



Chartered Institute
of Personnel and
Development

Survey report March 2005

WHO LEARNS AT WORK? EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCES OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Summary of key findings

Who Learns at Work? investigates what 750 people who participated in a training activity at work in the 12 months before the survey – the customers – thought of the training they received. It looks at who received the most training opportunities, preferred training methods and how successful the training was.

- Of the 750 respondents, 78% had received some form of training in the previous 12 months.
- Just over three-quarters (79%) of people say their employer provides them with enough training opportunities.
- Ninety-four per cent believe the training they received had helped them do their job better.
- Sixty-two per cent of respondents who have undertaken training in the past 12 months have explored with someone how useful it was to them in their work.
- The most common forms of training received are training held in a meeting room or classroom and on-the-job training. But on-the-job training is by far the most popular method, with over half (54%) of respondents rating it as their preferred method of learning.
- Only 16% of respondents have declined the offer of training in the past 12 months. The main reasons given by people for turning down the offer of training are that they are too busy (43%) or that the training is not relevant to their job (28%).
- Nearly a quarter of respondents have undertaken training outside work in the past 12 months.
- Those working in small businesses are less likely to receive training.
- There remains inequality in learning provision. Those with higher levels of qualifications are more likely to receive training, as are those in younger age groups. Part-time workers are as likely to receive training as their full-time counterparts, yet the evidence suggests they receive marginally fewer days per year.

Introduction

It's widely accepted that the UK should invest more in skills to help close the much-discussed productivity gap with other major economies. The importance of human capital to organisations has been widely reported by organisations including the CIPD and is considered to make a significant contribution to competitive advantage.

Rapid economic change and faster depreciation of new skills have led to a greater need for employers to invest in ongoing training to ensure that employees skills are constantly updated. And there's good reason to suppose that these skills requirements will go on rising.

But employers are often criticised by Government for not providing enough training, and they are increasingly reporting widespread skills shortages.

Within this context, training and development in organisations remains in the limelight. Since 1998 the CIPD's training and development surveys have tracked a number of significant changes in the training and development practices used in UK organisations and the priorities of training and development practitioners.

Recent years have seen a significant shift in focus – from training to learning. Learning is the process by which a person constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities, whereas training is one of several responses an organisation can undertake to promote learning. Learning must be cultivated everywhere, at all times, not only on training courses and not only in response to perceived gaps in capability. What people choose to learn is likely to be more important to the business than what they are trained to do as it increases the adaptive capacity that allows organisations to remain agile in the face of uncertain conditions.

There is also an emphasis on the individual taking responsibility for their own learning, with individually tailored training interventions such as one-to-one coaching showing a sharp increase.

While there are a number of strong themes emerging, these are coming from the perspective of the training and development professional.

Who Learns at Work? (2005) builds on the 2002 survey and investigates what 750 people who participated in a training activity at work in the 12 months before the survey thought of the training they received. It seeks to determine from the individual perspective if enough training is available, if it is relevant and successful, and what the preferred methods of learning are.

How much training do people receive?

Seventy-eight per cent of those interviewed had received some form of training in the past 12 months.

The results present a positive picture of both the percentage of employees who receiving training and the amount of training they are receiving. Seventy-eight per cent of those interviewed had received some form of training in the past 12 months.

Those working for larger organisations or in the public sector are more likely to receive training than those working for smaller companies. Women are more likely than men to receive training. These differences and others are discussed later in this report (see page 14).

