign their L&D strategies to ensure they deliver tangible value.



### Learning Programs Are Not Aligned with Business Goals:

The study reveals that **one in four companies don't believe their L&D investments are aligned with their objectives**, highlighting the necessity for L&D initiatives to be closely integrated with overall business strategies. This alignment ensures that learning outcomes contribute directly to organizational success.



### Skills-based Learning is on the Rise:

The future of L&D is increasingly technology-driven, with **74% of companies considering a skills-based approach**. Leveraging technology to scale personalized learning and utilizing AI for insights signifies a shift toward more adaptive and efficient L&D strategies.



### Companies are Embracing AI's Role in L&D:

Transformational companies strategically empower employees while aligning learning initiatives with overarching business goals, and **67% of those organizations have incorporated AI into their L&D strategies to provide personalized learning experiences and quickly adjust the content in real-time**. This adoption of AI-driven approaches showcases the potential for technology to revolutionize how learning is delivered and experienced.



### Remote & Hybrid Work Challenges Continue:

The transition to the new world of work is ongoing, and **56% of companies have hybrid and remote work models**. Despite adopting such models, the study reveals that just over **half of these organizations conduct regular virtual training sessions**. Alarming, **less than half are committed to fostering continuous learning, investing in collaborative learning through digital platforms, or providing self-directed learning opportunities**. This gap highlights a critical area for improvement as companies strive to ensure their L&D initiatives remain accessible to all and effective.



### Learning Cultures Need To Be More Inclusive & Accessible:

With only **half of the companies reporting their learning cultures as accessible to all employees**, there's a pressing need to create more inclusive learning environments. Guaranteeing equal access to learning resources is critical for cultivating a diverse and innovative workforce. The report indicates that learning programs are not very accessible to all employees in 47% of companies, a stark reminder of the importance of universal design principles in L&D content and delivery methods. Accessibility ensures that everyone, regardless of their role or location, can benefit from learning initiatives.



### Personalization Will Be a Key Focus:

The research shows that only **42% of companies tailor the learning experience for their employees**, pointing to a significant opportunity to boost L&D outcomes through personalization. Personalization is key to engaging and empowering learners, driving better outcomes and retention of knowledge.



### Strong L&D Can Transform Morale:

An overwhelming **93% of companies believe a strong learning culture positively impacts employee morale**, reinforcing the value of investing in a supportive and dynamic learning environment. A culture that values growth and development contributes to higher employee engagement and satisfaction levels.

As the dynamics of the modern workplace shift, this report sheds light on the current state of L&D and serves as a framework for organizations striving to excel. We challenge companies to reflect on their place within the L&D maturity model and ask themselves: "What steps are necessary to evolve into an organization that delivers transformational L&D programs?"

Embracing strategic investments, fostering personalized and inclusive learning experiences, and leveraging technology are more than just recommendations—they are imperatives for those looking to lead in creating a future-ready workforce. This report offers the insights and guidance necessary to embark on this journey, urging organizations to align their L&D initiatives with broader business objectives and the ever-changing needs of their employees.

Let this be the moment your organization commits to transforming its approach to L&D, setting a new standard for excellence in employee development and organizational growth. Find your organization on the maturity model and ask what it takes to adapt and lead in this new world of work.

This report introduces a maturity model that will help companies at any stage of transforming their learning cultures. It is based on three essential pillars: alignment, personalization, and inclusivity. Establishing these pillars is crucial for organizations aiming to cultivate a learning environment that is not only comprehensive but also resonates with individual employee needs and fosters an inclusive and engaging atmosphere.

### Personalization:

Only 42% of companies personalize the learning journey for their employees. Learning is not one-size-fits-all and needs to meet the needs of the individual.

### Inclusivity:

Only one in two companies state that their learning cultures are accessible to all employees. A strong learning culture impacts every level of the organization and offers the same benefits to all employees.

### Alignment:

One in four companies believe their investment in learning is wasted. Learning programs need to be aligned with both employer and employee expectations.



These pillars serve as the guiding principles for organizations looking to create an environment where learning is not just a checkbox but an ingrained part of the organizational DNA. Companies must examine what is working and what is broken to develop deeper insights and a more effective culture around continuous learning. They must reconsider their strategies, pricing models, and metrics that they have in place. This report, based on data collected by Aptitude Research in January and February 2024, will explore the evolution and maturity of learning cultures.

### It answers the following questions:

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What are the challenges with developing a strong learning culture?

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What are key drivers for improving learning cultures?

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What are the different stages of maturity for improving learning cultures?

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How can companies shift their view of strategy, pricing, and metrics to deliver greater value?

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What actions can companies take to become more strategic in the next year?

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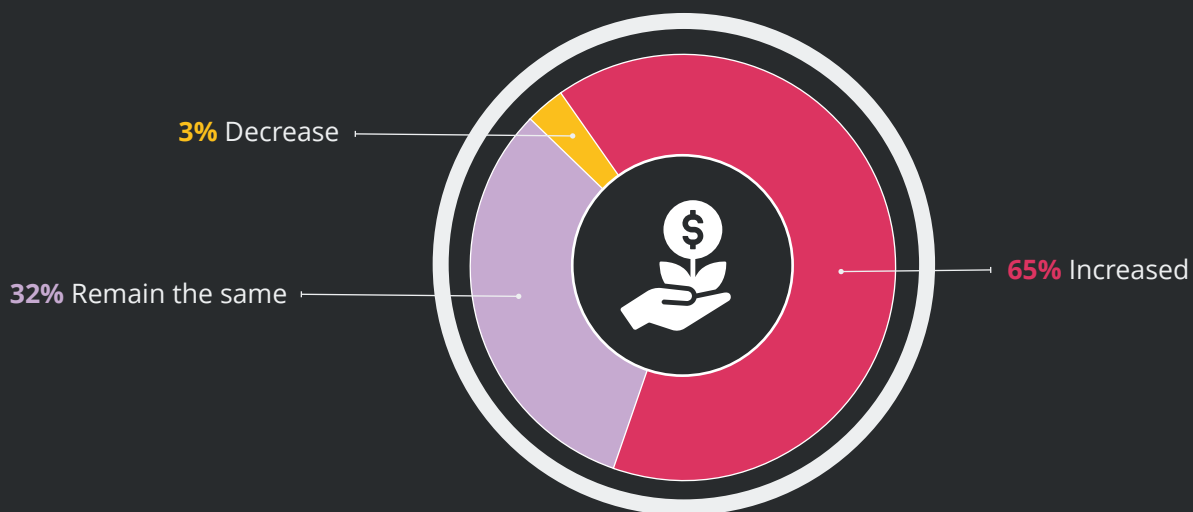
# CURRENT STATE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT:

## INCREASED INVESTMENT AND LOW CONFIDENCE



L&D is a critical priority for any company looking to gain competitive advantage and improve their employee experience. It sets the stage for the employee experience, allowing employees to improve their individual career paths and companies to reskill talent. Aptitude Research found that 67% of companies are increasing their investment in L&D and 58% of companies expect the size of their L&D function to increase in the next 12 months (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Investment in Learning and Development in 2024**



Yet not all this investment drives value, improves the employee experience, or provides the employee experience or provides systemic change. And the size of a L&D function is not always indicative of the value it provides. Aptitude Research found that less than half of companies are confident with their learning cultures. Too often, companies spend money on ad-hoc training programs or check the box on learning programs that do not align with employee expectations. Some common areas of investment include:

**1**

### **Training Programs:**

Companies often invest in training programs to upskill or reskill employees. This could involve in-person workshops, online courses, or a combination of both, covering topics such as technical skills, soft skills, leadership development, and industry-specific knowledge.

**2**

### **Technology and Learning Platforms:**

Investment in learning technologies and platforms is crucial for delivering and managing training efficiently. This includes Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual classrooms, e-learning platforms, and other digital tools that facilitate learning.

**3**

### **On-the-Job Learning Opportunities:**

Companies may invest in creating an environment that encourages continuous learning on the job. This could involve mentorship programs, job rotations, cross-functional projects, and other experiential learning opportunities.

**4**

### **Leadership Development:**

Developing leadership skills is often a key focus area for L&D investment. Leadership development programs may include coaching, workshops, and other initiatives to cultivate effective and adaptive leaders within the organization.

