REPORT | *February 2019*

Professionalising learning and development

The CIPD's new Profession Map and key L&D development needs

in partnership with

TOWARDS MATURITY

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Report

Professionalising learning and development

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① **Foreword**

In a world in which the nature of work, the workplace and workforce are changing at a relentless pace, organisations must respond to change. In the context of such rapid change learning and development (L&D) functions play a vital role in supporting transformation. However, they in turn are not just experiencing an evolution, but a revolution.

Where the course was once the default go-to learning approach, learning must now be delivered in the flow of work, not just in a classroom. Skills and capabilities must be developed through accessible and agile methods which demands digital solutions. The prevalence of organisational data enables learning to be targeted to support key performance needs and impact measured. The explosion of excellent online content provides the opportunity for a step-change in learning design from sluggish creation to swift curation. Communities of practice in both face-to-face and online settings enable people with a shared concern or passion to freely share practice and solutions.

Andy Lancaster

Despite the exciting opportunities many L&D teams are struggling to change. Research undertaken by CIPD and Towards Maturity as a strategic partnership detailed in reports such as *Driving the New Learning Organisation* (2017) reveal significant gaps in understanding and practice needed to facilitate necessary change.

It is time for L&D practitioners to review their practice, invest in their own development and commit to a new agenda to 'professionalise'. But what does a new 'professionalising' agenda require? The CIPD report, *From Best to Good Practice: Developing principles for the profession*, defined the following six foundational areas[1]:

- Social and ethical responsibility
- Body of knowledge and skills
- Situational judgement
- Commitment
- Continuing professional development
- Identity

These characteristics underpin the CIPD's new Profession Map, launched in November 2018, which highlights the broader professional skills and capabilities, as well as specialist learning knowledge, needed by L&D practitioners to truly impact an organisation.

Following a Skills Pulse Survey carried out by Towards Maturity on behalf of CIPD, this research report defines key L&D development gaps themes in the CIPD's new Profession Map. In addition, it provides practical insights to help L&D practitioners 'make better decisions, act with confidence, perform at your peak, drive change in your organisation and progress in your career'.[2]

The transformation of organisations demands the transformation of L&D practitioners!

This report has been created to energise that revolution!

Andy Lancaster
Head of Learning and Development, CIPD

Foreword

② Executive summary

This research study explored the professionalising of learning and development teams and their key development needs in relation to the CIPD's new Profession Map. The key findings are as follows:

Planned professional development for L&D professionals creates impact

Organisations that develop the skills and knowledge of their L&D practitioners through planned continuing professional development see a significant positive impact on growth (21%), productivity (12%) and performance (15%).

Nine key areas of the CIPD's new Profession Map for improvement in L&D teams


Business acumen: 90% of L&D practitioners consider business acumen to be a priority, yet only 42% think their L&D teams possess the necessary business knowledge. High performing learning organisations are 34% more likely than the average to equip their L&D teams with business acumen.
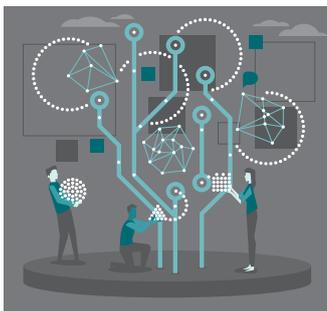
Analytics and Creating Value: 96% of L&D practitioners identified data analytics as a development priority with just 24% believing to have these skills. High performing learning organisations are 38% more likely than the average to analyse problems before recommending a learning solution.

Culture and behaviour: 98% of L&D practitioners aspire to develop a positive learning culture; however only 36% actually report that they have achieved it. High performing learning organisations are 35% more likely than the average to build a learning culture by integrating learning into the flow of work.
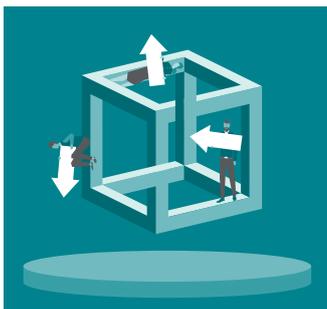
Situational decision-making: Whilst 73% of L&D practitioners were confident that they have the skills to take evidence-based decisions in their work, in around a quarter of organisations L&D teams are not assured that they are making sound decisions that will have a positive impact.

Professional courage: Organisations in which L&D practitioners have developed courage score consistently higher on nearly every performance aspect in this study and were 20% more likely to speed up the implementation of changes with learning being seen as an integral part of change.

Insights focused: Only 36% of L&D practitioners are measuring specific business metrics when evaluating the effectiveness of learning. High performing learning organisations are four times more likely than the average to use learning analytics to shape their future learning strategy and services.

Learning impact: L&D practitioners desire to have a better understanding of learning impact with 96% of practitioners noting this as a concern. That being said, only 22% of those surveyed are actively improving the way they gather and analyse learning impact data.

Social collaboration: Organisations that facilitate social and collaborative learning are twice as likely to increase learning access and flexibility, twice as likely to develop a positive learning culture and four times more likely to facilitate continuous learning.

Adult learning theories: Less than half L&D practitioners integrate new learning concepts, for example neuroscience, into practice. Those that did were twice as likely to leverage networks and collaboration to drive transformation and four times more likely to improve leadership capabilities.

L&D practitioners and their professional development

48% of L&D practitioners are 'extremely concerned' with the lack of time they can spend on their own learning. The most common methods that L&D practitioners use for developing knowledge, behaviours and skills are through professional bodies, informally from colleagues and through blogs, podcasts and online articles.

③ Introduction

The CIPD's new Profession Map[3], launched in November 2018 and developed in consultation with approximately 19,000 global practitioners, provides the foundational values, knowledge and behaviours that underpin effective learning design, delivery and impact. The map not only describes key areas of specialist L&D knowledge but also a common core of knowledge and behaviours shared with all people professionals.

The purpose of this map is to upskill and equip learning practitioners with fundamental skills and behaviours to do their job to a set professional standard.

With 57% of L&D professionals in the 2018 Towards Maturity Health Check reporting that L&D staff are overwhelmed and underequipped, the need for a professional development structure is clear. The new Profession Map provides the necessary guidance to develop the capabilities of the L&D professional and ensure they are equipped to handle the challenges of ever-changing organisations.

