



# Preparing for the Future of Learning

A Changing Perspective for L&D Leaders

[www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/futurelearn](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/futurelearn)

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In conjunction with Strategic Partner

**CIPD**

In-Focus  
Report

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## About this research

This report presents the evidence for leaders in learning and development to reflect on changing approaches to workplace learning and consider the skills they need for the future. It aims to stimulate action amongst L&D professionals around the globe that will:

- ▶ Inspire them to embrace the increasingly self-directed nature of today's learners
- ▶ Harness the potential for learning innovation through technology
- ▶ Modernise their approach to developing the skills they need to facilitate social and experiential learning
- ▶ Help them to engage with business leaders and enhance business performance

Data for this report is drawn from the Towards Maturity 2015 Benchmark™ research with over 600 L&D leaders, reported in *Embracing Change* ([www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark) - See Appendix B for study methodology and participant demographics). The benchmarking review process included questions on the priority skills for L&D professionals and how they are acquired. *Embracing Change* is free to download, thanks to the support of the Towards Maturity Ambassador programme. For more information, visit: [www.towardsmaturity.org/ambassadors](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/ambassadors).



Reference is also made in this report to Towards Maturity's Learning Landscape™ research, when we explored how individuals learn what they need to do their job. We draw data from two sources in this report: 1,600 workers using learning services within their own company (gathered in 2015) and 200 L&D professionals who have invested their own money in online learning (gathered in 2016). Evidence is also included from around 170 L&D professionals who attended CIPD Leaders in Learning network events around the UK in Spring 2016.

**CIPD** *This report is free to download, thanks to the support of our Strategic Partner, the CIPD.*

Download this report and more research from Towards Maturity's website:  
[www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/futurelearn](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/futurelearn)

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## Foreword by Peter Cheese, CEO of CIPD



The world of work is changing fast and having an immense impact on learning. New working practices, emerging technologies, flexible working patterns, dispersed locations and multi-generational teams are directly influencing the design and delivery of learning.

In this changing world of work, learning as a capability has to evolve and it has to be accessible, agile and flexible. Many interventions are now best delivered in the flow of work activity, not in a classroom. Digital technologies enable learning to be available anytime and anywhere with many also choosing to learn in their own time and often from their own sources of learning and knowledge. With the proliferation of rich, readily available online content, learning design is shifting from not just creation but to curation as well.

This new learning landscape creates many new opportunities but also raises a number of challenges which are detailed in this research study and report.

Learners must be at the heart of learning design and delivery. Development is shifting from activities that are 'done to' learners, to resources that are 'available to' staff to access in their own ways. Online social platforms and communities of practice can also now provide an environment where performance-related discussions take place in 'real time' and learning needs identified accordingly.

Organisations and business leaders are focusing more and more on productivity and adaptability, and have a greater expectation that their L&D teams will deliver innovative learning solutions to support these outcomes directly. Businesses should also be confident that their L&D teams will be leading this innovation in agile, flexible and digital learning solutions to drive performance and productivity and that we can measure the impact of learning investments on outcomes effectively.

But for these shifts to take place, learning professionals must also address their own knowledge and practice, and to upskill and reskill themselves. They need to make sure they have the skills to listen, observe, question and reflect how learning can best support the delivery of organisational goals. They need to understand where and how learners are learning, and to understand the potential for all the different forms and channels for learning, and when to create and when to curate. They must be role models in the new learning agenda where close alignment to the business operation must be the norm.

In this drive for innovation and change, the CIPD is committed to providing leading-edge development opportunities for L&D professionals through innovations such as our *Future of*

*Learning* development hub, digital resources, programmes and qualifications, as well as our regional 'Leaders in Learning' communities.

Through a strategic partnership, the CIPD and Towards Maturity are helping to diagnose and frame the challenges faced in workplace learning, but also in driving the change that is needed to underpin performance improvement.

This jointly-produced report seeks to inspire business leaders and learning professionals to transform their L&D practice and in doing so the organisations in which they work.

We join with Towards Maturity in the call to **#MakeItHappen**.



**Peter Cheese**  
CEO, CIPD

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## Fast Facts

*A modernised learning strategy must support the fast moving world of work and increasingly digital worker. The L&D professional responsible needs to develop new skills and a new mindset as their role shifts towards facilitation and performance consulting. **The findings of this report highlight six areas that can lead to greater success and help organisations prepare for the future of learning.***

### 1 Leverage learning optimism

*Many organisations have increased their overall training budget in the last two years and expect it to increase further. They are also expanding their L&D teams. However, those reporting the best outcomes do not necessarily have the biggest budgets or L&D teams.*

- ▶ **38%** of organisations have seen an increase in their training budget over the last two years and 36% predict further increase in the next two years
- ▶ **36%** have seen an increase in their training team in the last two years and 31% expect further increase

### Integrate learning and work

*The future of learning is in the heart of the workplace. Currently:*

- ▶ **85%** of L&D leaders want to improve business performance
- ▶ **61%** say L&D activity is aligned to the strategic goals of the business
- ▶ **54%** consider their role is shifting towards performance consultancy
- ▶ **48%** still believe the course is the only option for building performance
- ▶ **36%** L&D have a plan for how they will meet agreed business metrics

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***Only 17% of L&D leaders agree that they measure agreed business KPIs as part of their evaluation***

### Actively seek to understand 'internal customers'

*The extent to which L&D professionals understand their learners and the learning process and experience has a direct link to learning success, but only **one in three** take action:*

3

- ▶ **28%** agree L&D staff keep up-to-date with the latest research into learning theory (e.g. neuroscience)
- ▶ **30%** are proactive in understanding how learners currently learn what they need for their job
- ▶ **35%** involve users in design of the most appropriate learning approach

## Put technology on the learning agenda

*For many, there is a mismatch between the investment they are making in technology tools and the skills they have to use them to business advantage.*

- ▶ On average, **19%** of training budget is spent on technology
- ▶ Those reporting directly to the line of business support **double** the number of learners with fewer resources and spend **24%** of budget on technology
- ▶ **76%** build their own e-learning content in house and **86%** use live online learning

**However, only:**

- ▶ **23%** of L&D leaders think their L&D teams have the right skills to exploit technology for business advantage
- ▶ **50%** still say that L&D staff lack knowledge about the potential use and implementation of technology

**Only 28% believe L&D staff are confident in incorporating new media in learning design**

4

## Think digital

*As use of live online and social learning technologies increase, many L&D professionals lack the skills they need. L&D leaders recognise there are significant skills gaps and are planning to address them in the next two years.*

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- ▶ **34%** have the skills in house for live online learning delivery - **37%** plan to increase this in the next two years
- ▶ **20%** have the skills in house for facilitating social and collaborative learning - **46%** plan to increase
- ▶ **32%** have the skills in house supporting ongoing workplace performance - **46%** plan to increase

## Proactively invest in new L&D skills

*Despite the need for new skills, L&D are often too busy to plan their own CPD, reflect on what is working well and work closely with others who might be able to help.*

- ▶ **67%** are expected to join external networks and/or professional bodies
- ▶ **54%** of organisations provide CPD for their L&D staff
- ▶ **55%** know what questions to ask of their external providers
- ▶ **25%** are training classroom trainers to use technology to extend learning beyond the classroom

**26% expect L&D staff to keep skills up-to-date on their own.**

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# 1 Introduction

In some respects, the L&D profession has come a long way in the last five years. L&D staff are better able to create engaging online content and apply principles of instructional design. They are more aware of the potential of technology-enabled learning, and they are much better tuned in to the needs and priorities of their business. But are they keeping up with the pace of change?

One year ago, in a joint research report from Towards Maturity and the CIPD, we reported the need to ensure that there is a clear line of sight between L&D activity and organisational performance.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the consensus is that the role of tomorrow's L&D professional will be as facilitator and creator of network connections, social mentor and curator of knowledge and learning resources.<sup>2</sup> Someone whose curiosity for finding new solutions to business is infectious. This shift in role is also essential if the profession is to support a rapidly changing business and consumer world where the ability to constantly learn, unlearn and relearn becomes an essential rather than a luxury.



However, twelve months on, there are still significant skills gaps in critical areas of business and commercial influence, understanding and technological ability amongst L&D professionals.

Recognition that action is needed to transform the L&D function is not the issue – rather, it is the ability to apply the lessons learned from those that are achieving the best results to the local context. Today's high performing L&D teams provide powerful insights for preparing for the future of learning.

Technology will play a significant role in realising the vision now widely held about the future of learning, one in which learning and performance is supported at the point of need, responsive to change and leverages the power of community. Yet a fundamental lack of confidence in digital learning solutions and in the capability of L&D professionals to use them

<sup>1</sup> CIPD & Towards Maturity, *L&D: Evolving Roles, Enhancing Skills* (April 2015): [www.towardsmaturity.org/ldskills2015](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/ldskills2015)

<sup>2</sup> [www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2016/01/26/five-lessons-for-the-future-of-l-and-d.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2016/01/26/five-lessons-for-the-future-of-l-and-d.aspx)

to *transform* learning and development still remains. In too many organisations, digital transformation is simply the translation of in-house training models to online platforms.<sup>3</sup>

In Chapter 2, we look at some of the trends affecting the profession and how L&D are responding to change. In later chapters, we pick up themes from the 2015-16 Towards Maturity Industry Benchmark Report, *Embracing Change*.<sup>4</sup> The report outlines three fundamental principles necessary for L&D professionals as they prepare for the future of learning: setting and delivering against business expectations, empowering the self-directed learner and building the skills needed by L&D to succeed.

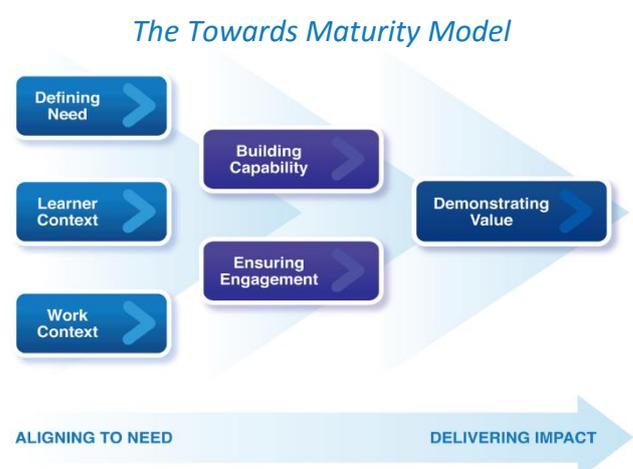
This report draws on three main sources of data:

- ▶ **The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study:** comparing results from over 600 L&D leaders who took part in the 2015 research, with a similar sized sample who took part five years earlier in 2010/11
- ▶ **The Towards Maturity Learning Landscape:** results from over 1,600 employees and 200 L&D professionals (who had paid for online learning), bringing valuable insight into the shift towards independent and self-directed learning.
- ▶ **The CIPD Leaders in Learning network events:** held around the UK in spring 2016 with 170 L&D professionals

## 1.1 Background: The Towards Maturity Benchmark

Since 2003, the Towards Maturity benchmarking process has sought to discover which organisations are achieving the *best* results in terms of staff impact and business impact and what they are doing differently to achieve those results.