**5**

### **Professional Certifications:**

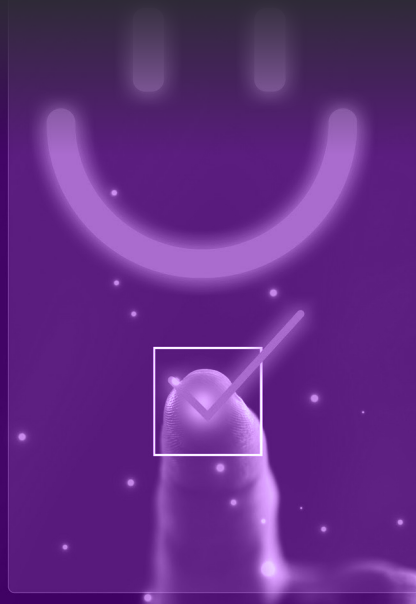
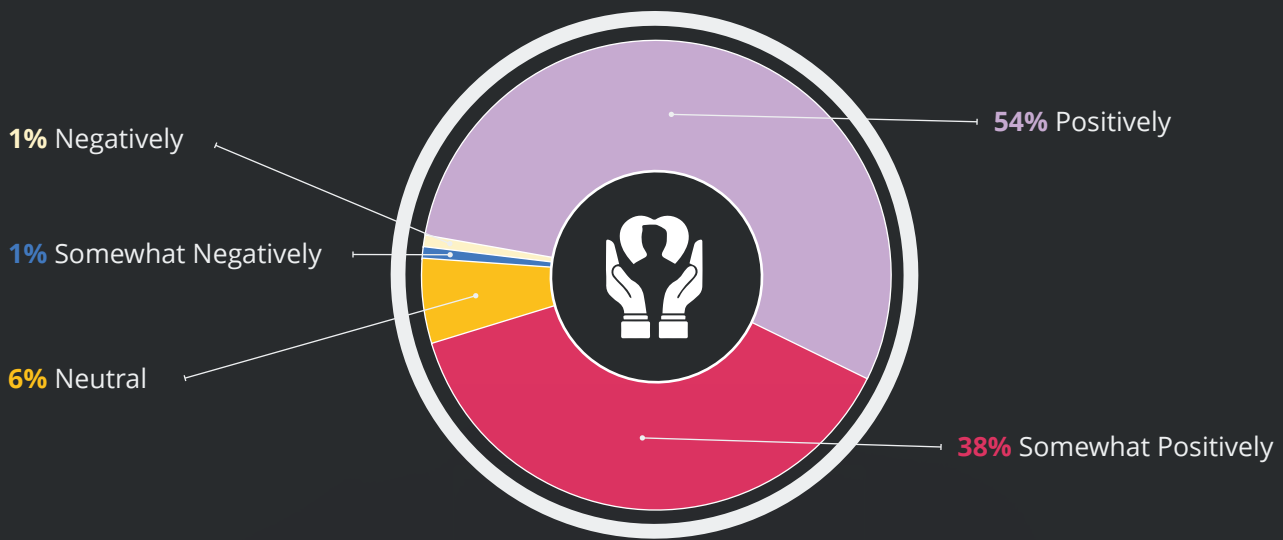
Supporting employees in obtaining relevant certifications can be a significant part of L&D.

These investments are often reactionary and address a one-time challenge but do not always drive real change in an organization. As a result, one in four companies believe their spending on learning and development is wasted. Traditional L&D investments often do not consider the employee experience or allow individuals the power to control their own learning paths. True change is not a short-term fix but a commitment to a continuous and collaborative learning culture.

# KEY DRIVERS FOR INVESTING IN A LEARNING CULTURE

An investment in a company's learning culture drives transformation. It goes beyond traditional training programs and embraces a mindset where learning is integrated into the foundation of the workplace and supported by leadership and embraced by employees. According to this study, 93% of companies believe a strong learning culture positively or somewhat positively impacts employee morale.

**Figure 2:** *Impact of Learning Culture on Employee Morale*





In a strong learning culture, employees are motivated to seek out new knowledge, acquire relevant skills, and apply them to improve both individual and organizational performance.

**Learning cultures have changed over the past few years and some of the key drivers for prioritizing learning cultures include:**

▶ **Continuous Learning:**

A commitment to ongoing education and skills development is ingrained in the organization's values. Learning is not viewed as a one-time event but as a continual process that adapts to changing circumstances.

▶ **Feedback and Reflection:**

A learning culture values feedback and encourages self-reflection. Employees are given constructive feedback on their performance, and they are encouraged to reflect on their experiences to identify areas for improvement. Eighty-two percent 82% of companies with a transformational learning culture state that employees can give feedback.

▶ **Alignment with Organizational Goals:**

Learning initiatives are aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. This ensures that the skills and knowledge acquired contribute directly to the success and competitiveness of the company.

▶ **Employee Development and Retention:**

Investing in learning cultivates a skilled and engaged workforce, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction, employee retention, and talent attraction. Employees are more likely to stay with companies that prioritize their professional growth and provide opportunities for skill development.

▶ **Innovation:**

Learning cultures encourage experimentation and creativity, driving innovation within organizations. Employees must be empowered to explore new ideas, approaches, and solutions, leading to breakthrough innovations that propel business growth and success.

▶ **Skills-Based Approach to Learning:**

Nearly three-quarters of companies (74%) are considering a skills-based approach to learning this year. The future of skills in learning and development is technology-enabled. Technology allows companies to scale their approach to skills, provide opportunities and personalization to every individual, and leverage AI and ML to draw deeper insights. Most importantly, it provides context to skills by inferring insights about the individual and employer.

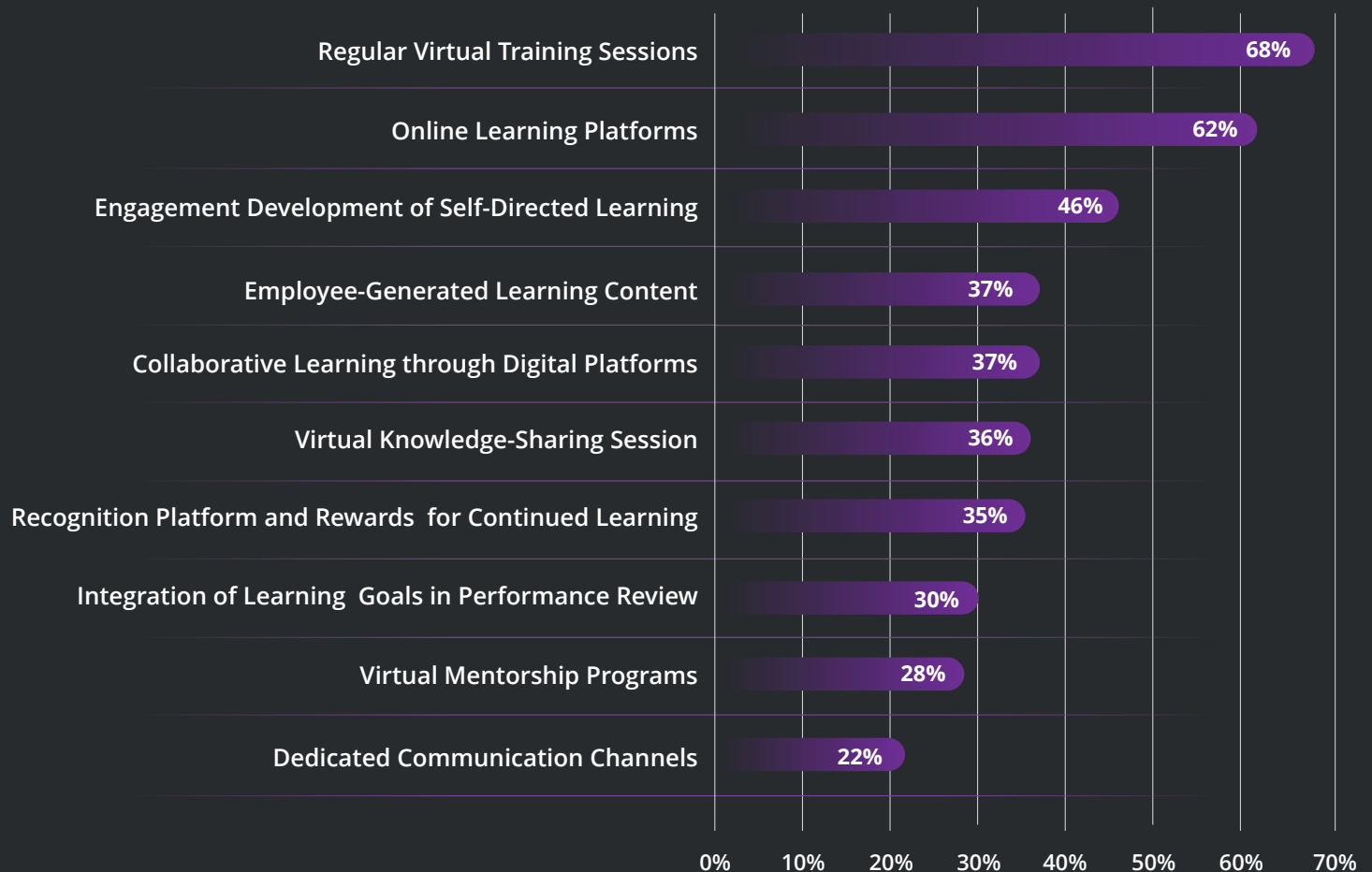


# TOP CHALLENGES WITH INVESTING IN A LEARNING CULTURE

Implementing an effective learning culture is critical, however several challenges often hinder the successful establishment of such a culture, impacting organizational performance.

**Remote and Hybrid Work Environments:** The rise of remote and hybrid work models presents significant challenges for implementing an effective learning culture. With dispersed teams and limited face-to-face interactions, fostering a sense of connection and engagement in learning initiatives becomes increasingly difficult. Employees may struggle to access learning resources, participate in training sessions, or engage in collaborative learning experiences, leading to reduced effectiveness and impact of learning programs. This study found that 56% of companies have remote or hybrid work models yet are not adapting their L&D strategies appropriately. When asked what companies are doing to support a remote workforce, over 50% conduct regular virtual training sessions and less than half support continuous learning, invest in collaborative learning through digital platforms, or provide self-directed learning opportunities (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** How Companies Support Remote and Hybrid Employees through Learning and Development Initiatives



**Low Engagement in Learning and Development:** Despite the recognized importance of learning and development (L&D), many employees exhibit low levels of engagement in these initiatives. Factors such as lack of time, relevance of training content, and limited support from leadership can contribute to disengagement with learning programs. On average, companies stated that less than one-third of employees participate in learning initiatives. Without active participation and buy-in from employees, organizations risk investing resources in initiatives that fail to deliver meaningful results or drive employee growth and development.

**Wasted Spend on L&D Programs:** One in four companies stated that they believe their L&D spend is wasted. Inefficient allocation of resources and ineffective program design often result in wasted spend on L&D initiatives. Organizations may invest in one-size-fits-all training programs that do not address the specific needs and skill gaps of their workforce. Additionally, a lack of measurement makes it challenging to assess the effectiveness and ROI of learning investments, leading to wasted resources and missed opportunities for improvement.