The L&D industry is continuously growing as organisations are investing more in people development.[4] In this context it is vital that we invest in the development of L&D capabilities to ensure people professionals are future-fit and remain relevant. After all, building L&D practitioner skills does not just impact learning but also has a substantial influence on organisational performance.

This report brings together insights from two key surveys conducted by the CIPD and Towards Maturity:

• The CIPD and Towards Maturity Skills Pulse Survey, which was completed by 175 L&D professionals which provided key insights into the development needs of learning practitioners, conducted in September 2018.
• The 2018 Towards Maturity Health Check, which provides insights into key L&D knowledge and behaviour gaps of learning professionals linked to the new Profession Map. Over 700 L&D practitioners participated in this study.

As this report reveals, organisations that provide relevant continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for their L&D staff are more likely to be increasing business impact by building the capability of the organisation to solve problems as they are better equipped to build the skills of their learners.

④ The CIPD's new Profession Map

The CIPD's new Profession Map is the product of wide consultation with CIPD members, business leaders, industry experts and partner organisations across the globe – thousands of people have contributed and the Map is all the stronger for it.

It can be used to:

• Build capability in yourself, teams and organisations
• Develop expertise in emerging areas of practice
• Drive sustainable organisational change
• Help you be a more confident, decisive and credible people professional
• Prove your value as an expert on people, work and change.

It's built around the overarching purpose of the people profession: to champion better work and working lives.

It shifts the focus from generic best practice and processes to values-based decision-making. It doesn't tell practitioners what to do, but shows how having the core capabilities to live CIPD's professional values (principles-led, evidence-based and outcomes-driven) leads to better decisions and impact in any situation.

The standards themselves are divided into three areas:

- **Core knowledge:** what you have to know to be an expert in people, work and change – regardless of your role, sector or specialism. This includes:

  - People practice
  - Culture and behaviour
  - Business acumen
  - Analytics and creating value
  - Digital working
  - Change

- **Core behaviours:** ways of thinking and acting that should be consistent across the people profession, and enable you to live the values of being principles-led, evidence-based and outcomes-driven. These are:

  - Ethical practice
  - Professional courage and influence
  - Valuing people
  - Working inclusively
  - Passion for learning
  - Insights focused
  - Situational decision-making
  - Commercial drive

- **Specialist knowledge**, including one for L&D which focuses on:

  - Continuing professional development
  - Developing capability
  - Adult learning theory and motivation
  - Design and delivery of face-to-face learning
  - Design and delivery of digital learning
  - Content management, creation and curation
  - Learning facilitation
  - Social collaboration in learning
  - Using coaching and mentoring
 - Learner engagement, learning transfer and impact
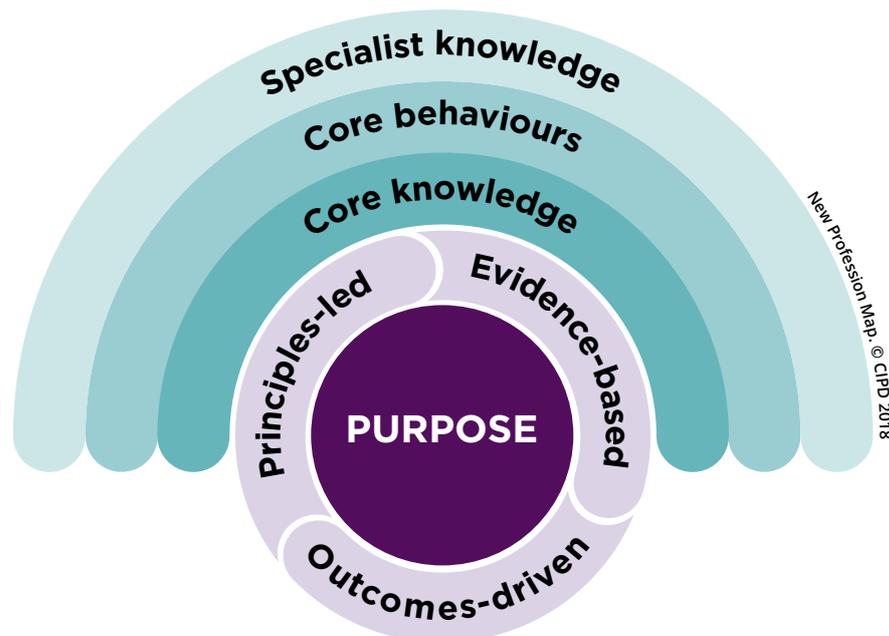
It is against these new Profession Map core knowledge and behaviours and specialist L&D knowledge that the CIPD-Towards Maturity Skills Pulse Survey was undertaken to explore and highlight key development themes for L&D practitioners.

The CIPD's new Profession Map

⑤ The value of developing L&D skills

Developing the professionalism of L&D practitioners not only enhances the skills they possess but has a more far reaching impact in improving the organisation as a result of L&D staff undertaking their roles more efficiently, effectively and creatively.

When analysing the CIPD Skills Pulse Survey data, it is clear that organisations who develop the skills and knowledge of their people professionals through planned continuing professional development (CPD) see a significant positive impact on growth, productivity and performance.

Figure 1: Continuing professional development of people professionals and business benefits (%)

Base: n=702
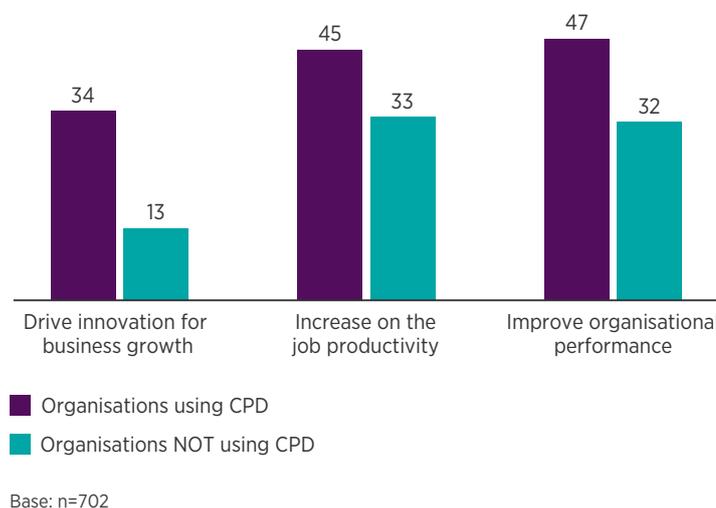
Through an investment in CPD, L&D practitioners have the capability to influence the wider success of the business as the CIPD Skills Pulse Survey data showed a significant positive impacts on organisational growth, productivity and performance.