The benchmarking process over the years has explored the L&D profession's vision for the future of learning and their tactics for achieving it. It considers drivers for learning and performance support, the barriers faced, the technologies used and their plan of action for achieving those goals. Understanding factors affecting individual choice and motivation and the work context within which L&D are operating are an integral part of the process.



<sup>3</sup> [www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2015/11/06/digital-learning-is-the-future-and-the-means-for-an-l-amp-d-revamp-experts-say.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2015/11/06/digital-learning-is-the-future-and-the-means-for-an-l-amp-d-revamp-experts-say.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Towards Maturity, 2015: [www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark)

Benchmark reviews with over 4,500 organisations over the past 13 years have highlighted six key areas that contribute to accelerating performance of L&D. These six effective practice workstreams are described in the Towards Maturity Model™ and the extent of their practice in an organisation is measured by the Towards Maturity Index (TMI), the unique single score that organisations can use to benchmark their progress.

Organisations active across all six workstreams are consistently achieving better business and individual performance. When compared to those in bottom quartile for TMI (Q4), the **Top Deck** (those in the top decile for the TMI) are consistently high performers:

- ▶ **Five times** more likely to report benefits relating to efficiency and business process improvement
- ▶ **Five times** more likely to report benefits relating to productivity and business responsiveness
- ▶ **Eight times** more likely to report benefits relating to building the learning culture in the organisation

Those in the **Top Deck** are also delivering more for less:

- ▶ **65%** of the top deck agree that learning innovation has contributed to improvements in organisational productivity (26% average)
- ▶ **74%** of top deck have increased the proportion of staff engaged in learning and development through technology (42%)
- ▶ **58%** have noticed improvements in staff behaviour (23%)

We look to the **Top Deck** to illustrate the steps that L&D leaders might take to build responsive and highly skilled teams; people that are prepared to embrace and drive the future of learning.

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*The quotes from learning professionals that we feature are from respondents to the question, “Please share any other comments on how the skillset for your L&D staff is changing, or any other additional challenges they are facing for the future.”*

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*The role of the L&D professional must change rapidly as they embrace new technologies and delivery mechanisms, driven in part by the requirements of a new generation of tech-savvy staff. The next chapter tracks L&D progress to date.*

## 2 Progress update

*Looking at trends over the past five years, certain factors illustrate just how little has changed! A number of skills gaps and shortages in learning and development still exist and we explore how they can be addressed.*

With an average of eight L&D professionals in the team, each responsible for the training needs of 1,135 staff, the pressure is on to deliver the skills and performance the business needs – when it needs it!

Training budgets, with a median value of £0.5m, are increasingly stretched. The modern L&D team needs to think differently and to harness technology more effectively in order to become more efficient and bring both training and performance support closer to the point of need.

The organisations reporting the most benefits from a modernised learning strategy are not always those with the biggest budget or team size. **Top Deck** organisations are drawn from across all sectors and have an average L&D team of just five people, each responsible for an average of 960 people.

Overall, there is a cautious optimism in the L&D profession. Across the 2015 Benchmark Study sample as a whole:

- ▶ **36%** have increased the size of their training team in the last two years
  - **31%** expect further increase in the next two years
- ▶ **38%** of organisations have increased training budget over the last two years
  - **36%** predict a further increase in the next two years

*Table 1: Changing learning and development team size*

	Private sector	Public sector	Not-for-profit sector
Average ratio of learners to each L&D professional	1174:1	1287:1	723:1
% that increased training team size over last two years	38%	29%	39%
% planning to increase training team in next two years	34%	19%	35%

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*“We are merging with another business, doubling the size and complexity of skills and employees.” **Group HRD, Retail sector***

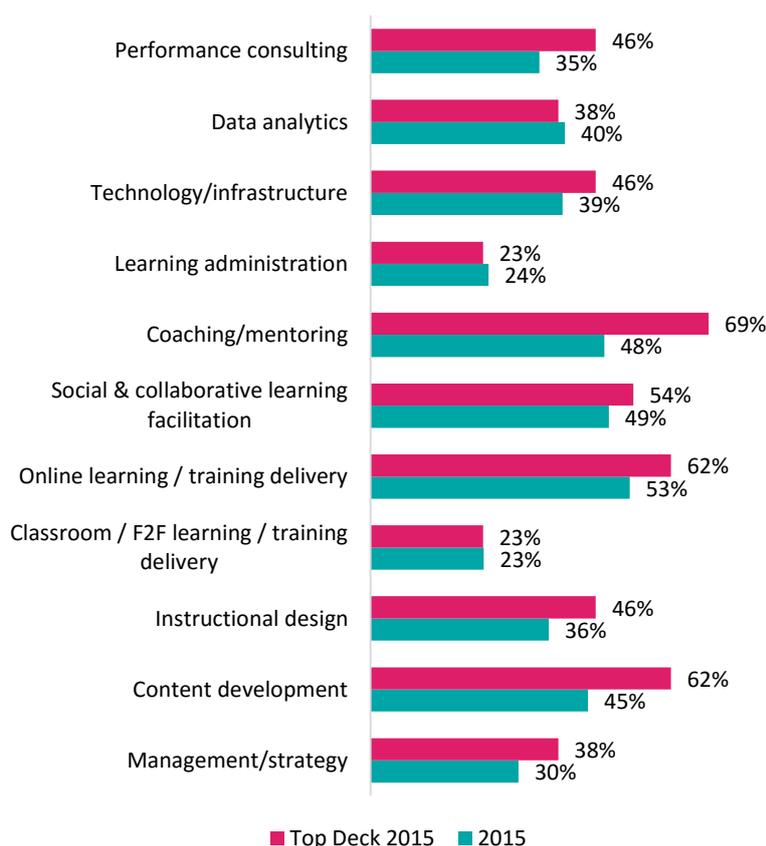
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Many organisations are planning to increase their number of L&D staff in the next two years in a number of areas: Figure 1 shows the planned increased in team capacity. The reasons for this can be associated with business growth, energising new L&D campaigns, a shift in business expectation from the team, or to build team competence in critical areas to operate and lead successfully in the digital world.

Across the 2015 sample as a whole, the greatest increases to L&D team capacity are planned in:

- ▶ **53%** plan to increase capacity in online delivery
- ▶ **49%** in social and collaborative learning facilitation
- ▶ **48%** in coaching/mentoring

Figure 1: Planned increase in L&D team capacity



*Which sectors vary from average in increasing L&D team capacity?*

**Above average**

- ▶ Social and collaborative learning facilitation (49% average)
  - 67% Central government
  - 85% Professional services
- ▶ Online training delivery (53%)
  - 60% Local government
- ▶ Coaching & mentoring (48%)
  - 92% Professional services
- ▶ Content development (45%)
  - 64% Retail
- ▶ Classroom training (23%)
  - 77% Professional services
- ▶ Online delivery (39%)
  - 89% Energy and Utilities

**Below average**

- ▶ Management/Strategy (30%)
  - 7% Central Government
- ▶ Data analytics (40%)
  - 17% Health
- ▶ Learning administration (24%)
  - 8% Health
- ▶ Classroom training (23%)
  - 0% IT and Telecoms
  - 0% Local government
- ▶ Performance consulting (35%)
  - 17% Charities
  - 18% Manufacturing

*“We rely on secondments of staff from the business. This model may need to evolve to incorporate additional L&D trained professionals to assist with the implementation of learning technologies.” L&D, Professional Services*

The proportion of organisations planning team growth has increased in all of these areas of responsibility in the last 12 months. The most notable increases are:

- ▶ 35% want to increase capacity in performance consulting (up from 28% in 2014)
- ▶ 24% want to increase capacity in learning administration (up from 16% in 2014)

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*“Due to budget cuts, the professional L&D team is being subsumed into the generalist HR team. This will result in less time being spent on L&D and digital learning functions.” OD Adviser, Local Government*

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However, those in the **Top Deck** are focusing their growth on coaching and mentoring (69%), content development (62%) and online training delivery (62%). Whilst many of them are planning team growth, there has been a shift in emphasis during the last 12 months:

- ▶ **62%** of the Top Deck want to increase capacity in content development (up significantly from 42% in the 2014 Top Deck)
- ▶ **46%** want more technology infrastructure specialists (up from 29%)
- ▶ **69%** want to increase capacity for coaching and mentoring (up from 58%)

Getting the right L&D team in place will be a combination of bringing in new skills with new team members and internal development of the existing staff. The areas for growth above, rightly correspond with the areas where L&D are least confident that they have the skills in house already. Those in the Top Deck are twice as likely to have the right skills in place now, and can point the way to others for the Future of Learning.

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*“Our team includes technical members who have joined from the audit practice and so have the technical background rather than an L&D background.” Assurance Learning Leader, Professional Services*

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## 2.1 Digital progress

An average of 19% of overall training budget is spent on learning technologies – an average that has not changed in five years, despite two-thirds of organisations reporting each year that they are planning to increase that proportion. Table 2 shows that the not-for-profit sector has bucked the trend and have significantly increased the proportion spent on technology. **Top Deck** organisations are currently allocating 25%.