**The Need for Greater Inclusivity:** Ensuring inclusivity in learning initiatives remains a significant challenge for organizations striving to cultivate a diverse and equitable learning culture. Inclusive learning requires addressing barriers to participation, such as language, accessibility, and cultural differences, to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities for growth and development. Failure to prioritize inclusivity can result in marginalized groups being overlooked or excluded from valuable learning experiences, hindering their professional advancement, and contributing to a lack of diversity within the organization. When asked if learning programs are accessible to all employees, 47% of companies stated that it is not very accessible to all employees.

Addressing these challenges requires companies to look at their learning cultures, assess where they are, and take action to make changes. Organizations must prioritize inclusivity, actively engage employees in learning initiatives, leverage technology to support remote and hybrid work environments, and implement effective measurements. The next section of this report will look at how companies can overcome these challenges and mature in their approach to learning and invest in an effective, personalized, and inclusive learning culture.

Figure 4



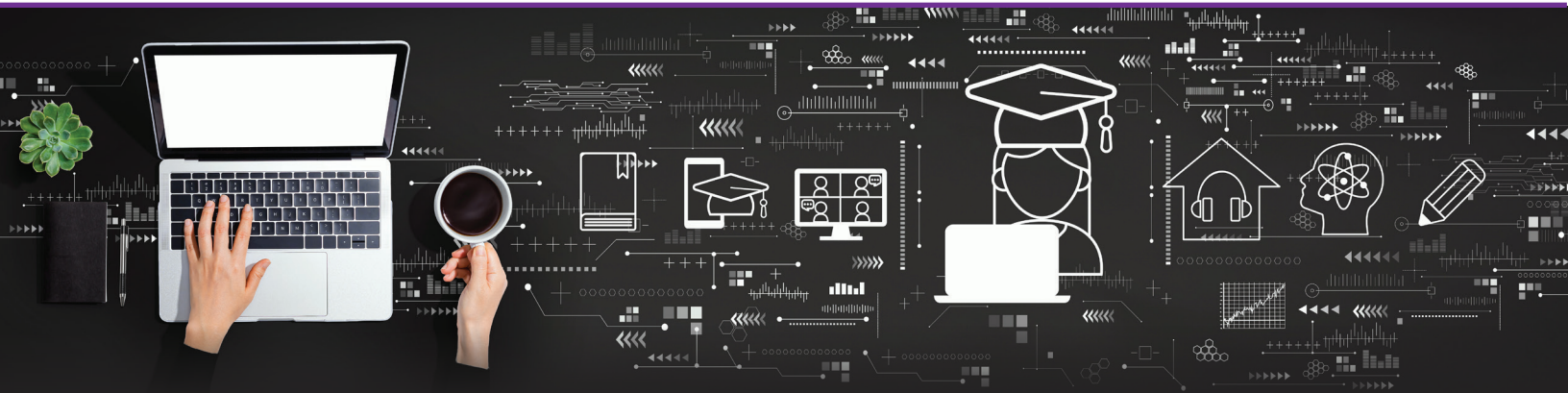
On average, companies stated that less than  
**1-in-3**  
employees participate in learning initiatives.



**1-in-4**  
companies stated that they believe their L&D spend is wasted



When asked if learning programs are accessible to all employees, only  
**47%**  
of companies stated that it is not very accessible to all employees.



## PRIORITIZING LEARNING PREFERENCES

In today's world, where over half of the global workforce is eligible for remote or hybrid work models, online learning has emerged as a highly favored strategy for corporations worldwide.

By leveraging online platforms and tools, companies can expand skills development, teach culture-building courses, and ensure compliance training across their diverse employee base. The digital approach can benefit workers who operate in various settings—in-office, on-site, or remotely, with access to digital devices like iPads or kiosks.

Despite its widespread adoption, online learning is not a panacea. Dubbed a “quick and dirty solution” because it gets the job done fast and cheap, it can fail to deliver on the promises of efficiency and effectiveness, leaving much to be desired in terms of outcomes, value, and the quality of the learning experience provided.

And while the concept of “learning styles” is no longer in vogue, the reality is that people learn differently. While online learning attempts to cater to a broad audience, it can fall short in personalizing the learning experience to meet individual needs. The one-size-fits-all approach neglects the nuanced preferences that can significantly impact a student's ability to absorb and retain information.

For instance, some learners benefit from visual aids and interactive content, while others may succeed in textual materials and self-paced study. The rigid framework of many online courses fails to adapt to these varying needs, leading to a disconnect between the employee and the material.

Online learning can also overlook the importance of social interaction in professional education. Learning is not just about gaining knowledge; it's about engaging, asking questions, and discussing. Lack of real-time interaction and feedback might hinder learning, making it difficult for the learner to ask questions and deepen understanding. This isolation is challenging for those who thrive in collaborative environments.

In addition, online learning is not naturally inclusive. Not all workers have equal access to the resources required for online learning, such as stable internet connections, computers, and quiet work environments where they can focus. Online learning fails to address these disparities, offering a solution that may not be as inclusive as it claims to be.

To truly benefit from online learning, we must develop personalized learning platforms that consider individual needs, promote inclusivity, and foster a sense of community among learners. Only then can we move towards a learning model that is not just quick and dirty but also thoughtful, inclusive, and effective at developing people for the workforce of the future.

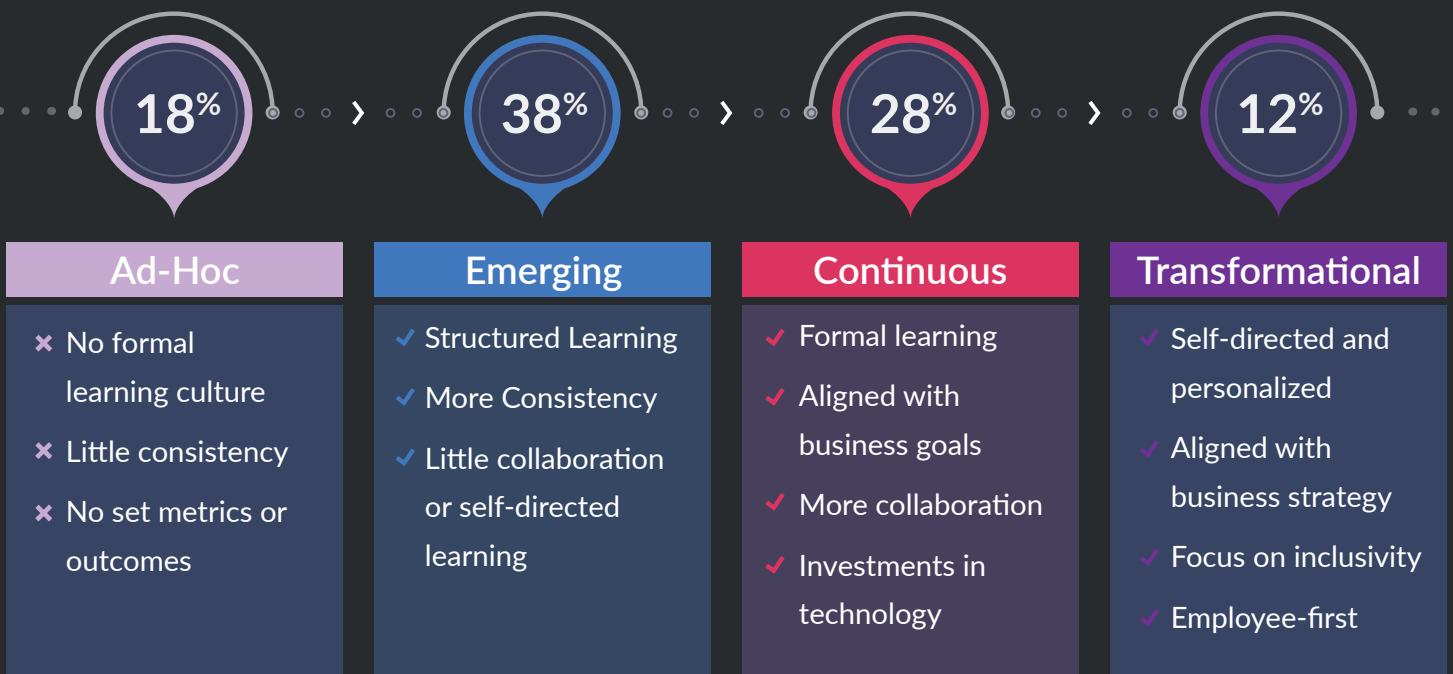
# INTRODUCING THE LEARNING CULTURE MATURITY MODEL

Learning has become increasingly complex. Companies face new pressures and new responsibilities to find, engage and retain the best talent, improve productivity, and address DEI, all while improving the employee experience. We know that this year presents many uncertainties, companies have a tremendous opportunity to drive change and build a truly impactful culture around learning.

Every company is at a different stage in its learning journey. Some companies are just getting started and making ad hoc decisions based on short-term needs, while other companies are strategically planning for their future where employees are empowered.

Aptitude Research developed the following maturity model to help companies understand their own process around learning cultures and the steps they need to take for a more strategic and optimized approach. This maturity model includes four stages: Ad Hoc, Emerging, Continuous, and Transformational (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** Learning Culture Maturity Model



Currently, 18% of companies surveyed have an ad hoc learning culture. As these companies consider their priorities over the next year, they must consider what steps are required to mature.

Each stage is defined by five different characteristics:



### Leadership Support:

Leaders play a crucial role in promoting a learning culture. When leaders actively participate in and advocate for learning initiatives, it signals the importance of continuous improvement throughout the organization.



### Personalization:

Learning is not a one size fits all approach. Learning should be self-directed so that employees can control their learning journeys and determine what they need in terms of resources and time.



### Investment in Technology:

Learning resources, tools, and opportunities are readily available to employees. This can include training programs, mentorship, online courses, and other platforms that facilitate knowledge acquisition.