That could be why, 90% of high performing learning organisations within Towards Maturity's 2018 Health Check (those companies that see the biggest business impact as a result of learning), ensure their learning professionals are given relevant CPD opportunities to develop their skills.

Continuing to develop the capabilities and professional standards of L&D practitioners is a key to business success that is too often ignored. If organisations expect employees to engage in continuous learning to future-proof the organisation, it is equally essential that people professionals are proactively supported and resourced to undertake professional development to remain effective in managing the constantly evolving L&D practice. The more investment into developing the skills and knowledge of people professionals, the greater the opportunity of seeing better organisational results, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Like the proverbial children of the shoemaker who went without shoes, it is not only short-sighted but wholly detrimental to organisational success to ignore the CPD of people professionals. Their capability underpins the effective development of all others and their ability to innovate will drive learning beyond outdated, ineffective approaches.

(6) Core knowledge, behaviour and specialist L&D areas for improvement

Having established a clear link between the professional development of L&D staff and organisational improvement and success, the Skills Pulse Survey also revealed areas within the new Profession Map where knowledge and capability gaps existed. Three significant gaps have been identified for core knowledge and behaviour and L&D specialist knowledge. These are suggested as priority areas in professionalising L&D functions to drive organisational impact.

Purpose

Core knowledge
Business acumen • Analytics and creating value • Culture and behaviour

Core behaviours
Situational decision-making • Professional courage • Insights focused

Specialist L&D knowledge
Learning impact • Social collaboration • Adult learning theories

6.1 Core Knowledge: Key Areas for Improvement
The wide consultation that underpinned the creation of the CIPD's new Profession Map established the importance of core knowledge that is essential for all people professionals.

Regardless of position within the L&D team, these are needed to ensure that each team member is to be considered as an 'expert of people, work and change'.[5] Whether involved in developing strategy or learning delivery the elements of core knowledge in the new Profession Map are essential.

Three areas of core knowledge emerged as significant themes in the Skills Pulse Survey and which provide the potential to increase learning effectiveness and organisational impact. These are business acumen, analytics and learning culture. Often these are seen to primarily be the concern of L&D managers and leaders however, the new Profession Map highlights the relevance of capability in these areas for *all* L&D practitioners.

6.1.1 Business Acumen

Within the 2018 Towards Maturity dataset, 90% of L&D professionals consider business acumen to be a priority, yet only 42% of learning practitioners think their L&D teams possess the necessary business knowledge. The CIPD survey 'The People Profession in 2018'[6] found that nearly half of people professionals don't believe their team or department has credibility in the organisation.

Findings showed that L&D professionals lack the ability to demonstrate and apply business acumen to a level regarded as satisfactory by the wider organisation. This raises doubts about the competence and professionalism of the function. The research data indicates that organisations in which L&D practitioners lack business acumen are substantially less likely to manage risk successfully and rarely drive innovation for organisational growth (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Business benefit of business acumen (%)

25%
Organisations where L&D
possess business acumen

0%
Organisations where L&D DO NOT
possess business acumen
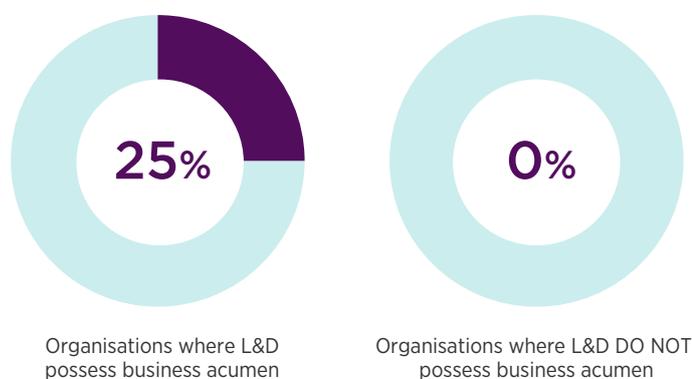
Base: n=175   ■ **Drive innovation for business growth**

However, by developing the capability to understand the nature and implications of business situations L&D professionals are equipped with the skills to solve problems and drive innovative solutions that will support positive organisational outcomes.

Our findings illustrate that L&D professionals that have business acumen have a deeper understanding of the organisational needs by asking insightful questions and exploring the part that learning has to play in wider systematic problems. The solution to a complex business challenge is rarely a simple course.

Moreover, organisations where an L&D team possess business acumen are more likely to be aligned with the organisation as they have made a plan for how they will meet agreed business metrics and KPIs. Noticeably high performing learning organisations within the Towards Maturity Health Check are 34% more likely than the average to equip their L&D teams with business acumen.

> **Reflective questions**
> - What is the current leadership perception of the L&D team's business acumen?
> - How does the L&D team engage with leaders to understand key challenges and opportunities?
> - What are the key aspects of the organisational strategy; how does the L&D team support that?
> - What is needed for the L&D team to become effective 'performance consultants'?

6.1.2 Analytics and Creating Value
The explosion of data within organisations that can support decision-making has triggered a corresponding skills gap in data analysis for L&D professionals.

96% of learning practitioners in the Towards Maturity Health Check identified data analytics as a priority area for development and upskilling. With just under a quarter (24%) believing to have these skills in house, there clearly needs to be a focus on developing knowledge and capability around using people analytics.