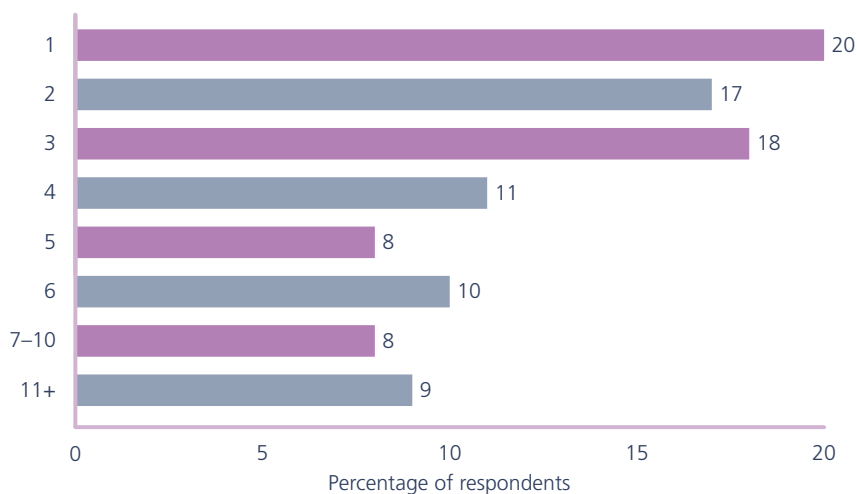
Over one-third (37%) of those who received training in the past 12 months did so on one or two occasions. Twenty-seven per cent participated in six or more

training sessions. The mean number of training activities in the past year is 4.9.

Respondents working in the public sector are more likely than those working in the private sector to have received training on more than five occasions in the past 12 months (28% as opposed to 21%). Based on the means, those who received the most training are those in companies with 500+ employees, those working full-time and those with a degree. Respondents in the youngest age group (16–24) participated in more training activities in the past 12 months than those aged 25 and above.

Figure 1 shows the number of training activities participated in by those receiving training.

Figure 1: Number of training activities participated in by those receiving training



Base: 586 (all who had received training in the past 12 months)

There are differences in the amount of training received by employees, yet over three-quarters (79%) of people state that their employer provides them with enough training opportunities.

Initiating training

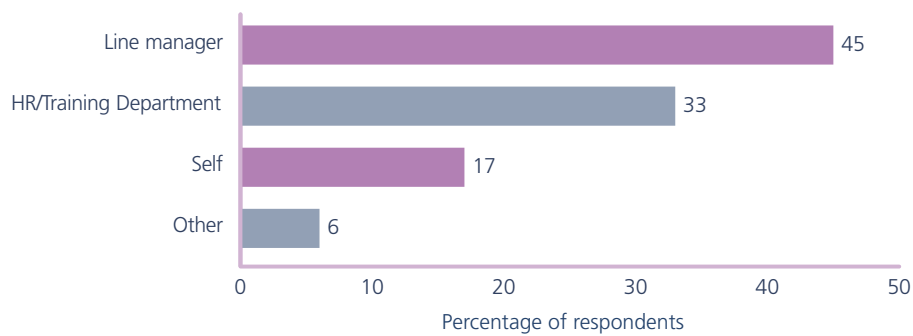
Of the 531 training and development practitioners who were respondents in the CIPD's Survey Report, *Training and Development 2004*, 94% agreed that employees should take more responsibility for their own learning and development. Yet this shift towards individual responsibility for learning appears to be very much in the early stages. The training and development survey found that, in most organisations (60%), the HR/training department is responsible for driving learning and development activity.

To gauge the employee perspective, we asked respondents in the current *Who Learns at Work?* survey who had initiated their most recent training. Only 17% had initiated it themselves.

Line managers have a critical role to play. As Figure 2 illustrates, 45% say that their line manager initiated their most recent training.

Initiating training themselves is more likely where respondents possess a degree. This would appear to confirm that the more learning an individual undergoes, the more confident they are in requesting further opportunities. Individuals initiating training are also more likely to be in organisations with less than 20 employees, where there's unlikely to be an HR/training department.

Figure 2: Who initiated your most recent training activity?



Base: 586 (all who had received training in the past 12 months)

How successful was the training?

Ninety-four per cent of respondents who have undertaken training in the past 12 months believe the training they received has helped them do their job better.