Table 2: Variation in spend on learning technology according to sector

	Average	Private sector	Public sector	Not-for-profit sector
% of training budget spent on technology in <b>2015</b>	19%	19%	16%	18%
% of training budget spent on technology in <b>2011</b>	20%	22%	14%	13%

The greatest increases in external spend on technology in the last five years have been in:

- ▶ Custom-made e-learning objects (up from 53% in 2011 to 61% in 2015)
- ▶ Learning management systems (up from 71% to 80%)
- ▶ Electronic performance support systems (up from 29% to 36%)
- ▶ Learning portals (up from 47% to 54%)

Many of the other technologies that have shown similar increase in use have been low-cost solutions, mindful of the constant pressure on L&D teams to deliver ‘more for less’. For example:

- ▶ Rapid application development tools, such as content authoring tools (up from 44% to 63%)
- ▶ Cloud-based file- and presentation-sharing applications (up from 20% to 49%)
- ▶ Virtual meetings (65% to 79%)

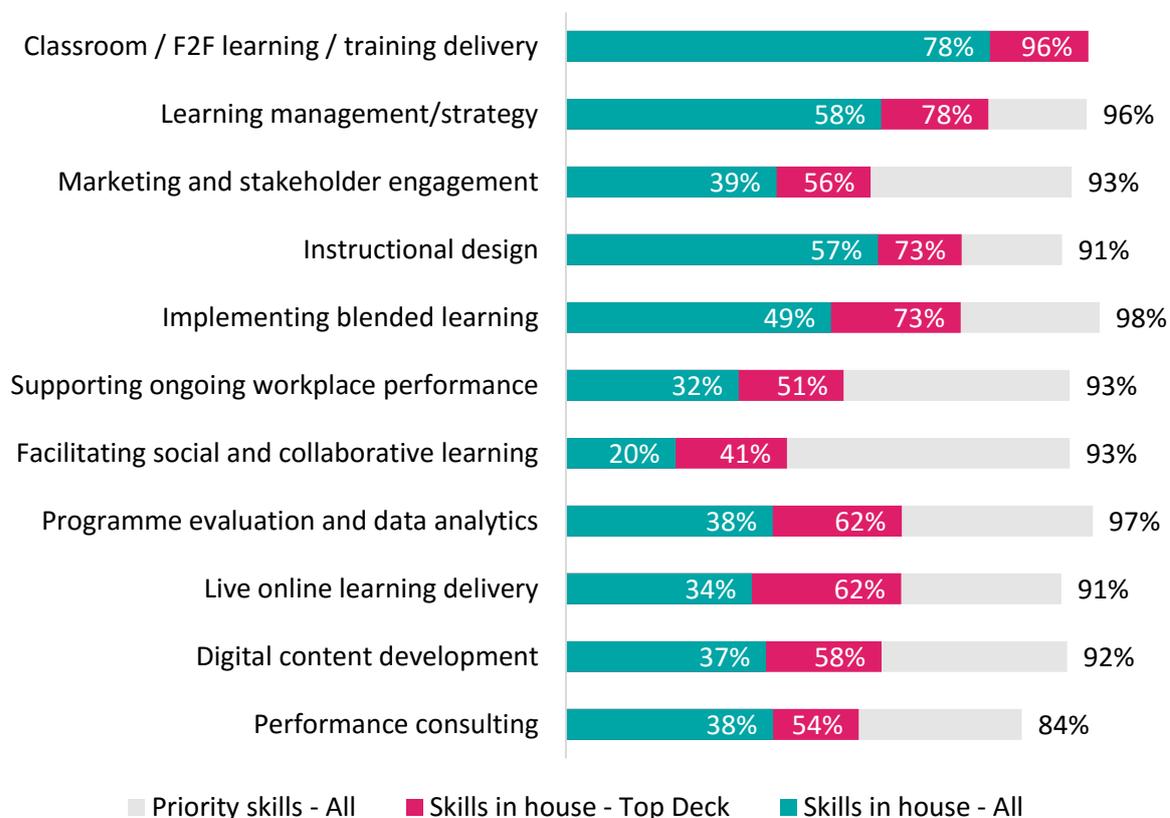
## 2.2 Skills priorities for L&D

Demands on internal teams for professional credibility are increasing and becoming broader as L&D become recognised as a strategic enabler. Core L&D skills are evolving and not only do L&D need a broader, more diverse range of skills, but their customers are looking for a higher quality of learning courses and resources.

In the last few years we have seen an increase in online delivery, a greater focus on supporting workplace performance and more organisations advocating social and collaborative learning. However, progress is painfully slow with **two in three** of those in L&D still reporting that they do not have the skills to take advantage of these tools.

Today organisations are looking for L&D teams with collective competence across a wide range of skills areas (Figure 3). However, whilst the majority possess good skills in house in classroom delivery and **three in five** have skills in learning management/strategy and instructional design, fewer than half have the wide range of skills that they currently consider a priority.

Figure 2: Proportion of sample with priority skills in house



We identified three specific areas where L&D skills are not keeping pace with the increasing use of technology. Over the last five years, the number of technologies in use by over 50% of our sample has doubled and more organisations than ever are developing their own digital learning platforms and resources in house. However, the expertise to support this shift from ‘buy’ to ‘build’ has not increased proportionately. These are all tools that L&D predict to be using a lot more of in the next two years.

### 1. Designing and developing online content:

- ▶ 76% build their own e-learning content in house (72% in 2011)
- ▶ 63% are using content authoring tools (44%)

Yet only 57% believe they have the skills in house already for instructional design (33% in 2011), and only 37% have the skills for digital content development (36%). Even fewer organisations have skills to design learning solutions to business advantage, at 23% (25%).

### 2. Supporting online delivery:

- ▶ 86% using some form of live online learning (63% in 2011)
- ▶ 45% are using virtual classrooms (46%)

Yet only 34% believe they have the skills in house already for live online learning delivery (20% in 2011).

### 3. Facilitating social and collaborative learning:

- ▶ 49% are using in-house social media (34% in 2011)
- ▶ 50% are using communities of practice (46%)

Yet only 20% have the facilitation skills they need (up from 15% in 2014).

In two areas, there are indications that L&D could actually be under-using the skills they have in house:

### 4. Using learning analytics to improve performance:

- ▶ 32% use tools for online evaluation of business impact (32% in 2011)
- ▶ 19% use learning analytics to improve the service they offer\*
- ▶ 15% actively use benchmarking as a performance improvement tools (24%)

Whilst 38% claim to have skills in house for programme evaluation and data analytics.

### 5. Supporting ongoing workplace performance:

- ▶ 30% are using blogs (34% in 2011)
- ▶ 12% are using content curation and social bookmarking tools\*

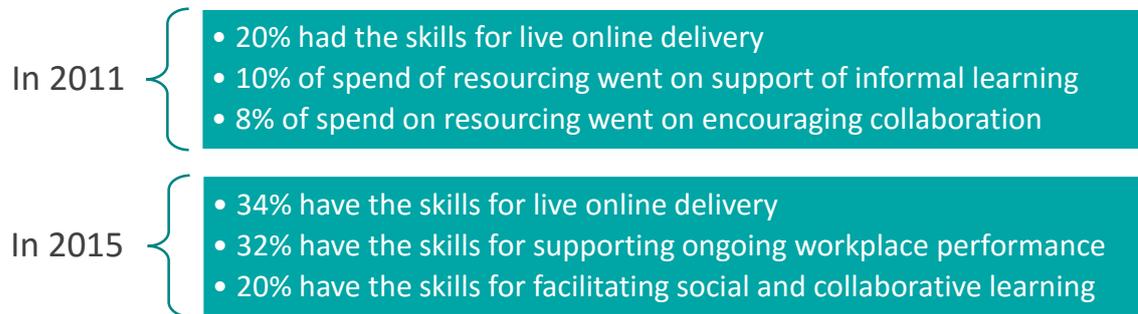
Despite 32% claiming that they have the skills they need for supporting performance\*.

*\*Not investigated in 2011*

When compared to those in the **bottom quartile** for the Towards Maturity Index, the **Top Deck** are:

- ▶ **3x** more likely to have skills in house for:
  - ✓ Implementing blended learning
  - ✓ Facilitating social and collaborative learning
  - ✓ Programme evaluation and data analytics
- ▶ **4x** more likely to have skills in house for:
  - ✓ Live online learning delivery
- ▶ **14x** more likely to have skills in house for:
  - ✓ Facilitating social and collaborative learning

Figure 3: Developing critical skills for L&D



The skills gaps identified shed some light on the issues faced by the innovative L&D leader, keen to embrace the opportunities that the technology can offer, but not yet in the place they need to be to make the most of them. At best, some degree of experimentation with new technologies is healthy and engenders a spirit of enthusiasm for new ideas amongst L&D staff and their learners. At worst, learners bear the scars of their attempts to introduce the latest whizz-bang gadget and become jaded and reluctant online learners.

**Only 20% have skills in house for facilitating social and collaborative learning**

Revealingly, the jury is still out on the urgent need for skills in facilitating social and collaborative learning which we reported last year. Table 3 shows that whilst only 20% of organisations have these skills in house already, 49% are planning to recruit

new L&D staff with these skills, and 50% recognise that they need to develop these skills now. However, this is also the skillset with the greatest proportion postponing development for the time being.

We investigated for each of these skills areas, which were considered to need developing first and which were being pushed further down the list. Supporting ongoing workplace performance, a skillset in great demand with fewer than one in three organisations having such skills in house already, is deemed to have the most urgent need for attention.

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*“The L&D skills we need are changing as we become more of a digital product organisation, managing user-focused learning products. Trainers are becoming more multiplatform learning professionals to include content production and social learning moderators.”* **Head of Digital Academy, Media sector**

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## 2.3 Where does L&D sit within the business?

Many organisations are re-considering where learning should sit within their structure. Across a wide variation of organisational sizes and structures we consider three variations:

- ▶ **67%** of the 2015 benchmark sample report to a central HR/L&D function
- ▶ **15%** report to an HR/L&D function within the line of business
- ▶ **17%** work and report directly into a line of business outside HR/L&D

In *Embracing Change*, we noted some of the differences in results expressed by these groups.<sup>5</sup> Each model has its strengths and weaknesses, but for this report, it is interesting to see the distribution of skills and talent that emerge. Those reporting into the line of business are more likely to recognise that they have skills gaps in consulting; those working in HR are more likely to focus on gaps in content development skills.

Figure 5: Top 5 skills gaps reported



Span of responsibility varies greatly across the three groups. Those reporting directly into the line of business need to punch above their weight, with fewer dedicated resources and double the number of learners to support per L&D professional. Notably, our sample for those reporting directly to the line of business had fewer senior managers, but a higher proportion of classroom trainers and content developers.