The CIPD report *'People analytics: driving business performance with people data'* [7] highlights how people professionals are using data and it provides a useful practitioner's guide *'Getting started with people analytics: a practitioner's guide for those seeking to improve their confidence and capability in using data.'* [8]

Interestingly, 50% of high performing learning organisations in the 2018 Towards Maturity Health Check believe they possess analytical skills.
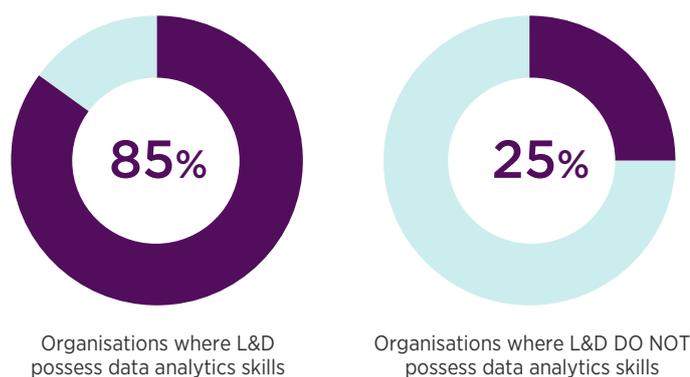
So what are they doing?

They are **four times** more likely, than the average learning organisations, to use organisational performance data to measure the impact of their learning programmes.

By collecting and analysing data and insight, L&D teams in high performing learning organisations are also more likely to have the skills to shape effective future learning strategies that support organisational objectives. This is because they are 38% more likely than the average to analyse the business problem before recommending a learning solution.

Moreover, they are more than **twice as likely** to facilitate continuous learning and more than **three times** to harmonise the learning provision since they have a deeper understanding of learner needs across the breadth of the organisation (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Business benefit of analytics (%)

85% Organisations where L&D possess data analytics skills

25% Organisations where L&D DO NOT possess data analytics skills

Base: n=175 **Harmonise learning across the organisation**

The CIPD survey *'The People Profession in 2018'*[9] found that over half (55%) of people professionals use organisational data in their decision-making. CIPD members (64%) were more likely than non-members (49%) to base decisions on organisational data. Skills in data analytics are critical for improving transparency within organisations, and data-driven practitioners are more likely to feel able to fully express themselves professionally at work, and to find new ways of doing things.

Core knowledge, behaviour and specialist L&D areas for improvement

Reflective questions
- What organisational data and metrics are available that inform learning design and delivery?
- Which stakeholders have access to data that informs learning and what are the relationships like?
- Is data gathered only in hindsight to measure learning impact, or before to inform strategy?
- How are data insights shaping the learning priorities, strategy and methods?
- How confident are the L&D team in applying data; what development needs exist?

6.1.3 Culture

The CIPD's new Profession Map raises awareness of the need for L&D practitioners to understand the role of culture in organisational performance, since 'understanding and influencing organisational systems and human behaviour is integral to developing a positive culture and working environment'.[10]

The Skills Pulse Survey revealed that 98% of learning professionals aspire to develop a positive and consistent learning culture within their organisation, whilst only 36% actually report that they have achieved it.

Those L&D teams that possess an understanding of the wider organisational cultures and how to develop a learning culture increase the probability that their organisation will consistently improve talent management, organisational performance and facilitate new ways of working.

Having clarity on the existing learning culture and its impact is vital if L&D professionals are to support a real business impact through learning.

Drilling down further, the Skills Pulse Survey data highlighted that organisations that are using coaching and mentoring as a development approach are 35% more likely than the average learning organisation to build a learning culture, by integrating learning into the flow of work (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Business benefit of L&D teams understanding culture (%)

68%

Organisations where L&D facilitate coaching and mentoring

33%

Organisations where L&D DO NOT facilitate coaching and mentoring

Base: n=175

Facilitate new ways of working

This highlights the importance of line managers in developing a positive learning culture within their area of operational activity and their key role in establishing an effective learning environment. It is only when development becomes embedded in day to day activities with a clear ownership by staff members and managers that a true learning culture has been achieved rather than staff regarding learning as an event.

Core knowledge, behaviour and specialist L&D areas for improvement

Reflective questions
- What behaviours underpin a positive learning culture within your context?
- What are the most significant barriers to learning in your context; how can these be addressed?
- How can line managers be further encouraged and developed to support the learning culture?
- How can learning be delivered in the flow of work to establish an embedded approach?

6.2 Core Behaviour: Key areas for improvement

In the CIPD's new Profession Map, core behaviours 'are the ways of thinking and acting required to be considered an effective people professional'.[11] From the Skills Pulse Survey findings, there were three core behaviours in which there were a significant capability gap, which if addressed provide a source of added organisation value through learning.

6.2.1 Situational decision-making

Whilst 73% of the individuals that participated in the Skills Pulse Survey were confident that they have the skills to take informed, evidence-based decisions in their work, this revealed that around a quarter of organisations' L&D teams are not assured that they are making sound decisions that will have a positive impact.

The data showed that organisations that possess the L&D skills in-house to make well-judged decisions at the point of need are considerably more likely to provide a faster response to changing business conditions as they have developed their ability to make decisions under-pressure (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Business benefit of situational decision-making (%)

Organisations where L&D CAN make situational decisions — **50%**

Organisations where L&D CANNOT make situational decisions — **29%**

■ **Provide faster response to changing business conditions**
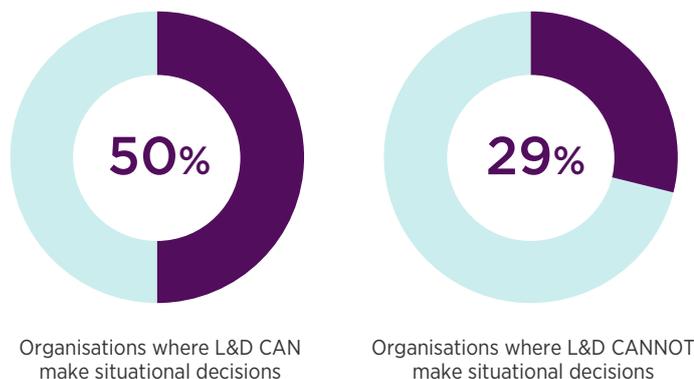
Base: n=175

Reflective questions
- How well does the L&D team understand operational activities and processes and their impact?
- How developed are relationships with key stakeholders to gain rapid insights?
- What range of learning interventions are available which can be flexed as solutions?
- How can L&D teams be empowered to make informed decisions and budget expenditure?