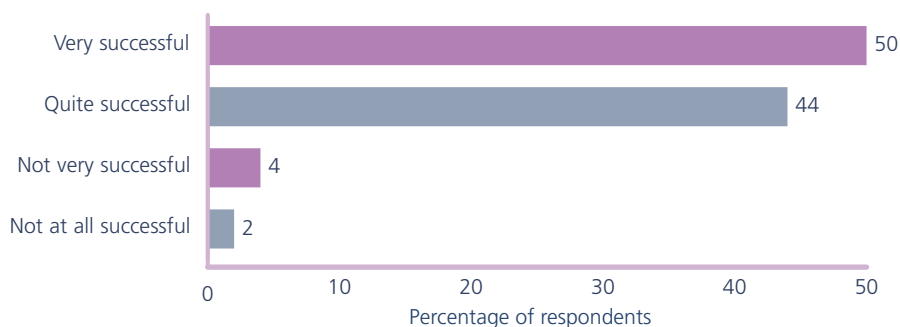
As Figure 3 illustrates, half (50%) think the training received has been very successful, while a further 44% judge it to have been quite successful.

These striking results confirm the importance of training in the workplace and the value that employees place on training and development opportunities.

Only 6% of people report that their training was not successful. Given the small sample size (34 respondents), care should be taken when drawing conclusions. However, the top two reasons given by those who judge their training to have been unsuccessful are that the training was not relevant to their job and that they already knew what was covered.

Employees and training and development professionals appear equally positive about the training experience. The CIPD *Training and Development 2004* survey found that 94% of respondents believe that the training delivered is of 'great benefit' (79%) or 'some benefit' (15%) to their organisation. The remaining 6% registered their responses as 'don't know', thereby highlighting the possible difficulties involved in assessing the benefits of training from the perspective of the HR/training department.

Figure 3: How successful has the training been in helping you do your job better?



Base: 586 (all who had received training in the past 12 months)

Evaluation

Sixty-two per cent of respondents say that the usefulness of the training has been discussed with them.

Successive training and development surveys have stressed the importance of evaluation but some respondents report difficulties in the practicalities of evaluation because the impact of training is often not directly measurable. Yet, as is illustrated in the CIPD Change Agenda, *Human Capital: External reporting framework*, people management and development professionals need to take a lead in presenting and collating the information that is necessary for organisations to demonstrate their effectiveness in sourcing, managing and retaining the vital human capital they need for business success. And assessing the effectiveness of training and development in the workplace is a key contributor to this.

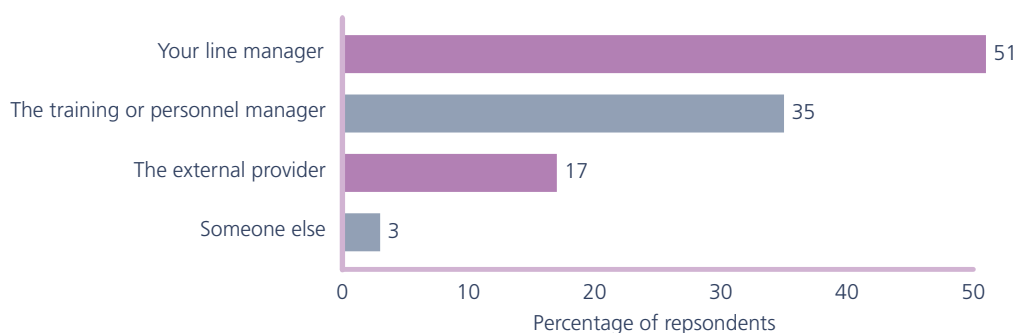
So how regularly do employees have an opportunity to 'evaluate' the success of their training with someone? Respondents who had undertaken training in the past 12 months were asked if, whether following the training, anyone had explored how useful it is to them

in their work. Sixty-two per cent said that the usefulness of the training had been discussed with them. Discussion is more likely to happen in the public sector than the private sector (65% as opposed to 57%) and where there are more than 100 employees.