<sup>5</sup> Towards Maturity, 2015: [www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark)

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*“Our model has been to ‘grow our own’ L&D professionals by taking staff out of the business and repurposing them. Largely this has been reasonably successful, but it does mean a lack of deep expertise and experience in some areas (e.g. digital content development).” **Global Learning, Professional Services***

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Those reporting directly in the line of business are spending a higher proportion of training budget on learning technology (24% vs 16% for those reporting to HR central) and developing a higher proportion of content in house (39% vs 32%). A higher proportion have seen their budgets increase over the last two years (40% vs 31%) and predict further increase over the next two years (51% vs 33%).

This may indicate a shifting responsibility for learning away from a central HR function or reflect a more general change in business organisation towards dotted line reporting structures across multiple departments or regions. Not only do collaborative skills become all the more key in flat or matrix organisation structures, but so too does the understanding of and alignment with business priorities. There is no doubt that where there is no organisation-wide coordination of L&D or overall learning strategy, it is more difficult to establish L&D as a trusted professional service and business partner, critical for achieving organisational objectives and targets. However, those reporting directly into the line of business can be more in tune with immediate concerns and bring learning closer to the point of need as evidenced by the improved benefits they report:

- ▶ **41%** drive business innovation (vs 29% for those reporting to HR)
- ▶ **37%** improvement in on-the-job productivity (28%)
- ▶ **40%** improvement in customer satisfaction (33%)
- ▶ **37%** reduce time away from the job (29%)
- ▶ **27%** improvement in ability to personalise learning (16%)
- ▶ **23%** speed up application of learning back into the workplace (16%)
- ▶ **23%** integrate learning into the workflow (10%)

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*“L&D is part of what we do within HR and we have no dedicated staff to do this as their primary function. Our L&D performance is much improved with still a way to go but people are now taking more responsibility for their own learning, and managers for their teams, which is great to see.” **Head of HR, Charity***

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Moving towards a more integrated model of learning across the business can improve technology efficiency and business alignment, and those reporting to HR are more likely to strongly agree:

- ▶ **62%** agree that their strategy for learning allows for changing business priorities (52% for those reporting directly to the line of business)
- ▶ **65%** everyone on the L&D team understands the strategy, plans and priorities of the business (46%)
- ▶ **64%** if something is important to the business, learning interventions will be resourced and managed correctly (44%)

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*“We have recently restructured our team, giving those with specific skills the leads in influencing change.” **Training Manager, Not-for-profit organisation***

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## 2.4 Concluding observations

There is an optimism amongst L&D professionals about the future of learning. Team sizes and budgets are static or growing. Expectations to deliver business value higher are than ever before. Despite an increasingly digital business environment, budgets allocated to learning technologies have remained static over 5 years and the skills of L&D professionals to engage with technology in learning have, in many cases, actually fallen.

Those reporting directly to the line of business are more likely to have fewer resources and as a result, more likely to utilise technology in order to achieve desired benefits. It doesn't matter where you sit within the organisation, alignment is king to business, learners and HR. These three themes will be explored further in the next chapters.

*Top performing teams show us that future L&D success is not solely dependent on the integration of technology into existing learning process. In the next three chapters, we explore how L&D professionals are preparing for the future of learning as trusted business partners, empowering the learner to take ownership of their own learning and transforming their own skills to meet the challenge.*

### Insights from the CIPD Leaders in Learning Network

At the beginning of 2016, 170 L&D professionals gathered at the CIPD Leaders in Learning network to explore the implications of the research. Discussion focused on three main areas:

1. What do we need to do to get leaders on board?  
What skills do we need to do that?
2. What do we need to do to support self-directed learners?  
What skills do we need to do that?
3. How do we modernise our approach to building skills in the L&D department?  
How can we facilitate experiential and social learning for L&D professionals?

We have analysed their top tips and points of action. At the end of the next three chapters, we present the top 40 hints and tips separated into eight themes to help readers identify actions to help them prepare for the future of learning.

#### How to use these insights

It's time to focus on what makes a difference. Identify one of the three areas to set as your priority and consider which of the headings needs the most work. Debate the points with your L&D team and reflect on their views. Identify the goals, resources, timescales, research and plan the approach and build your action plan

*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 3 Integrating learning and work

*The future of learning is in the heart of the workplace. Top performing learning teams understand and evaluate the business problem. They both recommend and support solutions that build performance that go beyond the traditional course.*

In *Embracing Change*, we challenged business leaders to expect more from L&D than simply the course library and to expect greater impact from learning and development activities. Digital transformation, coupled with integrated thinking between managers, HR and L&D professionals and a focus on business outcomes leads to success.

### What do business leaders think about L&D?

Contributors to the Leaders in Learning network were caught in between what they would like business leaders to think (“invaluable, trusted, essential, difference-makers”) and what they fear is often the case (“repetitive, well-meaning, costly, irrelevant”).

### 3.1 Providing solutions to business problems

Nevertheless, in the Towards Maturity Benchmark, L&D leaders clearly want to be able to show business leaders that they are able to shift from delivering courses to delivering value. To achieve this, a clear understanding of business and strategic goals is critical, although not all were able to agree that it was well expressed within their organisation:

- ▶ **61%** say L&D activity is aligned to strategic goals of business (**86% in the Top Deck**)
- ▶ **59%** agree teams are aware of how their work aligns with business objectives (**86%**)
- ▶ **31%** identify specific business metrics/KPIs to improve through learning in partnership with senior management (**78%**)
- ▶ **36%** L&D have a plan for how they will meet agreed business metrics (**79%**)

Even fewer organisations evaluate their progress against the strategic goals:

- ▶ **17%** measure specific business metrics when evaluating the effectiveness of learning technologies (**51%**)<sup>6</sup>

Top Deck organisations are **twice as likely** to identify, plan and measure business metrics in association with senior managers

Little progress in these areas appears to have been made over the last five years. A mature organisation needs a structured and standardised approach to learning and organisational

<sup>6</sup> To explore learning impact in more detail, visit: <http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/learningimpact>

development. Strategic alignment and profound knowledge of the business is key to developing world-class learning solutions and embedding a learning culture within the organisation.<sup>7</sup>

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*“Communicate the value of learning - it is a vehicle to inform, motivate and influence stakeholders.” Global Learning Director, Financial Services*

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In two areas, however, there has been considerable improvement. L&D are now more flexible in their strategies than they were five years ago and they are more aware of the skills that the business needs.

Figure 6: Extent to which L&D are aligned to business and strategic priorities



### 3.2 Moving beyond the course to get closer to the business

Many L&D leaders still have an overemphasis on providing ‘the course’ the answer to all business training and skills development needs. This proportion has not changed significantly in the last five years, despite seeing a significant increase in those looking to understand business requirements by shifting towards a more performance consulting approach:

- ▶ **52%** consider the course as only one option for building skills and performance (55% in 2011)
- ▶ **54%** consider their role is shifting towards performance consultancy (46% in 2014<sup>8</sup>)

When L&D operate as a part of the central HR function, they appear to be better at linking learning to business and getting buy-in from business leaders. For those reporting to HR:

- ▶ **65%** agree that everyone in L&D understands the strategy, plans and priorities of the business (46% for those reporting directly into a line of business)
- ▶ **62%** agree that L&D activity is fully aligned with organisational strategic goals (52%)

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<sup>7</sup> For ideas on improving business alignment, see: *In-Focus: Aligning Learning to Business* (Towards Maturity, 2015): [www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus-alignment2015](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus-alignment2015)

<sup>8</sup> Question not asked in 2011

- ▶ **40%** of senior managers demonstrate a commitment to learning (32%)
- ▶ **51%** ensure L&D is always discussed as part of performance review (37%)
- ▶ **64%** ensure that if something is important to the business, it will be resourced and managed correctly (44%)

This places additional pressure on those working in the line of business to see how their activity fits into the big picture.

**Top Deck** organisations have their primary focus on integrating learning at work:

- ▶ **94%** consider the course as only one option for building skills and performance
- ▶ **90%** consider their role is shifting towards performance consultancy

The benefits from better understanding of business needs are clear. In the Top Deck:

- ▶ **71%** agree that they increase on-the-job productivity (29% average)
- ▶ **61%** drive business innovation (31%)
- ▶ **59%** manage risk more successfully (23%)

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*“Challenges for the L&D arena will be to truly professionalise into multi-skilled business partners that can transition from the 'training manager' mindset to organisational/learning development consultants.” **L&D Manager, Energy sector***

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### 3.3 Evidence-based teaching and learning

Forward-thinking L&D leaders develop a strong sense of business awareness, recognising that they are business leaders too – and respected as such by others. This recognition is reinforced by learning and development programme success and by careful planning and piloting of new initiatives.

**62%** of those in our 2015 Benchmark noted skills gaps in programme evaluation and using data analytics (see Figure 5). For successes to be anything more than anecdotal, L&D leaders need to urgently build skills in this area.

In the formal education system, performance data plays an important role in helping schools to drive up standards and help teachers to make professional judgements about pupil progress.<sup>9</sup> However, it would appear that for many in workplace learning, collection, analysis and usage of performance data is much more limited. Indeed, as Table 4 indicates, some of those in L&D have taken their eye off the ball over the last five years.

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. [http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/groups/public/@education/documents/nas\\_download/nasuwt\\_010772.pdf](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/groups/public/@education/documents/nas_download/nasuwt_010772.pdf)

Table 4: Measuring the benefits delivered by learning and development

	2011 average	2015 average	Top Deck
We know how long it takes for learners to become competent in their job roles	27%	24%	69%
We know the opportunity cost of the various ways our learners learn	19%	17%	55%
We use learning analytics to improve the service we deliver	21%*	19%	73%
We actively use benchmarking as a performance improvement tool	24%	15%	43%
We collect financial data related to programme benefits	19%	11%	43%

\*2014 data

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*“We will use meaningful, relevant analytics... how a specific L&D event/deliverable has impacted the critical business metrics.” L&D Director, Logistics*

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Whilst measuring Return on Investment is not something that is routinely done – in fact only 10% of our sample calculate ROI for their learning programmes, rising to only 35% in the Top Deck – engaging with and involving business leaders is something that is routine in the Top Deck and contributes towards their success.

Compared to the sample average, the **Top Deck** are at least twice more likely to:

- ▶ Regularly communicate successes to senior management (94% vs 44% average)
- ▶ Report against the targets agreed (92% vs 39%)
- ▶ Ensure there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders (88% vs 39%)
- ▶ Pull stakeholders into a steering group to support programme design and implementation (80% vs 39%)

### Tips for gaining business leader support

The members of the CIPD Leaders in Learning network identified 40 hints and tips to help L&D professionals gain the support of business leaders with the learning agenda. These include ideas on being proactive, building relationships, challenging the status quo, demonstrating professionalism, being more business savvy, increasing confidence, researching thoroughly and talking value. You can find them on pages 28-29.