6.2.2 Professional courage

L&D professionals must have courage and confidence to address leaders and stakeholders at all levels to make proposals about learning strategies, innovations, budgets and resourcing. The CIPD's new Profession Map prioritises effective communication and negotiation as a core behaviour for all people professionals.

The CIPD survey *The people profession in 2018*[12] found that building the confidence to apply strong professional judgement in order to successfully balance the interests of the organisation with those of its people should be a critical area of focus for the profession. The report notes that almost three in ten (28%) feel that there's a conflict between what their organisation expects of them and their professional beliefs, and this is most prominent in the public sector.

Organisations in which L&D teams have developed skills for negotiation, persuasion and personal courage score consistently higher on nearly every performance aspect of the Pulse Skills Study. This behaviour is clearly a vital part of an effective L&D team in order to advocate for learning provision, innovation and resourcing.

The exploration of the Skills Pulse Survey data highlighted that the L&D teams that possess professional courage are 17% more likely to pull stakeholders together into a steering group to support new learning initiatives.

Having the confidence to discuss learning matters with stakeholders proactively encourages the development of a positive, aligned organisational learning strategy. Where these skills are present, it was found that the organisation was 20% more likely to speed up the implementation of changes to systems and processes, with learning being seen an integral part of change.

The confidence to effectively represent and stand up for the needs of the learners to stakeholders also appears to have a positive impact on learners themselves. L&D professionals that demonstrate professional courage were **five times** more likely to enhance employee well-being as learners were more likely to be supported in the workplace (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Business benefit of professional courage (%)

78%	**14%**
Organisations where L&D teams SHOW professional courage	Organisations where L&D DO NOT SHOW have professional courage

Base: n=175   ■ **Enhance employee well-being**

Reflective questions
- In what areas have the L&D team demonstrated courage that has influenced an outcome?
- Who could be members of learning 'steering group' to enable influential discussion to take place?
- What learner challenges or opportunities currently require L&D team advocacy?

6.2.3 Insights focused

With the prevalence of data in organisations, there is no shortage of insights to define learning priorities. The CIPD's new Profession Map stresses that it is vital for L&D professionals to 'adopt a disciplined approach to understanding and diagnosing problems, and then use a range of evidence to develop people insights and solutions' if they are to be successful.[13]
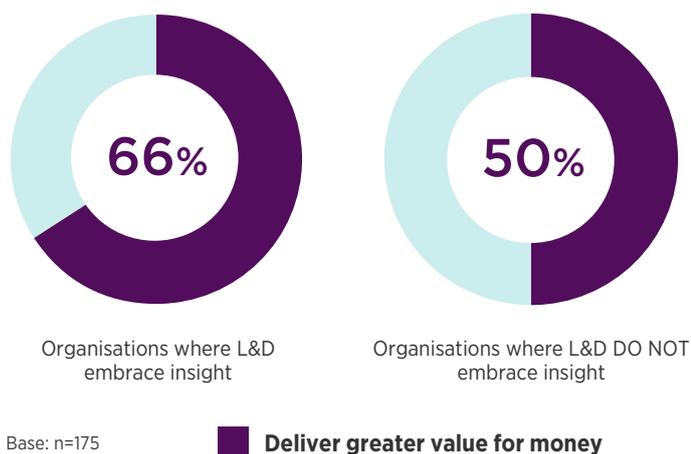
The CIPD paper *'In search of the best available evidence'*[14] discusses whether employers and people professional leaders base decisions on evidence that is sound or shoddy, well validated or speculative, and provides valuable insights as to how key decisions in people management can be more evidence based.

That Pulse Survey showed that few L&D professionals are collecting insights into the impact of learning within the organisation, with only 36% of respondents measuring specific business metrics when evaluating the effectiveness of learning.

The survey also shows that organisations where people professionals have embraced business insights into their work, are more likely to deliver greater value for money and improve leadership capabilities. The ability to understanding and align with business KPIs, ensures L&D professionals can prioritise the need to improve efficiency and productivity as a result of workplace learning.

High performing learning organisations that took part in the 2018 Towards Maturity Health Check that embrace business insights are **four times** more likely than the average learning organisation to measure specific business metrics when evaluating the effectiveness of learning. Beyond this, top performing learning organisations are also **four times** more likely than the average to use learning analytics to shape their future learning strategy and the services they deliver to align to the wider organisational needs. Moreover, they also deliver greater value for money with resources targeted to known defined needs (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Business benefit of insight (%)

66%	50%
Organisations where L&D embrace insight	Organisations where L&D DO NOT embrace insight

Base: n=175   ■ **Deliver greater value for money**

Core knowledge, behaviour and specialist L&D areas for improvement

Reflective questions
- What insights are currently shaping your learning strategy and approach?
- What insights should be gained to address future learning needs?
- How are insights being used to target resources to ensure value for money?
- What insights would define the impact of existing learning initiatives?

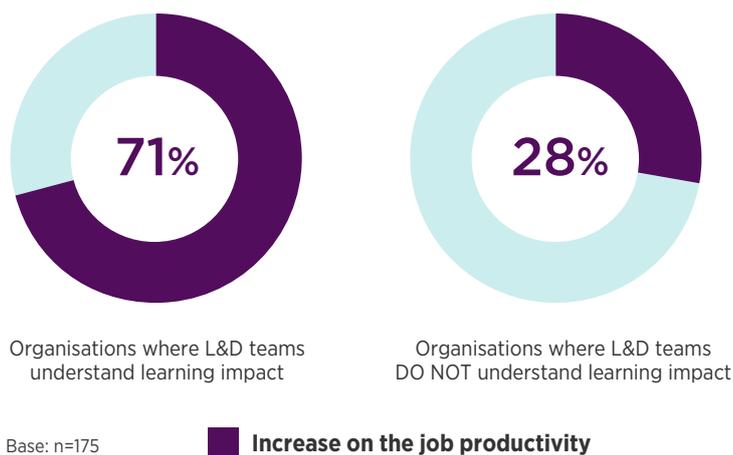### 6.3 L&D Specialist Knowledge: Key areas for improvement

Learning and development is one of nine specialist knowledge areas defined in the CIPD's new Profession Map. The L&D specialist knowledge focuses on themes that underpin the delivery of a future-focused and professional service by L&D teams. The data from the Skills Pulse Survey revealed three aspects of L&D specialist knowledge in which a capability improvement is required if L&D teams are to create an organisational impact.