### Collaboration:

Learning cultures require greater collaboration and communication across the organization including senior leaders, mentors, and peers



### Inclusivity:

Inclusive learning environments recognize and celebrate diversity. They ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to all employees, regardless of their background, and create a sense of belonging.

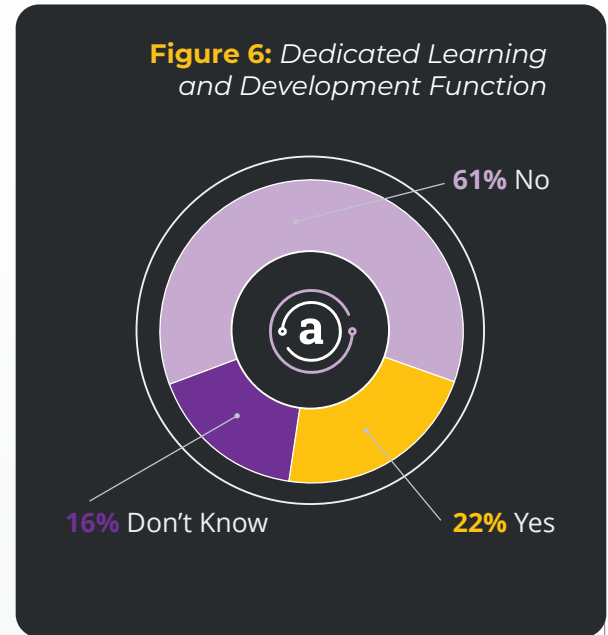
## Stage 1 Ad Hoc Learning Culture



### Strategy and Alignment:

An ad hoc learning culture refers to a sporadic approach to learning and development within an organization. Learning opportunities are not systematically planned or structured but occur on an irregular or unplanned basis. This culture lacks consistency, accessibility, and alignment with the company's values and goals. It may involve informal training sessions, limited access to learning resources, or a lack of clear direction and support for employee development. Only 22% of companies at this stage have a dedicated L&D function (see Figure 6).

The strategy of an ad hoc learning culture is a reactive rather than a proactive approach to employee development. Organizations may respond to immediate needs or challenges as they arise, without considering the long-term implications or ensuring that learning initiatives are available to all employees. Personalization is often absent, as learning opportunities are not tailored to individual needs, preferences, or career development.



### Leadership Support:

Companies at this stage report that only one in three leaders actively support the learning culture within their organization. Leaders may overlook the strategic importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning, supporting instead reactive approaches to employee development. Without dedicated support and direction from leadership, ad hoc learning cultures lack the necessary structure, resources, and alignment with company goals to thrive.



## Personalization:

Incorporating personalization into learning strategies should extend beyond tailored experiences to include various forms of support, including dedicated learning time, stipends for individualized needs, and financial assistance. Only 15% of organizations actively personalize learning journeys at this stage. Along with tailored experiences, companies should ensure that employees have dedicated time for learning activities, with only 28% providing such opportunities. However, half of these companies offer less than one hour. Additionally, providing stipends or support allows employees to invest in resources that align with their learning goals, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment in their development journey. By embracing this comprehensive approach to personalization, organizations can better cater to the unique needs of their workforce, ultimately driving engagement, productivity, and retention.



## Collaboration:

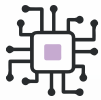
Only 13% invest in collaborative learning through a digital platform and only 14% have a dedicated communication channel at this stage. Companies that adopt an ad hoc approach to learning often experience significant challenges in encouraging collaboration among employees. The lack of a structured learning framework results in disjointed knowledge sharing and limited opportunities for collaborative learning experiences. Employees may struggle to access relevant resources, share expertise, or engage in meaningful discussions around shared goals or projects. This fragmented approach not only hurts the development of a collaborative culture but also undermines teamwork, innovation, and organizational effectiveness.



## Inclusivity:

Inclusive ad hoc learning programs are crucial for fostering a supportive and equitable learning environment within organizations. However, only 28% of companies at this stage ensure accessibility to all employees, highlighting a significant gap in inclusivity. Without accessible learning opportunities, certain segments of the workforce may be excluded from valuable developmental experiences, hurting their professional growth and overall engagement. Ad hoc learning programs should prioritize accessibility by removing barriers to participation, such as language barriers, technological limitations, or geographical constraints. By embracing inclusivity and ensuring that learning initiatives are accessible to all employees, organizations can engage a diverse talent pool, driving innovation, collaboration, and organizational success.

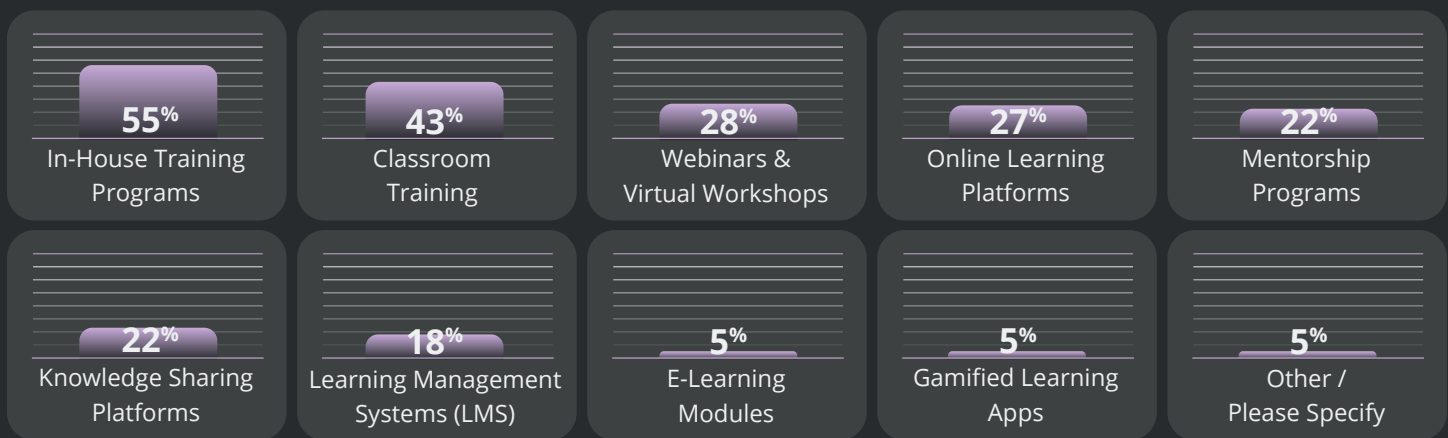




## Technology:

Companies with ad hoc learning cultures often rely on disparate technologies to deliver learning content in an unstructured way. These technologies may include basic Learning Management Systems (LMS) for hosting online courses, webinars or video conferencing tools for virtual training sessions, and traditional classroom training. Nearly 60% of companies stated that they are using in-house training programs (see Figure 7). While these tools may serve immediate needs, they lack integration and coherence, leading to fragmented learning experiences. Additionally, without a strategic approach to technology selection and implementation, companies may struggle to track learning progress, personalize content, or ensure accessibility for all employees.

**Figure 7:** Investment in Technology for Ad Hoc Learning Programs



## Key Recommendations for Improvement

An ad hoc learning culture can result in missed opportunities for employee growth and organizational success. To address this, organizations need to shift towards a more deliberate and strategic approach to learning and development, one that is inclusive, aligned with company values, and personalized to meet the diverse needs of their workforce. This involves establishing clear learning objectives, providing accessible and equitable access to resources, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

- ✓ **Establish Clear Learning Objectives:** Define specific learning goals and objectives that align with the company's overall strategy and values.
- ✓ **Invest in Results-Driven Learning Infrastructure:** Allocate resources towards building a robust learning infrastructure, including technology platforms, resources, and support systems, to facilitate accessible and effective learning experiences for all employees.
- ✓ **Align Learning with Company Values:** Integrate learning initiatives with the organization's core values, mission, and strategic objectives. Ensure that learning efforts contribute to driving business success and achieving long-term goals.
- ✓ **Promote Inclusivity:** Ensure that learning opportunities are available to all employees, regardless of their role, level, or location within the organization. Implement inclusive practices that address diverse learning needs and preferences.

## Stage 2 Emerging Learning Cultures



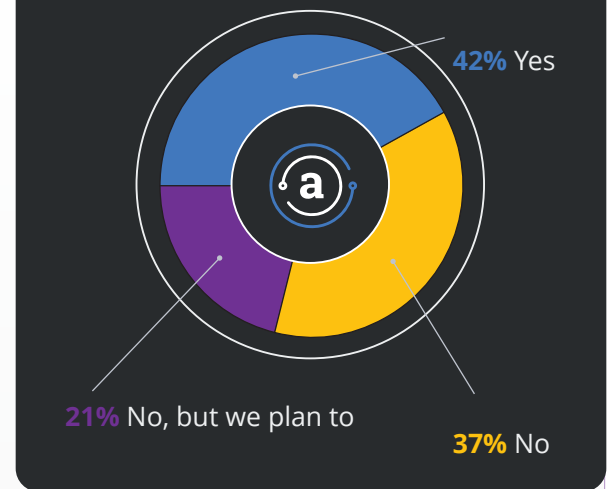
### Definition and Strategy:

An emerging learning culture within a company is a recognition of the need for continuous learning and growth yet acknowledges that the company is still in the process of fully realizing this vision. The strategy of the emerging learning culture revolves around fostering a mindset shift towards prioritizing learning as an ongoing journey. While the company may not have fully established the infrastructure or practices to support continuous learning, it is actively taking steps to cultivate a culture where learning is valued and encouraged. This strategy involves promoting awareness and buy-in among employees about the importance of continuous development, as well as exploring initiatives and resources to facilitate learning opportunities that will promote greater engagement.

Forty two percent (42%) of companies at this stage have a dedicated learning and development function (see Figure 8).