Where discussions about the success of the training take place, over half (51%) take place with respondents' line managers. Thirty-five per cent hold discussions with someone from their HR/training department and 17% with an external provider. There are no significant differences between the public and private sectors.

Line manager support is therefore important in driving training and in evaluating the effectiveness of training. Getting management buy-in for training and ensuring that line managers are serious in their approach to learning remains a priority for training and development practitioners.

Figure 4: What was the role of the person who explored the usefulness of the training with you?



Base: 361 (all who explored the usefulness of the training with someone)

Different forms of training – how much are they used and how appealing are they?

The most common form of training received in the past 12 months by respondents is training held in a meeting/classroom or on-the-job training.

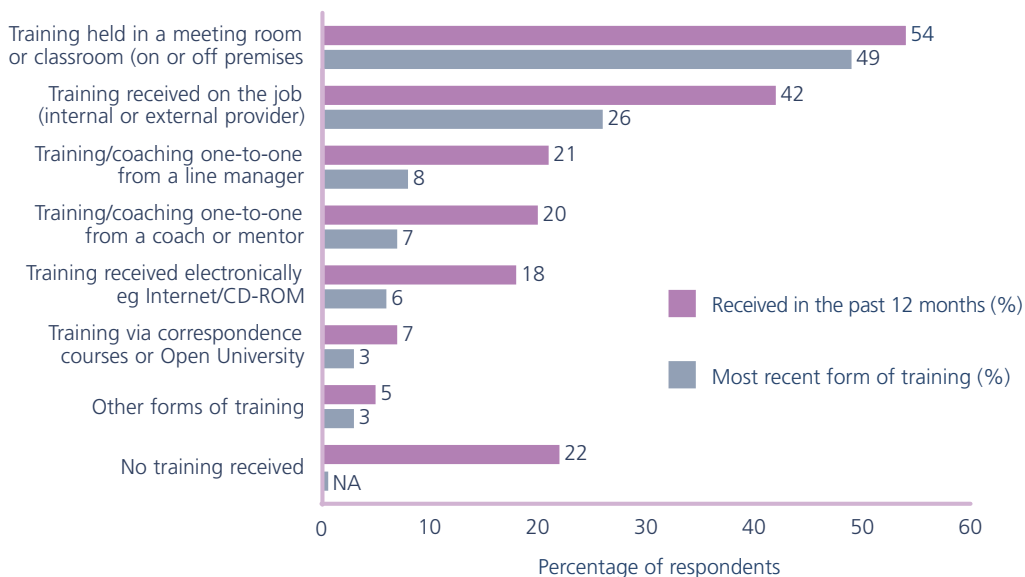
In the CIPD's *Training and Development 2004* survey, respondents gave the average proportions of formal and informal training delivered in organisations as 40% formal and 60% informal.

The most common form of training received in the past 12 months by respondents to this survey is training held in a meeting room/classroom or on-the-job training. Figure 5 illustrates the prevalence of these two methods and shows the most recent forms of training received.

Training in a meeting room or classroom is most evident in the public (61%) rather than private sector (45%). Full-time employees are a little more likely than part-time employees to have received training in a meeting or classroom (55% compared to 49%). Those not possessing a degree are more likely to have received on-the-job training.

The *Training and Development 2004* survey examined the growing trend of coaching. Training and development practitioners were asked if their organisation's use of coaching had changes in the

Figure 5: The forms of training received in the past 12 months



last few years. Seventy-seven per cent reported at least a small increase. This is reflected in the responses given by learners in this survey, with coaching featuring high in the table of techniques used.

As we have seen, classroom and on-the-job training are the techniques most used, but what do the learners prefer? Learners prefer active rather than passive learning. The respondents' clearly preferred method of learning is being shown something and then practising it. This is particularly true for those with no or low levels of qualifications. Only 19% state that being taught in a

meeting room or classroom is the best method of learning for them. This supports the growth of informal methods of learning, but also indicates a mismatch between the learning that is taking place in organisations and the learning that employees believe is most effective.