### 3.4 Concluding observations

In a rapidly changing business world, learning strategies are becoming more flexible. However, the future of learning will involve bringing learning and performance initiatives closer to the point of need than ever before. Top performing organisations are more proactive in planning to integrate learning and work; are more reliant on evidence to support decision-making; they work closely with key business stakeholders throughout the process and they no longer consider the course as the only option for supporting performance.

*In the next section, we look at how innovative learning organisations are empowering learners to take control of their own learning and development and the shifting role of the L&D professional in supporting the self-directed learner.*

## 40 ways to get leaders on board with learning

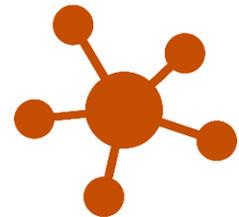
### Be proactive



- ▶ Uncover specific rather than assumed needs
- ▶ Ensure leaders take responsibility for the learning of their direct team
- ▶ Seek to innovate and develop a fresh image and L&D brand
- ▶ Take a pre-emptive and proactive approach
- ▶ Open the door to leaders...if it is closed!

### Build relationships

- ▶ Be customer-focused and driven; the key stakeholders for businesses
- ▶ Build relationships with leaders who understand the business
- ▶ Spend time understanding how the business works and its needs
- ▶ Speak plain business language and cut the L&D jargon
- ▶ Speak to leaders at their level using strategic and commercial language



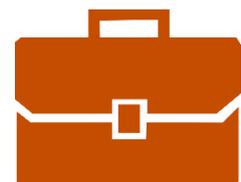
### Challenge



- ▶ Challenge assumption that 'training courses' are the solution
- ▶ Excel in questioning; ask clear and effective questions
- ▶ Define any learning prejudices; unpick why they exist and promote new thinking
- ▶ Get leaders to observe great learning in action; challenge stereotypes
- ▶ Make links between the business need and non-conventional learning approaches

### Demonstrate professionalism

- ▶ Ensure competence in the use of modern workplace technology
- ▶ Define what business credibility looks like to leaders and peers
- ▶ Understand and apply the latest learning and business research
- ▶ Demonstrate the behaviours on CIPD Profession Map
- ▶ Apply principles of behavioural science for effective learning; which assumes we know them!



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

### Get business-savvy



- ▶ Demonstrate business acumen and savvy
- ▶ Know the key business targets and KPIs
- ▶ Keep the bottom line in mind to save money and improve sales and performance
- ▶ Ensure L&D has a strong clear understanding relevant markets and trends
- ▶ Use business analysis methods such as environmental scan, PESTLEE and SWOT

- ▶ Be passionate, resilience, persistence, confident and engaging
- ▶ Align all learning with strategic objectives
- ▶ Know what success looks like in terms of goals, objectives and clear business benefits
- ▶ Develop influencing and negotiation skills
- ▶ Be brave and bold

### Have confidence



### Research thoroughly



- ▶ Consider the implications if we do nothing, something or lots to engage leaders!
- ▶ Define what factors leaders think are slowing up or preventing organisational performance
- ▶ Understand the drivers that leaders have; ask them what keeps them awake at night
- ▶ Define what areas of learning leaders would consider as a good starting place
- ▶ Find data and metrics that demonstrate learning transfer

- ▶ Encourage leaders to be learners themselves; focus on meeting their personal needs
- ▶ Demonstrate the results that can be achieved when L&D is aligned to business targets
- ▶ Make sure great solutions don't go unnoticed; learning PR matters
- ▶ Demonstrate added value and improved productivity: provide examples
- ▶ Share the learning success stories and case studies both internally and externally

### Talk value



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 4 Customer-activated learning strategy

*Where organisations are successfully shifting from a trainer-led to a learner-led model they are reaping benefits in learner engagement and motivation as well as business performance. Those in the vanguard are moving from 'courses to resources' and building their technology infrastructure in support.*

Technology is reshaping the learning landscape and altering how people access learning, use resources and record evidence. In essence, staff are becoming more self-directed than ever before.<sup>10</sup> L&D teams proactively preparing for the future of learning understand that their customers are changing and are adapting accordingly. The move away from face-to-face training to provision of a range of flexible learning resources requires a shift in mindset not just for L&D professionals but for their customers too who need to recognise their own responsibility to access the learning they need.

L&D can help customers to have a more active voice and give them greater access to the opportunities they need. The role of L&D becomes one of facilitation, consultancy and an enabler of change, empowering learners to take control over their own development through providing them with the resources they need – and the capability to make the most of them. They also encourage people to reflect on what they are learning and the learning process itself.

Employees' expectations of L&D departments are also changing. Development opportunities are part of their perception of what makes a 'great company' to work for and is a factor in attracting the best talent and a strong influence on staff retention. The CIPD 2015 Resourcing and Talent Planning Report<sup>11</sup> cited that, for in a sample of 520 organisations, 49% increased learning and development opportunities as a specific step to address staff retention.

What are learners doing for themselves? We reported in *Embracing Change*:

- ▶ **88%** of learners learn more by finding things out for themselves than through face-to-face classroom training
- ▶ **75%** of learners are willing to use technology to share their knowledge in order to help others learn



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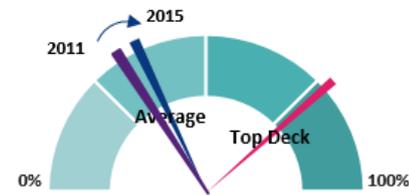
<sup>10</sup> See *Embracing Change* page 10 for demographics of learners taking part in this research

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/resourcing-talent-planning\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/resourcing-talent-planning_2015.pdf).

## 4.1 Understanding learners

Those in the **Top Deck** are twice as likely to understand how their staff learn what they need to do their job:

- ▶ **59%** agree L&D staff keep up-to-date with the latest research into learning theory (e.g. neuroscience) (28% sample average)
- ▶ **86%** are proactive understanding how learners currently learn what they need for their job (30%)



We involve users in the design of the most appropriate learning approach

There has been some small improvement in the level to which users are involved in the design process over the last five years (up from 31% in 2011 to 35%). However, the Top Deck are still over twice as likely to involve their end users in learning design (**76%**).

Even the proportion of L&D that claim to understand how employees use social media outside work to share ideas, which might be expected to increase year-on-year, has remained constant at just 16%, with the Top Deck again over twice as likely agree that they understand this (**40%**).

The benefits of translating an understanding of learner behaviours and the learning process, into insights on learner engagement and motivation are clear. In the Top Deck:

- ▶ **49%** report that they improve employee engagement with learning (20% average)
- ▶ **49%** increase the ongoing sharing of good practice (22%)
- ▶ **53%** improve staff motivation (20%)
- ▶ **43%** increase self-directed learning (18%)

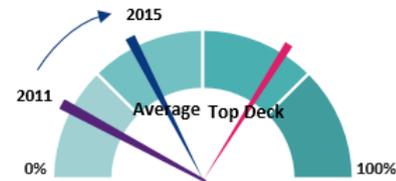
## 4.2 Empowering learners

This is well summed up by Dave Buglass, Head of Organisational Capability and Development, Tesco Bank. In the foreword to *Embracing Change*, he said: *“My role today is no longer purely about learning, it is also about colleague retention and reward. This creates an opportunity to build a seamless experience for colleagues that is more consumer-centric. Colleagues don’t care about policy, process, or the next big training initiative. They care about achieving their potential, overcoming their challenges and realising their opportunities.”*

To what extent are L&D empowering their learners?

- ▶ **19%** use available support systems to promote self-reliance rather than a culture of dependency (vs. **47%** in the Top Deck)
- ▶ **13%** use defined performance support practices to support learning transfer after formal training (**55%**)

These proportions have remained unchanged for the last five years – even with a different sample each year. At best, only one in three L&D professionals are successfully shifting culture to a more self-directed learning model. Even in the Top Deck, there is still a long way to go.



Individuals are encouraged to organise their own personal learning strategies

Trusting learners to make their own decisions; making learning attractive and relevant so that learners will engage in online learning without prompting; having the right content readily available so that learners can quickly find what they need to support their day-to-day performance improvement – these are all areas that L&D can work on immediately and will have a direct impact on learner motivation and engagement.<sup>12</sup>

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*“We are moving from courses to resources – becoming a curator of content, building management capability in developing self-directing learning, developing organisational agility and developing key skills to work effectively in a global organisation.”* **L&D Consultant, Local Government**

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For many organisations, the future of learning includes increasing the ability of staff to learn for themselves. 83% of L&D leaders are looking to build a more self-directed learning culture. As part of this, they encourage people to organise their own personal learning strategy. Whilst this has increased from 15% to 34% in the last five years, the Top Deck are still twice as likely to agree that this is part of their approach (**61%**).

Having the right infrastructure in place for performance support, collaboration, mobile and personalised learning is a key part of this, but many L&D teams have not yet implemented the technology that might help them. For example:

- ▶ **12%** use content curation tools (**50%** of the Top Deck)
- ▶ **13%** use tools for personalising the learning environment (**34%**)
- ▶ **15%** provide tools to download and organise learning apps (**36%**)
- ▶ **32%** use user-generated content (**82%**)
- ▶ **36%** use Electronic Performance Support Systems (**53%**)
- ▶ **46%** build learning communities (**75%**)

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<sup>12</sup> For further ideas, see: *In-Focus: Building Staff Engagement*: [www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/engagement2015](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/engagement2015)

### Tips on supporting self-directed learners

The members of the CIPD Leaders in Learning network generated 40 hints and tips to help L&D professionals support self-directed learners and learning. These include ideas on how to nurture culture, guide and facilitate, create connections, signpost expertise, leverage technology, communicate clearly, assist and reward and to become an agent of change. You can find them on pages 34-35.

## 4.3 Concluding observations

There was strong agreement amongst the CIPD Leaders in Learning network that preparing and promoting opportunities for people to learn from and with others is an essential part of a modern organisational learning strategy. Their insights on the following page can help others in L&D to improve the learner engagement and motivation in their own organisation.