While these organizations understand the importance of ongoing development for their own growth and success, they are also realizing the significance of empowering employees to take ownership of their learning journeys. This shift would require that employees are actively encouraged and supported to pursue learning opportunities that align with their individual aspirations and career goals. It involves creating an environment where employees feel empowered to seek out knowledge, acquire new skills, and drive their own professional development. By placing a greater emphasis on empowering employees in their learning endeavors, these companies can cultivate a more engaged, motivated, and adaptable workforce poised for long-term success.

**Figure 8:** Companies with a Dedicated Learning and Development Function



### Leadership Support:

Despite having leadership support and fostering emerging learning cultures, many companies still struggle to obtain the necessary support for their initiatives. While top-level endorsement is crucial for driving change and innovation, it often requires sustained commitment and alignment across all levels of the organization. In some cases, competing priorities, resource constraints, or cultural resistance may hinder the implementation of learning initiatives, despite leadership backing.



## Personalization:

Incorporating personalization into learning strategies should extend beyond tailored experiences to encompass various forms of support, including dedicated learning time, stipends for individualized needs, and financial assistance. Currently, only 28% of organizations actively personalize learning journeys, a statistic that underscores the need for a broader understanding of personalization. More than half of companies (52%) of companies ensure that employees have dedicated time for learning activities. However, half of these companies offer less than four hours a month. Providing stipends or financial aid enables employees to invest in resources that align with their learning goals, creating a sense of ownership and empowerment in their development journey. By embracing this comprehensive approach to personalization, organizations can better cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of their workforce, ultimately driving engagement, productivity, and retention.



## Collaboration:

Only 24% of companies at this stage invest in collaborative learning through a digital platform and only 18% have a dedicated communication channel. Companies that are emerging must carefully consider communication and collaboration. The lack of a structured learning framework results in disjointed knowledge sharing and limited opportunities for collaborative learning experiences. Without cohesive learning initiatives in place, employees may struggle to access relevant resources, share expertise, or engage in meaningful discussions around shared goals or projects. As a result, companies may fail to leverage the skills of their collective workforce and build meaningful relationships.



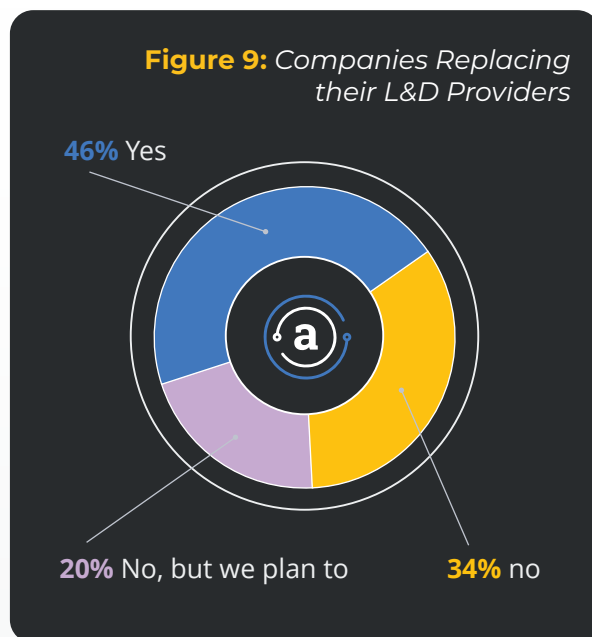
## Inclusivity:

For companies cultivating emerging learning cultures, inclusivity is paramount to fostering a thriving and equitable environment. By embracing diversity in perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds, organizations can enrich collaborative learning experiences and promote innovation. Cultivating an inclusive learning culture involves creating spaces where all voices are valued and respected, providing accessible learning opportunities that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, and actively addressing barriers to participation. Through intentional efforts to prioritize inclusivity, companies can cultivate a culture of belonging where every individual feels empowered to contribute, learn, and grow.



## Technology:

Companies with emerging learning cultures are beginning to recognize the potential of technology in revolutionizing their approach to employee development and knowledge sharing. However, there is a realization that more innovation, collaboration, and personalization are needed at this stages. While they have taken initial steps by embracing digital platforms like learning management systems (LMS) and online collaboration tools, these organizations acknowledge that they still have a long way to go. One in two companies at this stage state that their LMS is a primary tool for L&D and one in three companies are looking to replace their provider (see Figure 9). There is a growing understanding that technology can enable more accessible, interactive, and personalized learning experiences for employees, empowering them to drive their own development and adapt to changing business needs. By continuing to invest in technological advancements and fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, companies with emerging learning cultures aim to create more change.

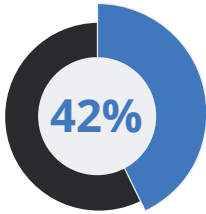


## Key Recommendations to Mature

An emerging learning culture can be an opportunity for companies to make significant changes. To address this, organizations need to shift towards a more deliberate and strategic approach to learning and development, one that is inclusive, aligned with company values, and personalized to meet the diverse needs of their workforce. This involves establishing clear learning objectives, providing accessible and equitable access to resources, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

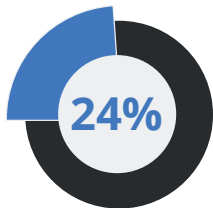
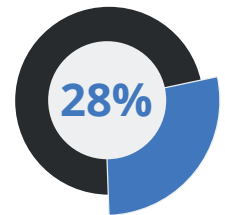
- ✔ **Foster a Culture of Continuous Learning:** Encourage a mindset of continuous learning and improvement among employees by providing ongoing support, recognition, and incentives for participation in learning activities.
- ✔ **Personalize Learning Experiences:** Tailor learning initiatives to individual employee needs, preferences, and career aspirations. Provide opportunities for self-directed learning and professional development planning.
- ✔ **Provide Leadership Support:** Engage leadership in championing learning and development initiatives, demonstrating commitment and providing resources to support employee growth and skill development.
- ✔ **Evaluate Success:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of learning programs and initiatives through feedback mechanisms, metrics, and performance evaluations. Use data-driven insights to identify areas for improvement and refine learning strategies accordingly.
- ✔ **Encourage Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate opportunities for employees to share knowledge, skills, and best practices through collaboration, mentorship, and peer learning initiatives.
- ✔ **Embrace Innovation:** Embrace innovative approaches to learning and development to enhance engagement and effectiveness of learning experiences.

## Emerging Learning Cultures



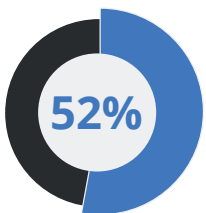
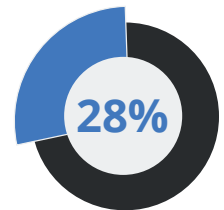
Forty-two percent (42%) of companies at this stage have a dedicated learning and development function (see Figure 8).

Only 28% of organizations actively personalize learning journeys, a statistic that underscores the need for a broader understanding of personalization.



Only 24% of companies at this stage invest in collaborative learning through a digital platform and only 18% have a dedicated communication channel. Companies that are emerging must carefully consider communication and collaboration.

Aptitude Research found that only 28% of companies ensure accessibility to all employees at this stage, highlighting a significant gap in inclusivity. Without accessible learning opportunities, certain segments of the workforce may be marginalized or excluded from valuable developmental experiences.

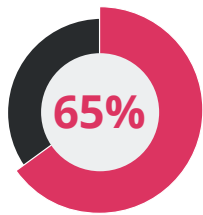


52% of companies ensure that employees have dedicated time for learning activities. However, half of these companies offer less than four hours a month.

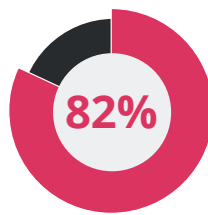
## Stage 3 Continuous Learning

At this stage, organizations are accelerating their journey towards a fully realized continuous learning culture. They acknowledge the importance of continuous learning and growth while actively working to embed this mindset throughout the company. The strategy in this stage revolves around deepening the commitment to learning as a fundamental aspect of company culture. Despite not yet having all the necessary infrastructure or practices in place, these organizations are actively taking steps to cultivate an environment where learning is valued and encouraged.

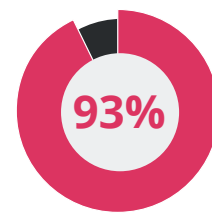
Organizations with continuous learning cultures are shifting towards empowering employees to take ownership of their learning journeys. This involves creating an environment where employees feel encouraged and supported to pursue learning opportunities that align with their career goals. Employees are more engaged and supported in this environment. At this level, organizations do the following:



**65% state that learning is accessible to all employees**



**82% give employees dedicated learning time**



**93% allow employees to give feedback on learning initiatives**



### Leadership Support:

Sixty percent (60%) of leaders actively support the learning culture within these organizations. However, there is a recognition that leadership support is crucial for the success of continuous learning initiatives. Additionally, 78% state that they are very effective or effective at communicating about their learning cultures.



## Personalization:

Over half of organizations actively personalize learning journeys, and there is a growing understanding of the importance of tailoring learning experiences to individual needs. Providing dedicated learning time, stipends, or financial assistance enables employees to invest in resources that align with their learning goals, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment in their development journey. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of companies at this level provide a stipend to employees



## Collaboration:

Investing in collaborative learning through digital platforms and dedicated communication channels is a priority for organizations in this stage. By facilitating knowledge sharing and creating opportunities for collaborative learning experiences, companies can leverage the collective skills of their workforce and build meaningful relationships.



## Inclusivity:

Inclusivity is crucial for fostering a supportive and equitable learning environment. However, 65% of companies at this level provide programs that are accessible to all employees. Embracing inclusivity and ensuring that learning initiatives are accessible to all employees can improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization. Companies with continuous learning also encourage and support individual learning preferences.