6.3.1 Learning impact

It is clear from the Pulse Survey that L&D professionals desire to have a better understanding of learning impact with 96% of practitioners noting this as a concern. That being said, only 22% of those surveyed are actively improving the way they gather and analyse learning impact data. It is clear that not enough is being done to improve capability in this area, which in turn hinders the improvement of organisational learning initiatives. Without being able to measure learning impact valuable time and resources are wasted; it is therefore a key accountability for L&D teams.

The 2018 Towards Maturity Health Check reveals organisations that lack an understanding of learning impact are **five times** less likely to utilise business intelligence to future-proof the organisation and nearly **three times** less likely to increase on the job productivity (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Business benefit of learning impact (%)

71%

Organisations where L&D teams
understand learning impact

28%

Organisations where L&D teams
DO NOT understand learning impact

Base: n=175   ■ **Increase on the job productivity**

Measuring learning transfer involves systemic thinking and vital analysis around whether learning needs are being accurately defined, who learning is aimed at and how well the learners are prepared and supported by manager once back in their workplace.

By having the knowledge and skills to define the impact of learning, L&D professionals can ensure their resources are used in the most effective manner. That is why high performing learning organisations are more than **four times** more likely than the average to collect and use learning analytics to improve the service they deliver.

Reflective questions
- How are key learning needs defined and outcome measures planned?
- What part does learner preparation play in ensuring learning impact?
- How are managers engaged to support learning transfer and measurement in the workplace?
- To what extent are impact measurements focused on organisational performance factors?

6.3.2 Social collaboration

The ability to facilitate social and collaborative learning is a central component of a modern learning strategy. Whilst the concept of peer learning and communities of practice are not new, they are a vital part of a continuous learning culture and require knowledge and skills that appear to be lacking across the industry.

The CIPD report *'L&D: evolving roles, enhancing skills'*[15] highlights social and collaborative learning facilitation as being the top area in which L&D professionals anticipate a greater emphasis in learning delivery. Similarly the CIPD report *'The future of learning and technology'*[16] found that 77% plan to use communities of practice for reflection and discussion.

The successful facilitation of social collaboration requires the scaffolding of environments that encourage trust and effective networking be they physical or digital spaces, a culture which encourages openness, the provision of resources to help foster discussion and community management which supports rather than controls the interaction.
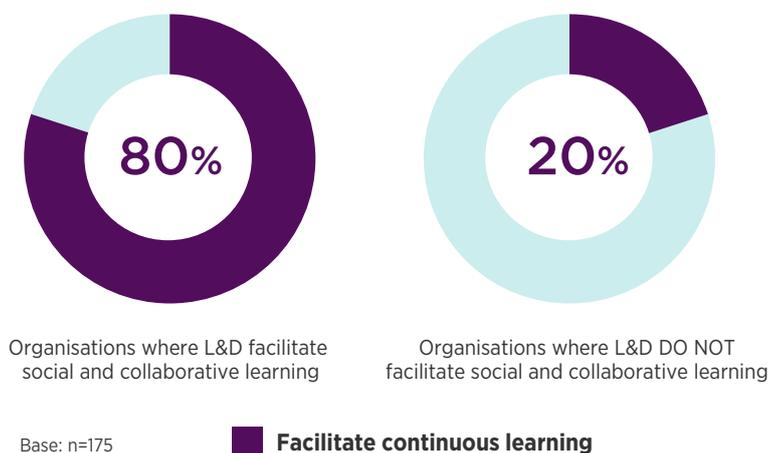
Social collaborative learning is a natural process that should be an integral part of the design and delivery of learning initiatives.

Only about half of those in the Skills Pulse Survey considered they have the skills within their L&D team to facilitate effective collaborative learning.

Based on findings from the Skills Pulse Survey it is clear organisations that facilitate social and collaborative learning are **twice** as likely to increase learning access and flexibility, **twice** as likely to develop a positive learning culture and **four times** more likely to facilitate continuous learning (Figure 9).

High performing learning organisations within the 2018 Towards Maturity Heath Check encourage social collaboration in learning and are **twice** as likely as the average to actively encourage people to collaborate in building knowledge resources.

Figure 9: Business benefit of social collaboration (%)

80%

20%

Organisations where L&D facilitate social and collaborative learning

Organisations where L&D DO NOT facilitate social and collaborative learning

Base: n=175

■ **Facilitate continuous learning**

Core knowledge, behaviour and specialist L&D areas for improvement

Reflective questions
- What physical or digital 'spaces' are provided that facilitate social collaborative learning?
- Does the organisational and learning culture encourage trust and openness?
- Is social collaboration naturally integrated into the design of learning initiatives?
- Is there the need for 'community management' to support and foster effective collaboration?

6.3.3 Adult learning theories

Adult learning theories and principles explore how adults effectively learn. There has been a move to underpin learning design through 'andragogy' in which learners are encouraged to be self-directed and 'heutagogy' where learners develop skills to be fully autonomous. In addition, behavioural science and neuroscience are providing insights into how to design effective learning interventions. CIPD provides a factsheet that outlines contemporary psychology and neuroscience thinking.[17]

The CIPD report *'The future of technology and learning'*[18] highlights that the learning process and instructional method of technology is strongly related to positive outcomes, as they are with offline learning

By having an 'awareness of the science of learning theory, organisations ... can add to their learning culture' as they integrate evidence-based theories around adult learning into practice.[19] This in turn, helps develop the most appropriate and effective learning solutions and strategy.

Less than half of those in the Skills Pulse Survey integrate new concepts from learning theory for example neuroscience into their practice. However, those that do are 63% more likely to apply proven techniques such as spaced learning to aid learning transfer, retention and application and they are **twice** as likely to provide 'micro-learning' resources as part of the learning blend.

Applying learning theory into practice impacts the wider success of the organisation. Those that do were found to be **twice** as likely to leverage networks and collaboration to drive transformation and nearly **four times** more likely to improve leadership capabilities (Figure 10) based on approaches that that are proven to drive learning impact.