Today's workers are more tech savvy, more independent and have higher expectations of responsive service than ever before. In preparing for the future of learning, L&D teams need to tune into staff requirements faster. Top Deck Learning organisations demonstrate that are shifting to a 'customer-activated' learning approach: they listen more, challenge their own assumptions about how staff learn and then use this knowledge to better support their learners.

*Integrating learning and work and shifting to a customer activated learning strategy will require learning professionals to have new skills and mind-sets. In the final section, we look at the process of developing L&D skills needed for the future.*

## 40 ways to support self-directed learners and learning

### Nurture culture



- ▶ Ensure self-directed learning is part of 1-2-1, PDP and appraisal conversations
- ▶ Create energy and enthusiasm through on-going feedback, 'win's and great practice'
- ▶ Treat the culture change as a project with defined goals milestones
- ▶ Develop a review and evaluation approach before starting initiatives
- ▶ Be committed to provide on-going help and support; culture change takes time

- ▶ Encourage dedicated time for all staff to explore and reflect on their practices
- ▶ Let go; don't control learning but become a facilitator
- ▶ Encourage wider discussion about self-directed learning and share what works
- ▶ Involve stakeholders so they are aware and support actions
- ▶ Continue own your own self-directed learning and development; be a role model

### Guide and facilitate



### Create connections



- ▶ Provide relevant technology to support learning at the point of need
- ▶ Create an infrastructure to support networking and sharing
- ▶ Encourage social learning skills and model learning communities
- ▶ Create networking opportunities, relationships and connections; informal and formal
- ▶ Provide relevant devices and technology

- ▶ Provide an active, interesting curation stream of useful, interesting and available content
- ▶ Point people in the right direction; signpost things that may help
- ▶ Create a peer rating method to highlight relevant and useful learner generated content
- ▶ Create easy access to learning resources through a convenient hub
- ▶ Use SMEs and experts to provide advice and ideas

### Signpost expertise



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 40 ways to support self-directed learners and learning (cont.)

### Leverage technology



- ▶ Develop positive links and shared vision with the IT; their support will be needed
- ▶ Develop learners' tech-savvy skills (e.g. using social media and making videos with mobile devices)
- ▶ Encourage learners to create podcasts, articles, videos and course follow-ups
- ▶ Consider a reward or gamified system to highlight personal learning commitment
- ▶ Recognise and celebrate progress; highlight successes

### Communicate clearly

- ▶ Be open-minded about innovation and how learning could happen; what do learners think?
- ▶ Talk to people about what they want to learn and how they want to learn
- ▶ Get learners to define what would help and hinder them
- ▶ Help learners to connect to what they are interested in; not just work-related
- ▶ Communicate the goal for self-directed learning; be available to offer support and explanation



### Assist and reward



- ▶ Research what resources are needed to support learning; involve learners in that process
- ▶ Make learning opportunities visible and accessible to all
- ▶ Coach managers and learners to understand the value of self-directed learning methods
- ▶ Help learners to understand and assess their learning needs and aspirations
- ▶ Formally recognise and reward self-directed practice

### Become an agent of change

- ▶ Develop curiosity, analysis, study and research skills
- ▶ Communicate that people have permission to learn differently
- ▶ Spot early adopters who are self-directed learners and encourage them to share
- ▶ Steer learners towards what the business wants; not just learning but towards the right outcomes
- ▶ Offer attractive learning choices, rather than fixed options



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 5 Equipping L&D for the future of learning

*A fast-paced changing workplace combined with new digital learning approaches, demands a change in the skills of the L&D professional. Yet, the profession fails to invest in their own skills. Only half of organisations provide L&D staff with formal Continuing Professional Development and a quarter of L&D leaders do not know how their teams build new skills.*

### 5.1 Addressing skills gaps

Understanding skills gaps and how to address them begins with an awareness of the skills required and those already in place. How many of those in L&D have drifted into training or development functions without any history of skills development in evidence-based teaching and learning. Indeed, many L&D leaders are not fully aware of the skills they already have – or need:

- ▶ Only **29%** have audited the skills of L&D staff against those required - something which is common practice in Top Deck organisations (**84%**)
- ▶ **23%** think their L&D staff have the right skills to exploit learning technologies for business advantage (**69%**)
- ▶ **28%** believe L&D staff are confident in incorporating the use of new media in learning design (**73%**)

Lack of knowledge and skills around learning innovation remain barriers for at least one in two organisations, despite some progress in this regard in the last five years. This is restricting the potential benefits to business and individual to be realised from implementation of learning technologies:

- ▶ **56%** believe L&D lack the skills to implement and manage digital learning (61% in 2011)
- ▶ **50%** believe they lack knowledge of the potential use and implementation of learning technologies (62% in 2011)

#### Modernising the approach to building digital skills

Keeping pace with the skills needed to match the digital revolution in learning and development is challenging for all. The technology environment is changing rapidly, and the tools in use are an indication of the evolving role of L&D and influence the skills that they urgently need to develop.

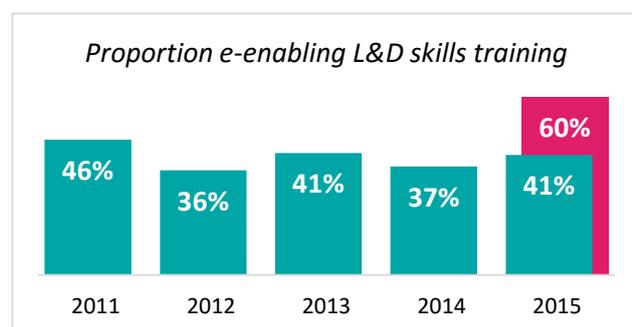
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*We need: “Social learning and collaboration tools. Ability to facilitate learning rather than deliver learning. Using analytics to understand performance improvement. Curating content that exists already rather than buying new.”*  
**Senior Manager, Academy Development, Finance sector**

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Across the 2015 benchmark as a whole, 69% of organisations have offered some form of skills development programme for L&D professionals. Despite investments in technology for other staff members, just 41% of L&D skills training is e-enabled (**60%** in the **Top Deck**).

This may be indicative of the lack of availability of high quality e-content around learning and development as this figure has remained static for over five years and the highest it has reached in any sector is 53% of programmes e-enabled in the manufacturing sector.



## 5.2 The dangers of ignoring technology

When 50% or more of L&D leaders say lack of skills in L&D is holding them back as an organisation, it’s no wonder then, that fewer than half of learners have confidence in them. Of the sample of 1,681 learners<sup>13</sup> who took part in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape in 2015, reported in *Embracing Change*:

- ▶ **47%** believe their L&D professionals (trainers, training team) understand and are able to provide help with their performance needs
- ▶ **5%** would consider that their L&D professionals are the people whose opinion they would feel most encourages them to get involved in learning online

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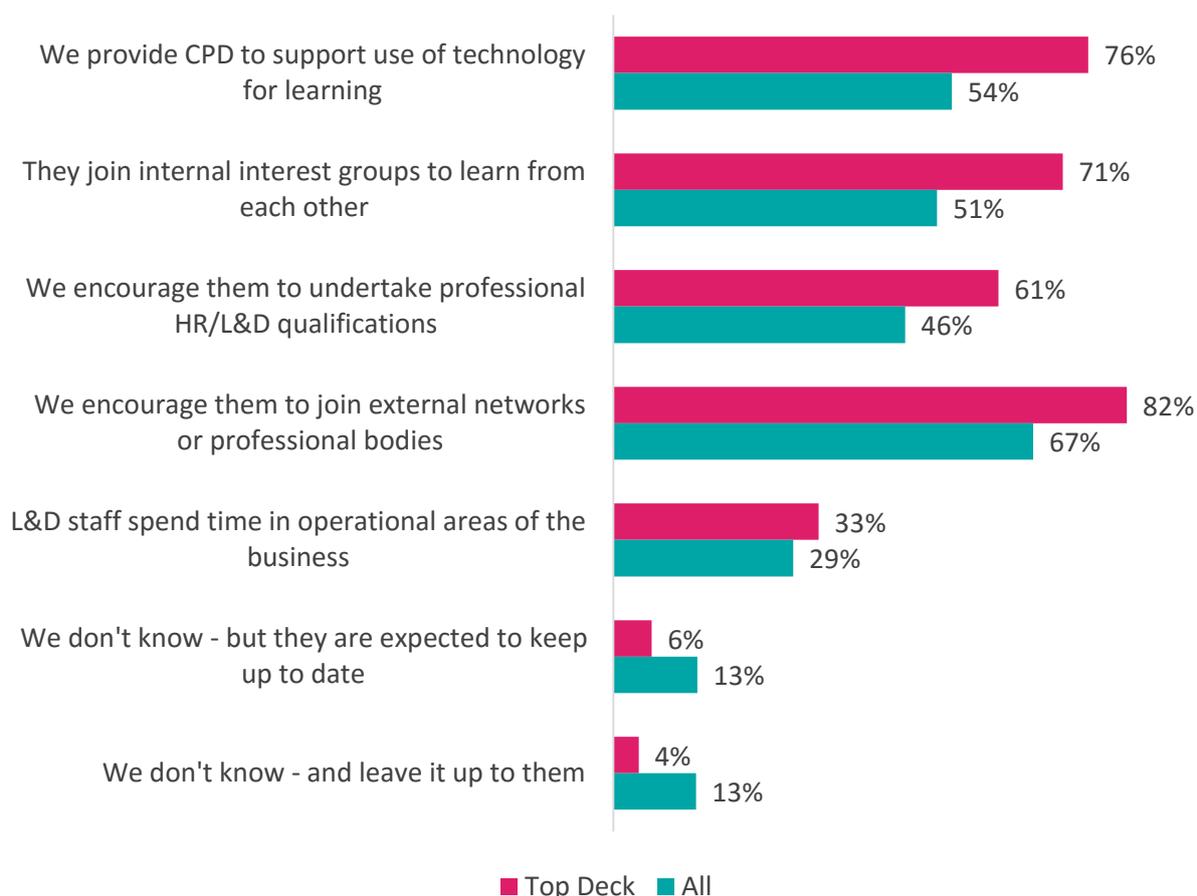
*“We encourage or require our L&D team to attend meeting/training courses organised by Global L&D on using and promoting learning technologies.”*  
**Senior manager, Professional services**

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<sup>13</sup> Towards Maturity, *Embracing Change*, 2015: [www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/2015benchmark)

So how are today's L&D professionals addressing their own skills, in order to better cater for 'customer' expectations? Figure 7 shows that three quarters of today's teams are being proactive in a number of ways:

Figure 7: Developing the skills of the L&D professional



Developing the skills of L&D professionals for digital transformation of learning is a priority, in whichever industry they are working, yet there are wide differences between industries in their approach:

- ▶ On average, **67%** are expected to join external interest groups or professional bodies to keep up-to-date
- ▶ **54%** provide CPD for their L&D professionals
  - Ranging from 33% in the IT/telecoms sector to 65% in central and local government
  - 38% in Australasia to 74% across the Middle East, Africa and India
- ▶ **52%** use internal interest groups so that they can learn from each other
  - Ranging from 35% in the retail sector to 67% in the energy and utilities sector

A worrying number leave it up to the individual and don't provide or encourage L&D skills development:

- ▶ **13%** simply expect L&D staff to keep up-to-date on their own
  - Ranging from 8% in the finance sector to 20% in IT/telecoms

Whilst this may provide positive evidence that L&D professionals, of all learners, are the best equipped to manage their own learning and keep up-to-date with learning theory and practice, the evidence belies this.