## Technology:

For companies committed to continuous learning cultures, technology adoption is a strategic imperative to facilitate ongoing skill development and knowledge sharing. Embracing innovative learning technologies enables organizations to offer diverse and accessible learning experiences tailored to individual needs. Companies can empower employees to engage in self-directed learning anytime, anywhere. Furthermore, embracing emerging technologies such as AI-powered personalized learning pathways and virtual reality simulations enhances the effectiveness and relevance of learning initiatives, driving continuous improvement.

## Key Recommendations to Mature

Embracing a culture of continuous learning presents a unique chance for companies to enact meaningful transformations. To seize this opportunity, organizations must transition to a purposeful and strategic learning and development framework—one that embraces inclusivity, aligns with company ethos, and tailors experiences to cater to the varied needs of their employees. This entails setting transparent learning goals, ensuring all employees have fair and accessible access to learning resources, and nurturing an environment that thrives on constant growth and refinement.

- 
**Embed Learning into Daily Operations:**  
 Make learning an inherent part of employees' daily tasks and workflows.
- 
**Promote Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration:**  
 Establish platforms for cross-functional collaboration and recognize contributions to knowledge sharing.
- 
**Empower Employee-Driven Learning:**  
 Provide resources and autonomy for employees to pursue personalized learning goals.
- 
**Leverage Technology for Learning Accessibility:**  
 Invest in user-friendly learning technologies accessible across devices.
- 
**Align Learning with Organizational Goals:**  
 Ensure learning initiatives are directly tied to strategic business objectives and KPIs.
- 
**Cultivate a Growth Mindset and Learning Culture:**  
 Encourage a culture of curiosity, experimentation, and resilience from leadership down.



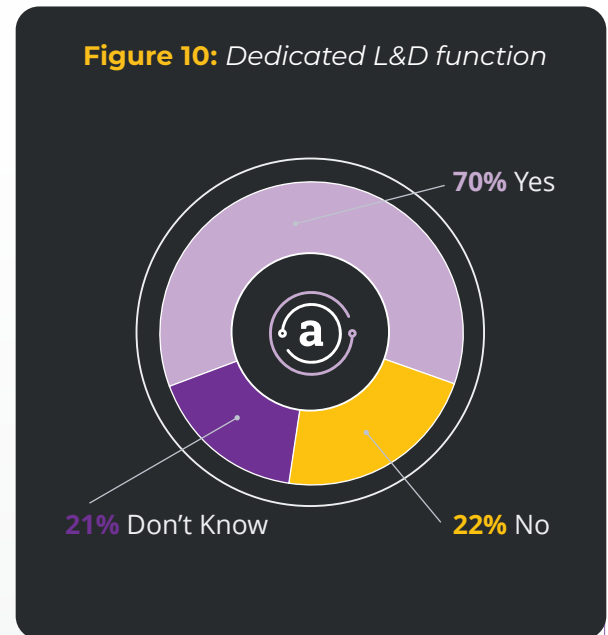
## Stage 4 Transformational Learning



### Definition and Strategy:

A transformational learning culture company strategically empowers employees while aligning learning initiatives with overarching business goals. At the heart of this culture lies a commitment to personalized learning journeys that meet individual needs, preferences, and career aspirations. With AI-driven insights and pathways, employees are guided on self-directed learning paths, fostering autonomy and ownership over their development. Moreover, these companies provide dedicated time and resources for employees to engage in learning activities, emphasizing the importance of continuous growth and adaptation. By linking learning with organizational objectives, a transformational learning culture cultivates a workforce that is not only highly skilled but also aligned and agile. Seventy percent (70%) of companies at this stage have a dedicated learning and development function (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10:** Dedicated L&D function



### Leadership Support:

Aligned with the business strategy, transformational learning is not a separate entity but an integral part of organizational goals. Learning initiatives are designed to directly support the company's objectives, ensuring that acquired skills contribute to improved performance and the achievement of strategic milestones. This alignment enhances the relevance and impact of learning efforts on the overall success of the organization. More than three-quarter of companies (76%) of companies at this stage stated that the learning culture is regularly updated to align with business goals.



## Personalization:

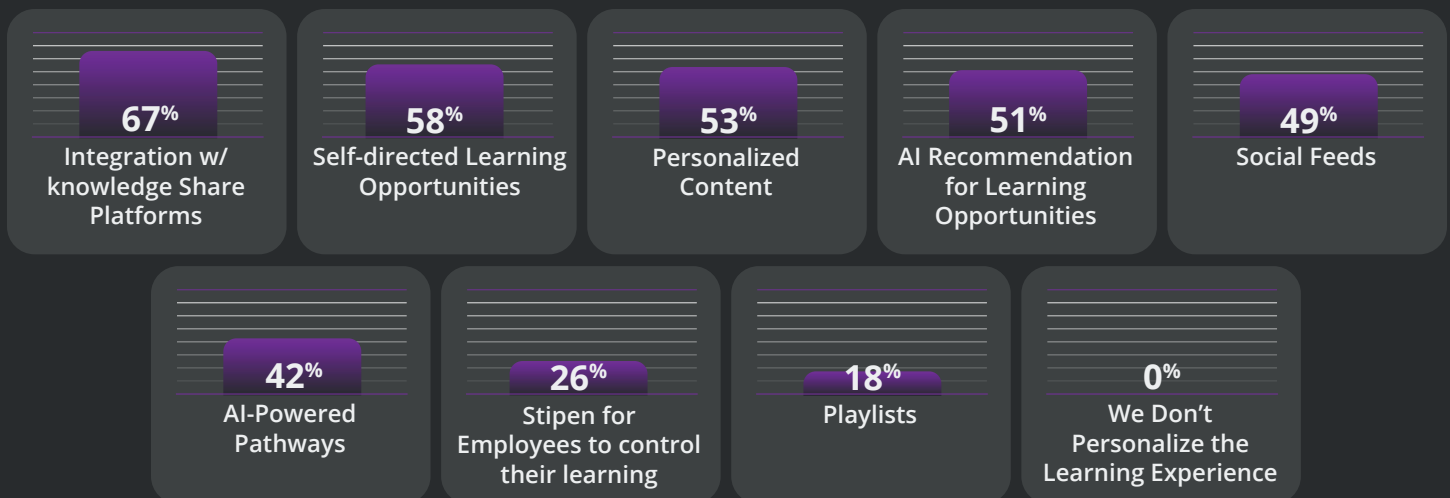
In a transformational learning environment, individuals take charge of their own development through self-directed initiatives. This approach empowers employees to identify their learning needs, set goals, and actively seek opportunities for skill enhancement. Self-directed learning fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to a more motivated and adaptable workforce. Eighty-seven percent (87%) give dedicated learning time to employees and over 50% give more than 10 hours a month. Additionally, companies are using personalized content, self-directed learning opportunities, and AI more frequently than their peers (See Figure 11).



## Collaboration:

Teams work together to share insights, knowledge, and best practices. Collaborative learning experiences, such as workshops, team projects, and cross-functional initiatives, enable the collective intelligence of the organization to flourish.

**Figure 11:** How Companies Are Personalizing the Learning Culture



## Inclusivity:

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of transformational learning, ensuring that learning opportunities are accessible to all individuals within the organization. Regardless of background, role, or level, everyone is encouraged to participate and contribute to the learning culture. Inclusive learning environments celebrate diversity, recognizing the value of varied perspectives and experiences in driving innovation and problem-solving.