Figure 10: Business benefit of using adult learning theories (%)

34%

Organisations where L&D teams integrate learning theories into practice

9%

Organisations where L&D team DO NOT integrate learning theories into practice

Base: n=175

■ **Improve leadership capability**

Reflective questions
- What adult learning theories currently underpin learning design and delivery?
- How can learners be encouraged and supported to be self-directed and autonomous?

(7) L&D practitioners as learners

CIPD's new Profession Map emphasises the need for L&D practitioners to embrace professional standards and the core knowledge and behaviour and specialist L&D knowledge that underpins their practice. A commitment to acquire and embed foundational knowledge, skills and behaviours is essential if L&D teams are to be effective and have a measurable impact on their organisations.

However, the Skills Pulse Survey highlighted that L&D practitioners are well aware of their shortcomings and the barriers that impede their ability to learn.
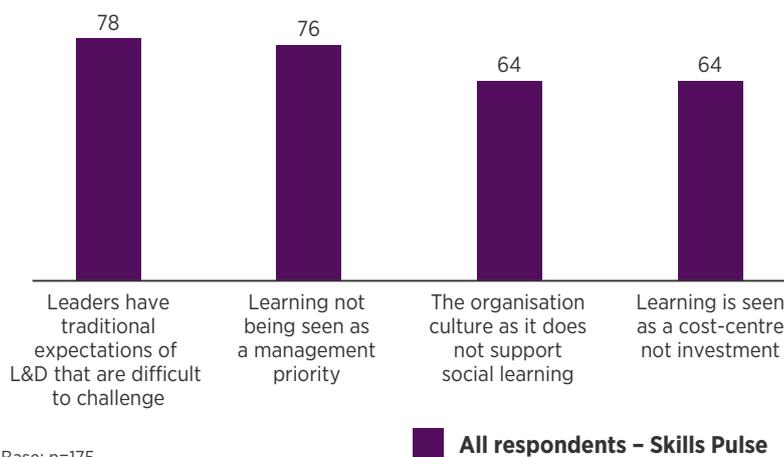
48% of the respondents within the Pulse Survey are 'extremely concerned' with the lack of time they can spend on their own learning. A common concern is their capacity to undertake continuing professional development activities and the reality is that they invest limited amounts of time in their own development. This is a key factor in the lack of the essential knowledge and skills listed in the CIPD's new Profession Map.

When asked about other barriers to learning, traditional expectations and perceptions of organisational learning methods amongst leaders and staff hinder L&D practitioners' ability to obtain the resources to explore the design and delivery of learning innovations that would support their professional development (see Figure 11). Not only that, but L&D practitioners do not receive the support and encouragement from senior leaders to innovate because they are deemed to lack the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver initiatives that have organisational impact.

L&D practitioners are therefore trapped in a vicious circle whereby the lack of resourcing hinders innovation and development which in turn reaffirms the limited expectations of leaders and the value that L&D teams add. L&D often is seen as an organisational cost-centre not a vital investment for future success.

Clearly professional courage and advocacy for change in the learning approach underpin the transformation that is needed!

Figure 11: Barriers for L&D professionals (%)

Leaders have traditional expectations of L&D that are difficult to challenge	Learning not being seen as a management priority	The organisation culture as it does not support social learning	Learning is seen as a cost-centre not investment
78	76	64	64

Base: n=175

■ All respondents – Skills Pulse

Organisations in which L&D practitioners are undertaking continuing professional development still face **all** of the 4 above barriers but to a lesser extent, since as they equip themselves with the core skills, knowledge and expertise they can increase and demonstrate the value and impact of organisational learning. The reduced impact found was as follows:

- 71% (versus 78%) struggle with leaders having traditional expectations of L&D that are difficult to challenge
- 69% (versus 76%) feel that learning is not seen as a management priority
- 53% (versus 64% believe the organisation culture does not support social learning
- 56% (versus 64%) argue learning is seen as a cost-centre not investment

Therefore professional development does not remove the barriers but equips L&D practitioners to address and overcome them.

How are L&D practitioners approaching professional development?

The written responses to the Skills Pulse Survey revealed the following preferences as the most common and effective methods for developing L&D knowledge, behaviours and skills (Figure 12):

Figure 12: Preferred development approaches for L&D practitioners (%)
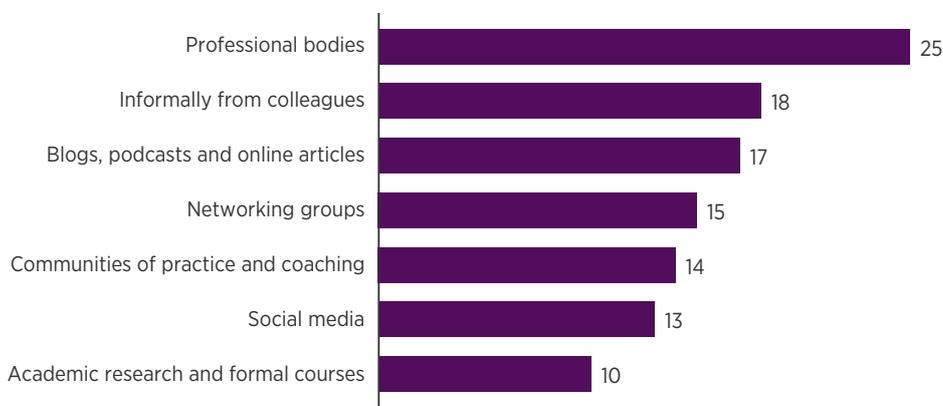
Base: n=175

It is clear that L&D practitioners recognise the effectiveness and importance of professional networking in which practice can be shared and discussed be that through professional bodies, networking groups and communities of practice. It is important to note that social media plays an important part in this networking highlighting how digital channels can connect like-minded practitioners across dispersed geographies.

Professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, provide professional advice, resourcing and professional development. CIPD's support for people professionals is principles led, evidence based and outcomes driven. From the Skills Pulse Survey L&D professionals that have joined professional bodies to support the development of their skills are more likely than those who have not to possess **all** the core behaviours discussed in this report:

Situational decision-making: 77% compared to 64%
Professional courage: 73% compared to 54%
Insights focused: 49% compared to 44%

Through **networking** through **communities of practice**, L&D professionals can develop relevant knowledge, behaviour and skills through peer interaction. L&D professionals who interact in communities of practice or personal learning networks (PLNs) were also more likely to develop **all** the *core behaviours* discussed in this report, compared to those that do not leverage a network.