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*"We have developed an internal program for L&D professional development for Learning Technologies. The appetite to learn new skills and approaches, including technology is good - but should be total."*

***Learning Innovations Consultant, Financial services***

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### 5.3 L&D professionals as collaborative learners

Given that L&D profession is heavily reliant on personal networks to build new skills for the future, it is important to consider how well equipped they are to build a personal learning network. 200 L&D professionals recently took part in a wider Landscape during early 2016. The one thing they had in common was that all of them had either paid for all or part of their online learning independently. The full results of the total sample are explored in, *In-Focus: The Consumer Learner at Work*.<sup>14</sup>

Having elected to study online in their own time, this group of L&D professionals are confident online, well-motivated, and clear about how online learning would help them to further their career. However, they did not rely on collaboration as a key learning opportunity:

- ▶ **30%** rate collaboration in their top three methods for learning
- ▶ **35%** publish curated content to share with others
- ▶ **46%** download apps for social networking

Whilst 87% of this sample of L&D professionals were willing to use technology to share their knowledge to help others learn, only 35% are doing this regularly already:

- ▶ **21%** need help to get started
- ▶ **32%** lack opportunity
- ▶ **7%** would feel uncomfortable

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<sup>14</sup> [www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/consumerlearner](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus/2016/consumerlearner)

It is hard to isolate the degree to which skills or confidence is the issue holding them back. 60% report that they know how to build a personal network to help them learn, which points to a skills issue for four out of ten.

This is a small sample of technically confident L&D professionals but highlights that learning how to collaborate to build the skills of the L&D professional will be essential if we are to play a role in helping others to collaborate.

## 5.4 The impact of investing in L&D skills

Comparing those that ‘don’t know and leave it up to them’ with the rest of the sample, the ‘don’t knows’ are much more likely to report that L&D staff lack knowledge about the potential of technology in learning (57% vs 47%) and lack skills to implement and manage e-learning (64% vs 55%). Unsurprisingly, these are also the organisations where fewer staff have a personal development plan (37% vs 60%).

The ‘don’t knows’ are not only far less likely to also have audited L&D skills against those required and to keep up-to-date with learning theory but they are **three-times less likely** to be successfully supporting social and experiential learning through:

- ▶ Understanding the support systems available to staff in the workflow
- ▶ Actively encouraging learners to engage with building knowledge resources
- ▶ Encouraging learners to reflect on what they have learned

Even in areas of formal learning like compliance, they report lower completion levels (58% vs 74%). Most conclusively, those that are realising the greatest benefits from technology-enabled learning are those where L&D skills are not simply left to chance.

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*“The majority of training interventions are actually delivered by line staff – we need to provide them with skills to do this better.”*

**Capacity Building Coordinator, Charity sector**

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## Professional development: informal learning, CPD and qualifications

With learning practice changing fast, it's vital that L&D professionals invest in their own development. The best way to do that is to mirror a range of development approaches present in effective learning organisations. At the CIPD, we encourage HR and L&D professionals to consider informal learning, continuing professional development and qualifications as components of an effective personal development plan.

### So what are the key differences?

- ▶ Informal learning is not a planned development occurrence but experienced directly in the natural function of everyday life. It has no set objective or intention and occurs spontaneously, accidentally and sporadically. It normally takes place outside a course or structured learning environment and is often related to problem solving scenarios.
- ▶ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is firmly focussed on results and the benefits that learning brings in the real world. Whilst informal learning can form a part, most CPD is planned using a wide range of learning methods to address pre-defined needs. A key aspect of CPD is personal reflection on how the learning undertaken influences professional practice.
- ▶ Qualifications are a rigorous assessment of competence, knowledge and skills. In the UK they are developed by regulated 'awarding bodies' and identified at one of nine levels. For example, Level 3 equates to an A-Level and is often aimed at practitioners, Level 5 equates to a Bachelor's degree relating to managers and Level 7 equates to a Master's Degree for those in strategic positions.

### Maximising the impact of informal learning, CPD and qualifications

Each of the three aspects of development has particular benefits:

- ▶ Informal learning has the benefit of being a powerful learning opportunity as it is a spontaneous learning occurrence linked to the flow of life or work. The key is to spot when informal learning has happened, record it and then reflect on it to gain maximum impact on practice. Informal learning is something that should be happening at all times. The skilful learner maximises their informal learning by deliberately encountering new scenarios, people and technologies.
- ▶ Continuing Professional Development has the benefit of being an ongoing, planned and recorded approach to use a range of learning methods to stay at the forefront of professional practice. As reflection is an integral part of CPD it is linked to driving personal change in thinking and action. The skilful learner maximises their CPD by creating a plan that is reviewed and updated regularly with input from managers and peers. Reflections should also be shared with other professionals.
- ▶ Qualifications require an investment of time and finance and have the benefit of boosting your credibility and employability through an independent assessment of knowledge and skills. They also introduce you to a network of like-minded peers. They can be important at key career moments, for example, in providing the foundation for a new role, as evidence of experience gained on-the-job or as a springboard to facilitate a promotion. The skilful learner assesses when a qualification is a key part of underpinning or demonstrating practice or facilitating change.

*Andy Lancaster, Head of Learning and Development Content, CIPD*

## 5.5 The benefits of CPD

The good news is that there has been a shift in the last few years with more organisations providing CPD and networking opportunities than previously. When compared with 2011, fewer organisations fall into the ‘don’t know’ categories:

- ▶ **13%** increase in the proportion offering CPD
- ▶ **35%** increase in the proportion with internal interest groups
- ▶ **41%** increase in the proportion encouraging external networking
- ▶ **27%** decrease in the ‘Don’t knows’

Sharing good practice is a key part of keeping up-to-date in such a fast-changing environment. Networking, both within the beyond the organisation, challenges the L&D professional to reflect publicly on their own approach and to gain useful feedback and insights from others. However, the skills for working collaboratively are amongst the least well developed in our sample (see Figure 2).

The investment in new skills needs to reach out to all job roles in L&D, perhaps especially those who are largely classroom-based, traditional trainers. However, only 25% are training classroom trainers to use technology to extend learning beyond the classroom (**84%** in the Top Deck).

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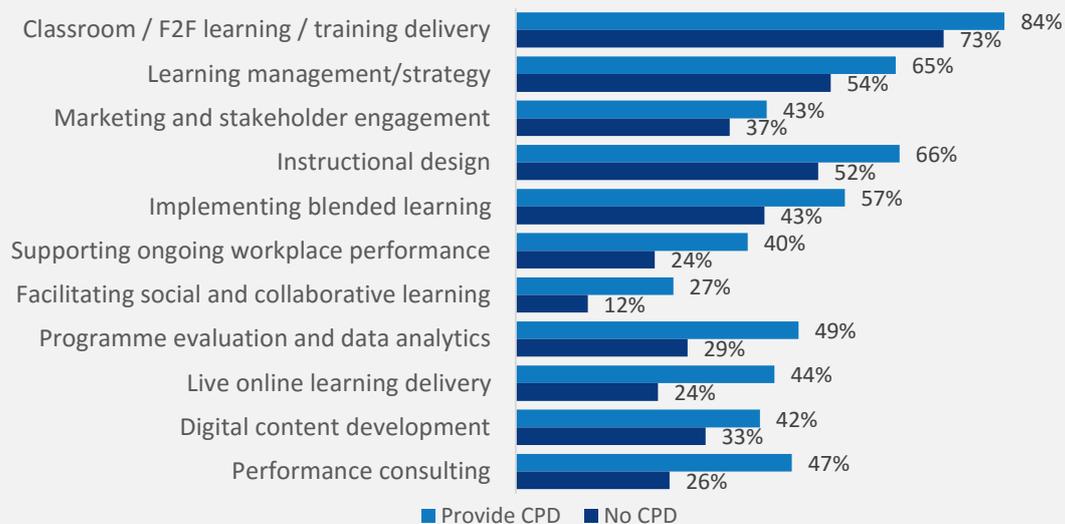
*“We participated last year in an e-learning development course which was really helpful, and had training in house.” **Trainer, Local Government***

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## The impact of providing CPD for L&D professionals

Providing CPD is not an end-to-end solution. Those organisations that do provide CPD invariably also set up internal interest groups (64% compared to 38% of those who do not provide CPD) or encourage staff to join external networks (72% vs 62%).

What skills do they have in house? It comes as no surprise to find that CPD-rich organisations are the skills-rich ones. The areas where CPD appears to be most focused are the priority skills identified by the Top Deck – performance consulting and support, online learning delivery and facilitation.



### Those that provide CPD are twice as likely to:

- ▶ Encourage learner reflection and allow staff time to learn at home
- ▶ Support learners in gaining business related qualifications
- ▶ Allow access to non-job-related learning
- ▶ Support learning transfer after formal learning events
- ▶ Apply spaced learning techniques to aid retention
- ▶ Encourage and make time for social and informal learning
- ▶ Be proactive in understanding how people learn what they need to do their job
- ▶ Use learning analytics to improve the service they deliver
- ▶ Actively use benchmarking for performance improvement
- ▶ Use feeds/curation and social bookmarking
- ▶ Develop their own mobile apps in house and integrate them within their LMS

### Those that provide CPD are at least 50% more likely to agree that they have:

- ▶ Increased on-the-job productivity
- ▶ Improved talent strategies
- ▶ Increased sharing of good practice
- ▶ Improved staff motivation
- ▶ Increased self-directed learning

## 5.6 How are L&D professionals learning on-the-job?

We have already seen that fewer than half L&D professionals say that their approach for their customers is shaped by models that support learning directly in the flow of work, despite evidence that embracing experiential and social learning delivers results. To what extent are L&D applying those principles to themselves?