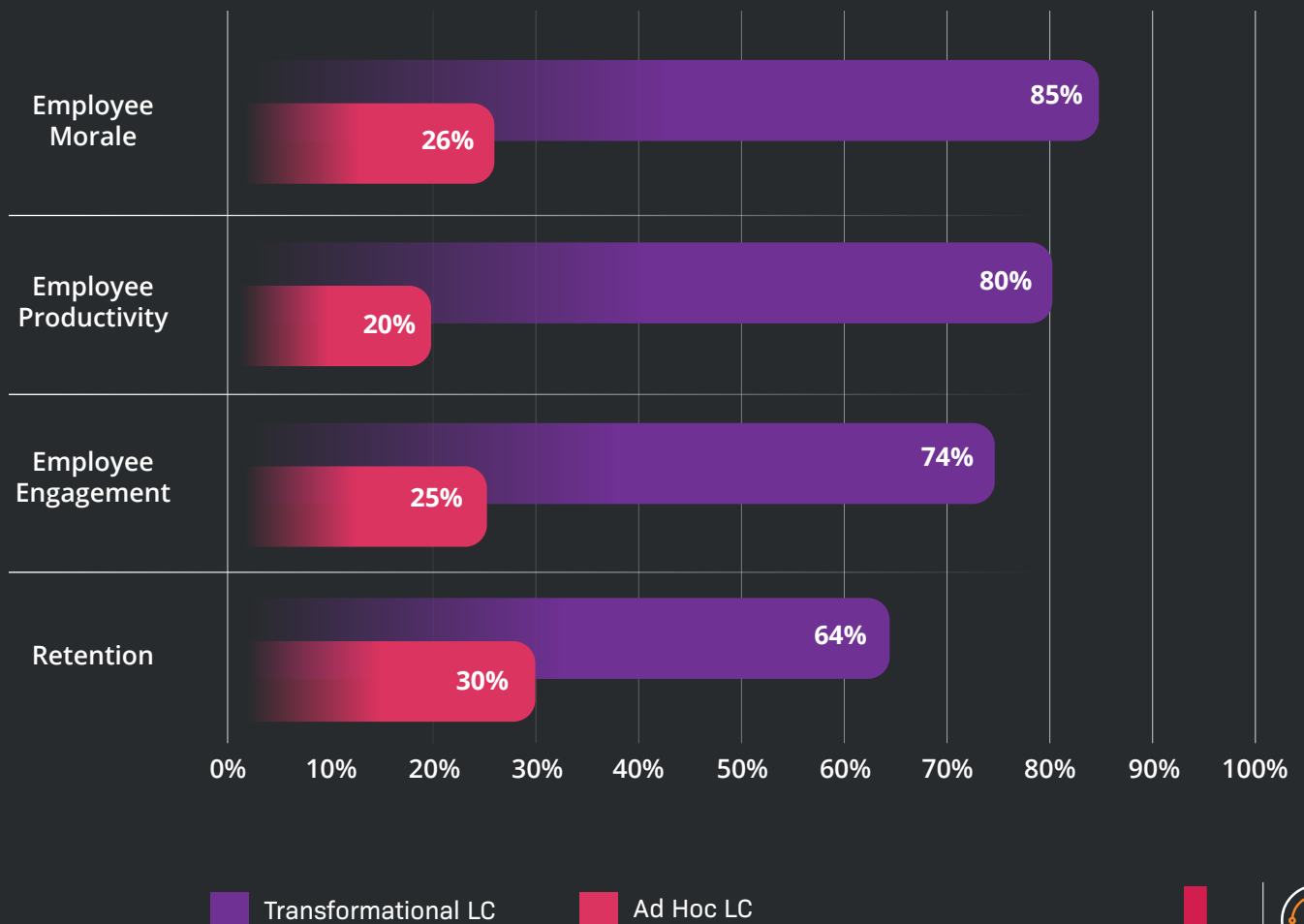


## Technology:

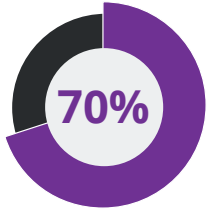
Sixty-seven percent (67%) of transformational companies have incorporated AI into their learning strategies to offer personalized experiences. AI algorithms analyze vast amounts of data, including employee skills, preferences, and performance, to generate personalized learning recommendations. By leveraging AI-driven insights, organizations can curate customized learning pathways tailored to each employee's unique needs, interests, and career goals. Furthermore, 42% of these transformational companies utilize AI pathways, where AI dynamically adjusts learning content and recommendations based on real-time feedback and performance data. This dynamic approach ensures that learning experiences remain relevant and adaptive, fostering continuous skill development and engagement among employees.

Companies at this stage are seeing significant benefits to employee engagement, morale, productivity, and performance compared to their peers with more immature learning cultures (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Business Impact of Transformational Culture

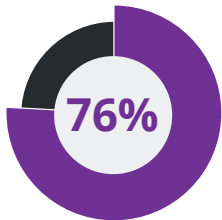
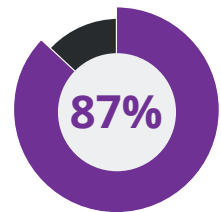


## Transformational Learning



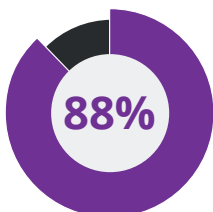
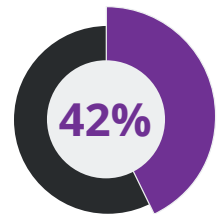
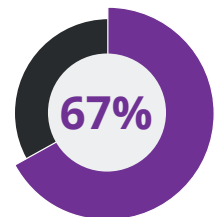
**70% of companies at this stage have a dedicated learning and development function** (see Figure 10).

Self-directed learning fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to a more motivated and adaptable workforce. **Eighty-seven percent (87%) give dedicated learning time to employees** and over 50% give more than 10 hours a month.



**76% of companies at this stage stated that the learning culture is regularly updated to align with business goals.**

**Sixty-seven percent (67%) of transformational companies have incorporated AI into their learning strategies to offer personalized experiences.** AI algorithms analyze vast amounts of data, including employee skills, preferences, and performance, to generate personalized learning recommendations. By leveraging AI-driven insights, organizations can curate customized learning pathways tailored to each employee's unique needs, interests, and career goals. Furthermore, **42% of these transformational companies utilize AI pathways, where AI dynamically adjusts learning content and recommendations based on real-time feedback and performance data.** This dynamic approach ensures that learning experiences remain relevant and adaptive, fostering continuous skill development and engagement among employees.



**This study found that 88% of transformational companies give dedicated learning time to employees.**

# Transforming the Learning Culture at Flutter UKI:



## Introduction:

Flutter's commitment to empowering employees through an inclusive learning culture has yielded remarkable results. This case study explores the transformative outcomes, including improved participation and engagement, a significant boost in employee engagement scores, and the establishment of a self-directed and continuous learning culture that has gained attention from senior leadership, particularly in relation to the Learnerbly platform.

Flutter is the world's leading online sports betting and iGaming operator. The Group consists of a diverse portfolio of leading recreational brands and products with a broad global reach. They operate some of the world's most innovative, diverse and distinctive online sports betting and iGaming brands such as FanDuel, Sky Betting & Gaming, Sportsbet, PokerStars, Paddy Power, Sisal, Tombola, Betfair, MaxBet, Jungle Games and Adjarabet.

In 2021 the UK and Ireland division was formed of some of the most popular betting and gaming brands in the market. These mega brands are Sky Betting and Gaming, Betfair, Paddy Power and tombola. Amidst the challenges of consolidating different businesses, learning approaches and technological frameworks, Flutter UKI recognized the need for a continuous and self-directed learning culture.

Flutter aims to instigate positive change within the sector through its Positive Impact Plan. The plan revolves around four key pillars – Do More, Play Well, Go Zero, and Work Better. These pillars are designed to foster an inclusive and empowering environment for Flutter's colleagues. As part of the Work Better pillar, Flutter is empowering colleagues to connect, collaborate, and learn together, and is dedicated to creating a workplace that prioritises continuous learning and development.

As part of this commitment, the company introduced a well-utilised learning fund, allowing employees to invest up to £1000/euros in relevant learning opportunities. Due to its remarkable success, this initiative was extended to other parts of the business, reflecting the company's endeavor to establish a holistic and inclusive approach to learning that empowers colleagues to take control of their learning journeys.



## The Strategy:

Flutter UKI consolidated systems to include one LMS, Udemy, and Learnerbly. The goal was to create more consistency that included a shift from traditional models to a more self-directed model. Through Learnerbly, colleagues would all get a stipend to control their learning journeys and have opportunities to connect with peers and direct their own learning paths.



## The Results:

In six months of using Learnerbly, Flutter UKI noticed the following results.

### ⤴ **Proactive Learning Advocacy:**

With employees actively advocating for their own development plans, there has been a noticeable increase in participation and engagement. Individuals are not only participating in learning opportunities but are also taking the initiative to explore and pursue a diverse range of developmental activities. Flutter observed significant improvements in employee participation in this program because of Learnerbly's ease of use and self-directed style. This participation and excitement around the learning culture also helped to improve employee engagement in the LMS and Udemy.

### ⤴ **Dynamic Learning Atmosphere:**

The learner-led approach has fostered a dynamic learning atmosphere at Flutter. Colleagues are not merely consumers of learning resources; they are contributors, bringing diverse perspectives and insights to the organization's continuous learning landscape.

### ⤴ **Significant Boost in Employee Engagement Scores:**

The introduction of learner advocacy and inclusive learning practices looks to be driving improvement in employee engagement scores with questions focused specifically around growth and career development.

### ⤴ **Alignment with Professional Growth:**

The increased engagement scores indicate a strong alignment between the organization's focus on learning and development and colleagues' ' perceptions of professional growth opportunities. The intentional efforts to empower learners have resonated positively, contributing to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

### **Inclusive and Empowering Learning Environment:**

Flutter's commitment to inclusivity and self-directed learning has created an environment where every employee feels empowered to engage in their unique learning journey. The organization's learning culture is marked by flexibility, adaptability, and a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

### **Cultural Transformation:**

The establishment of a self-directed and continuous learning culture signifies a cultural transformation at Flutter. Learning is not perceived as a one-time event but as an ongoing, integral aspect of the organization's ethos. This cultural shift aligns with the rapidly evolving needs of the workforce and the industry.

### **Top-Down Enthusiasm:**








The CEO's active involvement and excitement for Learnerbly have set a tone of top-down enthusiasm for learning within the organization. This leadership endorsement signals the strategic importance placed on the platform and the belief in its ability to contribute significantly to employee development.



## **Conclusion:**

Flutter UKI's journey towards learner advocacy, inclusive learning, and the strategic embrace of platforms like Learnerbly has resulted in transformative outcomes. From improved engagement scores to the establishment of a self-directed and continuous learning culture, the organization stands as a beacon of innovation and commitment to the professional growth of its workforce. The CEO's involvement and excitement underscore the strategic importance placed on these initiatives, positioning Flutter for continued success in the competitive landscape of the betting and gaming industry.