Interestingly, keeping a reflective learning log or journal to note personal insights and ideas, content and research for exploration and to document what took place in professional practice, why it happened and what can be learned and applied to future actions was a rare approach for those taking part in the Skills Pulse Survey.

Those participants who kept a log were more likely to demonstrate they had **all** the core *knowledge and behaviours* discussed in this report.

Key reflections
- How do you currently approach your professional development?
- Which of the 9 areas of core knowledge and behaviour and L&D knowledge are a priority for you?
- What part do professional bodies or networks play in supporting your development?
- How do you think keeping a reflective log or journal would enhance your development?

⑧ Conclusion: a time for action

The L&D profession is under pressure to transform and become future-fit in order to stay ahead of the demands of work and workers.

For the L&D industry to become more relevant, agile and effective in organisations, L&D professionals increase their knowledge and capability.

The CIPD have researched the future needs of the profession and gathered significant insight from a number of sources and professionals that defines the fundamental skills and knowledge needed by all L&D practitioners. The new CIPD's new Profession Map brings clarity to the L&D industry making it easier to develop, track and grow your career as an accredited professional.

Jane Daley
Chief Insight Officer,
Towards Maturity

Working in partnership with CIPD and the new Profession Map, Towards Maturity have analysed key data from the world's largest L&D data pool. Subsequently, we have established insight that allow us to see what knowledge and capabilities L&D teams from high performing learning organisations focus on to build credibility and drive impact.

There is a huge divide in the differences between high performing L&D teams and the rest. The majority of L&D leaders and teams are struggling to keep up with the pace of change required. More often they are finding the organisation is ahead of them; getting on with up-skilling their functions using open source tools or their own budgets because they do not believe L&D can respond to their needs in time, within budget or deliver the level of impact required.

However, leaders are now seeing that these 'quick fixes' are not bringing the long-term change and performance impact required. Organisations are realising that they need L&D experts to bring the knowledge and capability to show how effective learning should be undertaken.

Although organisations may worry about dedicating time and resources to learning, if L&D professionals get the approach right, then the organisation and people will benefit. L&D practitioners must engage with and support leaders and show that there is a more effective way to achieve the organisation's core purpose through a future-focussed learning and development plan that enables it to flourish.

Yet, our data is showing that L&D are far from ready for this.

The first step must be for L&D professionals to establish robust personal development plans to transform the knowledge and capabilities of L&D teams to create strategic, performance consultants that are data-driven and evidence-based, accredited and who have the commitment to engage with CPD to remain ahead of the curve[20].

The evidence is clear and highlights that L&D leaders and teams in top performing learning organisations invest significantly in themselves as they plan for change and then make it happen.

By addressing their own development before supporting learning needs in their organisations, they are able to provide the expertise and agility required and become the credible learning experts their organisations need.

It is through the investment in professional development, qualifications and networking that the knowledge and capabilities of L&D professional will be transformed. It is this that will have the impact on the four critical levers of organisational success; growth, transformation, productivity and profitability.

(9) Research methodologies

The data used within this report has been sourced primarily from CIPDs Skills Pulse. Additionally, it has been supplemented with figures around the high-performing learning organisation that have been established through the Towards Maturity 2018 Health Check.

The Skills Pulse
The Skills Pulse, commissioned by CIPD and undertaken by strategic research partner Towards Maturity, sought to uncover the skills and knowledge gaps present within the L&D profession. The pulse draws on data from 175 learning practitioners, collected over a 3-week period between September and October 2018.

Focusing specifically on establishing insight into L&D skills and capabilities, this study purposely collated data from a diverse sample of professionals; covering a variety of roles (both managerial and non-managerial), organisation sizes, sectors and industries (including: education, central/local government, IT, professional and financial services).

56% of the sample were members of the CIPD, whilst 44% were non-members.

The Towards Maturity Health Check
Over 700 L&D leaders went through the Benchmark review process in 2018. From the data, The Towards Maturity Index™ (TMI) was calculated. This is the single score from 1 – 100 that each organisation completing their Benchmark review receives to benchmark the maturity of their learning strategy against the workstreams of the Towards Maturity Model.

High-performing learning organisations are the top decile of the annual sample. Their TMI shows a very strong positive correlation with the number of benefits sought that are being achieved – organisations with a high TMI report greater programme impact and business benefits.

⑩ About Towards Maturity

Towards Maturity is a team of expert analysts offering 15 years of independent research and specialist advice to the L&D market. They help companies become high-performing learning organisations by applying trusted evidence to analyse, activate and accelerate change. They are proud to lead a vibrant community of practice, supporting leaders and people professionals to make smart learning decisions that deliver real impact.

Since 2003, Towards Maturity has championed independent research, uncovering insights that have advanced the world of learning and development. They have built one of the largest global L&D data pools across 60 countries and all industry sectors, continuously finding and sharing what's working in learning. More than 6,900 leaders and people professionals and 45,000 learners have contributed to our L&D strategic and learner intelligence portfolios.

Towards Maturity is part of Emerald, a global publisher committed to helping communities make decisions that count through research that matters.

Get fit for the future of learning
The Towards Maturity L&D Health Check uniquely analyses where you are now and where you want to be. It also benchmarks your insights with the top performers around the globe and helps you identify the best route to success that will work for you.

The Towards Maturity Health Check is considered one of the most comprehensive independent reviews of how organisations are establishing successful learning strategies in the workplace.

Find out more about the Towards Maturity Health Check **towardsmaturity.org/healthcheck**

Ambassadors for Change
Towards Maturity's extensive Ambassadors for Change community represents industry suppliers who support the annual research programme, working together to identify and improve effective practice, raising awareness and driving the profession forward. Find out more about Towards Maturity Ambassadors for Change at **towardsmaturity.org/ambassadors**

⑪ Endnotes

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20 The Transformation Curve is referring to Towards Maturity's 2018 model that illustrates the journey needed to deliver lasting business impact by becoming a high performing learning organisation. See: https://towardsmaturity.org/2018/01/31/transformation/

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