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*“We bring external experts into the business to upskill our L&D staff on current needs, particularly around digital learning design and use of chosen digital learning authoring tool.” **Talent Director, Retail***

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Some of the development comes from being fully aware of what is happening in other parts of the business and beyond, and extending their connections, some comes from external sources, networking, attending conferences and reading blogs and commentary online – and then being prepared to innovate and apply what they learn from others. However, compared with **Top Deck** teams, few are proactive in understanding what is happening beyond their own role:

- ▶ **43%** understand the support systems available to staff (e.g. help desk, peer support, manager support) (**92%**)
- ▶ **51%** have good links / relationships with the IT department (**90%**)
- ▶ **55%** understand the critical questions that they need to ask of external providers (**90%**)
- ▶ **39%** pull key stakeholders together into a steering group to support programme design and implementation (**80%**)

When it comes to learning on-the-job:

- ▶ **43%** complete and report on pilot projects before implementing major learning initiatives (**86%**)
- ▶ **38%** actively encourage staff to take on new work experiences as an opportunity to learn (**82%**)

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*“We do not have a large enough internal team to have a coordinated approach to this. We have begun to share knowledge regularly; it is further expected that each team member is responsible for their own learning.”*  
**L&D Manager, Legal sector**

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### Tips for building the skills of L&D teams

The members of the CIPD Leaders in Learning group identified 40 hints and tips to help L&D professionals support their own continual self-development. These include ideas on how to develop your vision, be more curious, challenge thinking, experiment more, grow together, invest in yourself, learn from others and share freely. You can find them on pages 46-47.

## 5.7 Concluding observations

Preparation for the future of learning cannot be left to chance. If they are to play an active role, today's L&D professionals need to invest in themselves first to build new skills and a new confident mindset. A proactive plan for identifying and building the skills of the future L&D department is not an option for Top Deck learning organisations, it is a must have. They are already investing in CPD and are building an extended network with colleagues inside and outside of the organisation to build the new skills required.

## 40 ways to build the skills of L&D teams

### Develop your vision



- ▶ Define what a future-focused L&D professional looks like and share it
  - ▶ Champion internal capability; L&D development matters and influences everyone
  - ▶ Create a personal development plan with clear goals to increase knowledge and great practice
  - ▶ Visit other organisations and L&D teams who can help develop new thinking and practice
  - ▶ Don't just recruit people to L&D with certain technical skills; look for great L&D practitioners
- 
- ▶ Make self-development a part of personal every day activity
  - ▶ Encourage the L&D team to network; bring the outside views in
  - ▶ Follow L&D blogs and add comments; consider creating your own or a team blog
  - ▶ Be active in social media channels and online network groups
  - ▶ Explore the use appropriate technology; be tech-savvy and curious

### Be more curious



### Challenge your thinking



- ▶ Don't be precious: let go of past developments and successes to pursue new things
  - ▶ Be open to constructive feedback; actively seek peer reviews
  - ▶ Be open when you don't know something: honesty invites support and new thinking
  - ▶ Network with people who may disagree with you or provoke your thinking
  - ▶ Use external L&D mentors who can shape practice and share their experience
- 
- ▶ Create a culture of trust where people feel safe to explore and embrace change
  - ▶ Commit to a new flexibility; we don't have to keep doing things in the same way!
  - ▶ Establish 'working aloud' where everyone shares about what they are working on
  - ▶ Be realistic, create pilots for new practice; start well, review and learn as you go
  - ▶ Get buy-in from subject matter experts to gain knowledge; deliver using new methods

### Experiment more



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 40 ways to build the skills of L&D teams (cont.)

### Grow together



- ▶ Work as a team to redefine the roles, skills and competences of future-focused L&D
  - ▶ Make professional development a key priority for everyone in L&D
  - ▶ Role model for the latest thinking; personally use and experience modern learning methods
  - ▶ Foster two-way conversations with other L&D professionals
  - ▶ Recognise and reward the sharing of practice within the team
- 
- ▶ Enrol on some formal learning; it doesn't have to be costly, there are many free options
  - ▶ Consider taking a qualification; new ones are emerging to support future-focused practice
  - ▶ Schedule time to share challenges and explore potential innovative solutions
  - ▶ Arrange short secondments to organisations where you can gain fresh L&D thinking
  - ▶ Develop wider business partnering and consulting skills to increase influence

### Invest in yourself



### Learn from others



- ▶ Benchmark to show where you *are* and where your practice *could be*
  - ▶ Attend conferences and events to embrace new thinking
  - ▶ Keep your own knowledge sharp and up to date; who are you following?
  - ▶ Take an interest in other disciplines that overlap with L&D (e.g. technology, neuroscience)
  - ▶ Follow the activity, curation and thinking of key L&D industry thought-leaders
- 
- ▶ Provide platforms for sharing, social learning and peer-to-peer communities
  - ▶ Join L&D communities of practice; regularly engage and interact with others
  - ▶ Establish curation as a practice to find and share great practice
  - ▶ Create peer coaching opportunities within and outside the organisation
  - ▶ Assign team members to research and share thinking about areas of new practice

### Share freely



*Insights from 170 L&D professionals in the CIPD Leaders in Learning Community*

## 6 Conclusions

As L&D professionals move from 'training providers' to 'performance consultants', there is a need for deeper awareness of how learning takes place. Training groups with similar needs using tried and tested methods still plays a critical role in most organisations, but the consultancy process demands a different set of skills for those in L&D. Demands on internal teams for professional credibility are increasing and becoming broader as the role of L&D as a strategic enabler evolves.

Learning content is moving further into the hands of employees as they share their knowledge using social learning tools. The L&D team will drive content in priority areas, provide guidance and drive best practice.

There is no set curriculum for L&D staff, although progress is being made in terms of how to create an appropriate curriculum. Core L&D skills are evolving and not only is the range of skills becoming broader and more diverse, but the quality demanded is increasing all the time.

The L&D professional needs to reinforce self-development and take charge of their own career, just like they advocate for the rest of their business. But it can be all too easy for L&D to forget about themselves! As social technologies become ever more pervasive, L&D cannot afford to be left behind and need to develop the skills and confidence in collaborative learning to lead by example.

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*“Developing the L&D Strategy to ensure the business is fit for ‘future’ rather than fit for ‘now’. Enabling timely, engaging and user friendly information and learning content in small instalments.” **L&D Manager, Financial services***

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Making high quality content available through multiple channels, harnessing the power of technology to personalise the learning experience and bring it close to the point of need presents new challenges to the L&D leader. They will need actionable and pragmatic plans to embed new thinking in corporate learning, and gain the buy-in from all stakeholders.

L&D have the potential to become the influencers and challengers in the organisation. They want to be seen as the enablers and facilitators of organisational learning rather than the administrators and deliverers of training. Their focus will increasingly move away from formal learning – be it face-to-face or e-learning - to building organisational learning capability and workplace learning skills will be centre stage.

## About the CIPD



*We're the CIPD – the professional body for HR and people development. We are the voice of a worldwide community of 140,000 members committed to championing better work and working lives.*

We've been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. Through our expertise and research, we provide a valuable point of view on the rapidly changing world of work. And for our members we're the career partner of choice, setting professional standards and providing the expertise to drive the HR and L&D professions forward.

To support social collaborative professional development in L&D we run the **Leaders in Learning** network. Open to members and non-members these free to attend groups for senior L&D professionals and managers meet quarterly to discuss L&D topics, review latest research, hear presentations of excellent practice from other network members and socialise. Regional groups run in London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Norwich, Milton Keynes and Bristol, with additional venues being considered. If you would like to be a part of CIPD's Leaders in Learning Network email [leadersinlearning@cipd.co.uk](mailto:leadersinlearning@cipd.co.uk).

As part of our commitment to support L&D professionals to stay at the forefront of practice we have created the **Future of Learning** development hub. It's an online community providing curated bite-sized content about latest industry trends, research and skills, lively discussion forums and monthly expert webinars. Commitment to professional development and reflection in the Future of Learning leads to a digital badge.

More details about the Future of Learning development hub can be found at: [www.cipd.co.uk/future-learning](http://www.cipd.co.uk/future-learning).

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## About Towards Maturity



*Towards Maturity is an independent benchmarking practice that provides authoritative research and expert advisory services to help assess and improve the effectiveness and consistency of L&D performance within organisations. The Towards Maturity portfolio includes:*

### **The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study™**

[www.towardsmaturity.org/benchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/benchmark)

The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study is an internationally recognized longitudinal study on the effective implementation of learning innovation based on the input of 4,500 organisations and 23,000 learners over 13 years. Towards Maturity continuously surveys and studies how people learn at work. This data is used to help L&D leaders assess and improve the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of their learning provision. Previous research papers and sector specific reports are available through the [Towards Maturity Shop](#).

### **Towards Maturity Benchmark Centre™**

[www.towardsmaturity.org/mybenchmark](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/mybenchmark)

A dedicated centre to complete your Benchmark and apply everything we know about good practice to gain personal, practical time saving advice in one place. Follow the online three-step continuous improvement process and Benchmark your current approach with your peers.

### **Towards Maturity Strategic Review™**

[www.towardsmaturity.org/strategicreview](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/strategicreview)

The Towards Maturity Strategic Review is a deeper analysis and comparison of your Benchmark against those who are already utilising learning innovation to deliver bottom line results and success. It helps you analyse and interpret your personal benchmark report to establish a base line and identify the next action steps for performance improvement leading to good practice within your organisation.

### **Towards Maturity Learning Landscape™**

[www.towardsmaturity.org/learner](http://www.towardsmaturity.org/learner)

The Towards Maturity Learning Landscape provides critical insights to help you understand the behaviours of your staff so you can design learning solutions that can be embedded more effectively into the workflow. It supports new learning technology strategies whilst mitigating risk when introducing new programmes or models of learning.



### **Towards Maturity Sector Benchmark Groups**

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Join these facilitated peer-to-peer groups to find out what top learning organisations are doing right and collaborate on new ways to support performance improvement, prioritise action planning and accelerate progress. These groups are an invaluable opportunity to network and solve problems – join more than 50 senior L&D leaders, including those in your sector, three times per year to address specific challenges common to L&D today.

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