# Closer Look at Maturity Levels

	Stage 1 Ad Hoc	Stage 2 Emerging	Stage 3 Continuous	Stage 4 Transformational
 <b>Definition &amp; Strategy</b>	Companies are reactive and responsive with short-term goals	Companies are striving for continuous learning and recognize the shift that needs to happen from employer-led to employee-led	Companies are providing a continuous learning environment where learning is self-directed and employees have a better experience	Companies have clearly aligned with business goals, committed to self-directed and personalized learning and are investing in innovative and transformational solutions
 <b>Leadership Support</b>	Limited	Emerging	Strong	Aligned
 <b>Empowerment/ Self-Directed</b>	Learning is not personalized	Learning is not yet personalized	Learning is self-directed	Learning is self-directed and personalized
 <b>Inclusivity</b>	Learning is not inclusive or accessible to all employees	Learning is not yet inclusive or accessible to all employees	Learning is inclusive and accessible to all employees	Learning is inclusive and accessible to all employees
 <b>Collaboration</b>	Employees do not collaborate	Collaboration is just starting	Collaboration is encouraged	Collaboration is critical
 <b>Technology</b>	Traditional training programs, classroom learning, online learning	LMS systems, disparate solutions, training sessions, desire to replace technology	Personalized experiences, consolidating learning technology, focus on innovation	Personalized experiences, AI-driven personalized learning journeys, Investment in ROI and innovation
 <b>Outcomes</b>	Time to complete, Employee participation	Time to complete, employee participation, course feedback, skill acquisition	Time to complete, employee participation and engagement, retention, employee experience, employee feedback, productivity, performance	Time to complete, employee participation and engagement, retention, employee experience, employee feedback, productivity, performance, dei



# THREE SHIFTS FOR TRANSFORM A LEARNING CULTURE

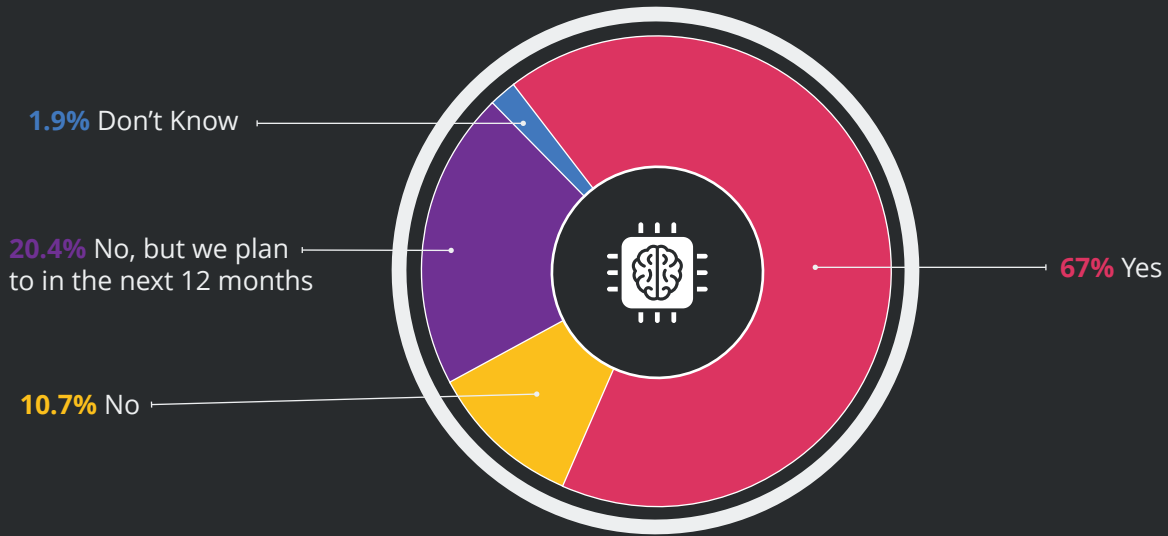


Companies aspiring to mature their learning cultures must undergo a transformative shift towards an employee-centric approach, leveraging innovative strategies to empower their workforce. Firstly, they need to reimagine their approach to technology and embrace AI to guide personalized learning journeys. By harnessing AI algorithms and machine learning capabilities, organizations can offer tailored recommendations and curated learning paths that align with individual employee needs and career aspirations. Secondly, providing stipends to support employees in managing their own learning journeys is essential. These stipends enable employees to invest in relevant courses, resources, or certifications that align with their professional growth, fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy over their development. Finally, companies must reevaluate the amount of time allocated to learning activities, recognizing its critical role in facilitating continuous skill development and innovation. By prioritizing dedicated learning time and creating a culture that values continuous learning, organizations can cultivate a workforce that is agile and able to thrive.

## Shifts in **Technology**:

On the path to transforming their learning cultures, companies are increasingly embracing AI to personalize learning journeys for their employees. According to this study, 67% of transformational companies have incorporated AI into their learning strategies to offer personalized experiences. AI algorithms analyze vast amounts of data, including employee skills, preferences, and performance, to generate personalized learning recommendations. By leveraging AI-driven insights, organizations can curate customized learning pathways tailored to each employee's unique needs, interests, and career goals. Furthermore, 42% of these transformational companies utilize AI pathways, where AI dynamically adjusts learning content and recommendations based on real-time feedback and performance data. This dynamic approach ensures that learning experiences remain relevant and adaptive, fostering continuous skill development and engagement among employees.

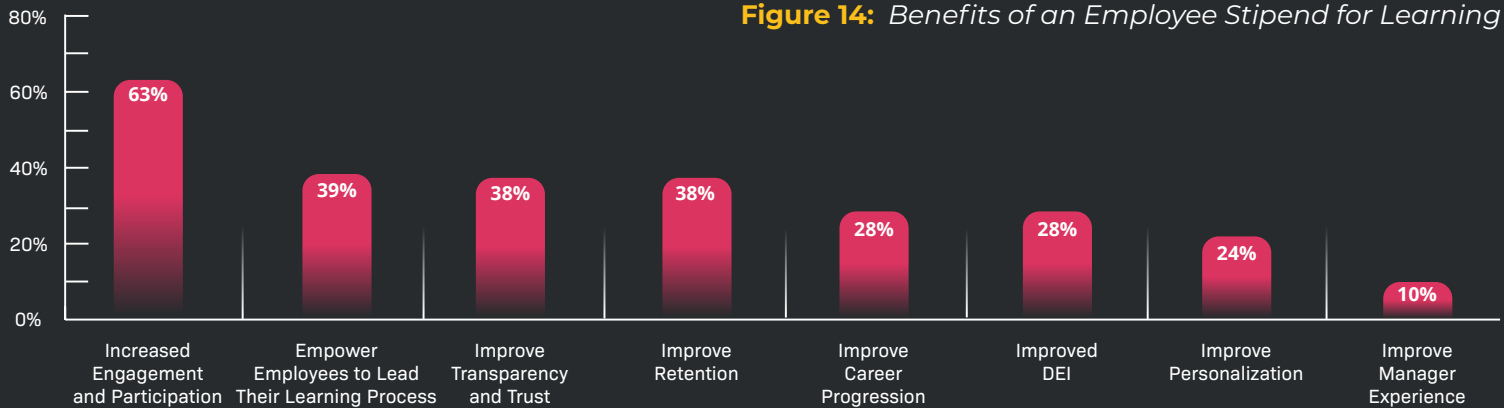
**Figure 13:** Companies Using AI to Personalize the Learning Journey



## Shifts in Pricing Models:

Shifting towards giving employees stipends represents a transformative step in fostering a culture of empowerment and ownership over learning journeys within organizations. By providing stipends, companies acknowledge the diverse learning needs and preferences of their workforce, empowering employees to invest in personalized development opportunities that align with their individual career aspirations. These stipends enable employees to access a wide range of learning resources, including courses, certifications, workshops, and conferences, allowing them to tailor their learning experiences to their specific interests and goals. Moreover, stipends convey a message of trust and support from the organization, emphasizing the value placed on continuous learning and professional growth. By equipping employees with stipends, companies demonstrate a commitment to nurturing a skilled and adaptive workforce, capable of driving innovation and success in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. Companies stated that the top benefits include increased engagement and participation (See Figure 14).

Figure 14: Benefits of an Employee Stipend for Learning



## Shifts in Time Management:

Transitioning to allocate more dedicated time for learning represents a pivotal shift towards prioritizing employee development and fostering a culture of continuous learning within organizations. By increasing the amount of dedicated time for learning activities, companies signal a commitment to investing in the growth and success of their workforce. This shift allows employees to focus on acquiring new skills, exploring innovative ideas, and engaging in professional development activities without the distractions of daily tasks and responsibilities. Providing dedicated time for learning demonstrates organizational support and recognition of the importance of ongoing skill development in driving individual and collective success. By affording employees more dedicated time for learning, companies empower them to enhance their capabilities, adapt to changing business needs, and contribute effectively to organizational goals. This study found that 88% of transformational companies give dedicated learning time to employees.

## CONCLUSION

This maturity model for learning cultures provides a comprehensive framework for organizations to assess and advance their approach to continuous learning and development. By identifying key stages and corresponding strategies, this model offers valuable insights into the evolution of learning cultures within companies.

From the initial recognition of the need for continuous learning to the advanced strategies for fostering a fully transformational learning culture, organizations can use this model to guide their journey towards creating a culture of personalization, alignment, and inclusivity.

The insights from this model highlight the importance of leadership support, employee empowerment, personalization, collaboration, inclusivity, and technological innovation in driving the success of continuous learning initiatives. By embracing the principles outlined in this model, companies can position themselves for long-term success in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment.

## ABOUT US



Aptitude Research is a leading human capital management (HCM) research and advisory firm. Our in-depth research and vendor assessments help HR leaders develop a deep understanding of the HCM technology landscape, including talent acquisition and engagement, to ultimately make better purchase decisions.

Our flagship research, The Aptitude Index Report, delivers a comprehensive look at talent acquisition trends and technology. This knowledge, combined with our consulting and advisory services, enables companies to save time, money and improve the recruiting, hiring and workforce management experience.

Founded by leading analyst Madeline Laurano and based in the Boston area, Aptitude Research provides a wealth of HCM expertise to companies, vendors and investors. View our recent and upcoming research at [www.AptitudeResearch.com](http://www.AptitudeResearch.com) or connect with us on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).



Learnerbly is the L&D marketplace that gives employees access to 200+ of the best learning content providers. In a world where “more than half of employees—58 percent—prefer to learn at their own pace and “on demand” ([McKinsey](#)), our expertly curated, multi-modal platform (including courses, books, coaches, e-learning subscriptions, and much more)

Learnerbly empowers employees to own their learning journey in the way that fits their learning preferences and role requirements, resulting in 40-60% engagement with learning across our customer base.

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