Figures 6 and 7 show the best and least appealing methods of learning. Four ways of learning emerge almost equally as the least appealing methods of learning: reading books/articles, watching videos, correspondence courses and accessing learning material via the Internet.

Figure 6: The best method of learning

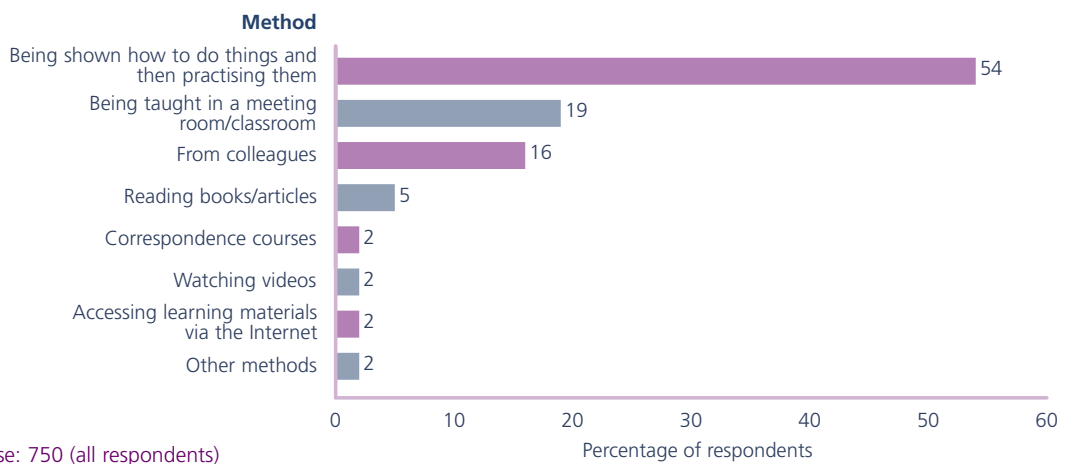
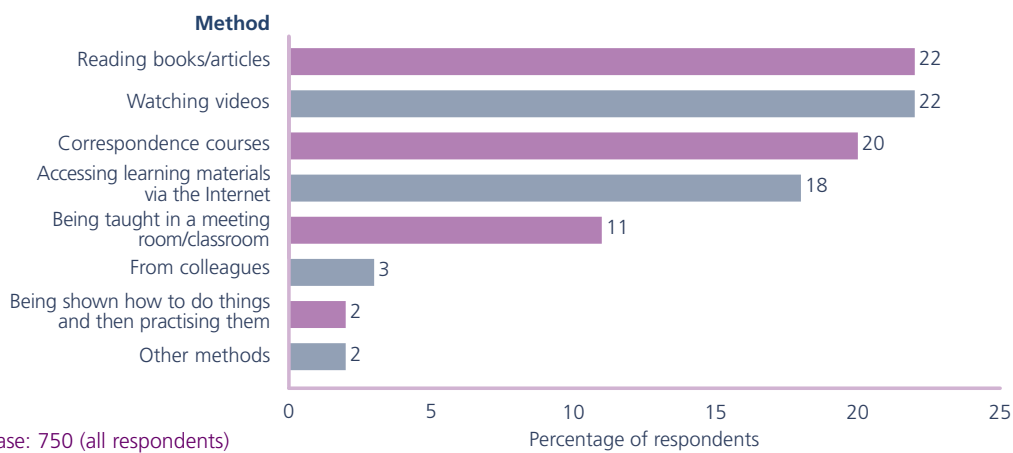


Figure 7: Least appealing method of learning



Barriers to training

Sixteen per cent of respondents have declined the offer of training in the past 12 months.

Interviewees were asked whether their employers had offered them any training in the past 12 months that they hadn't taken up. Only 16% of respondents had declined the offer of training.

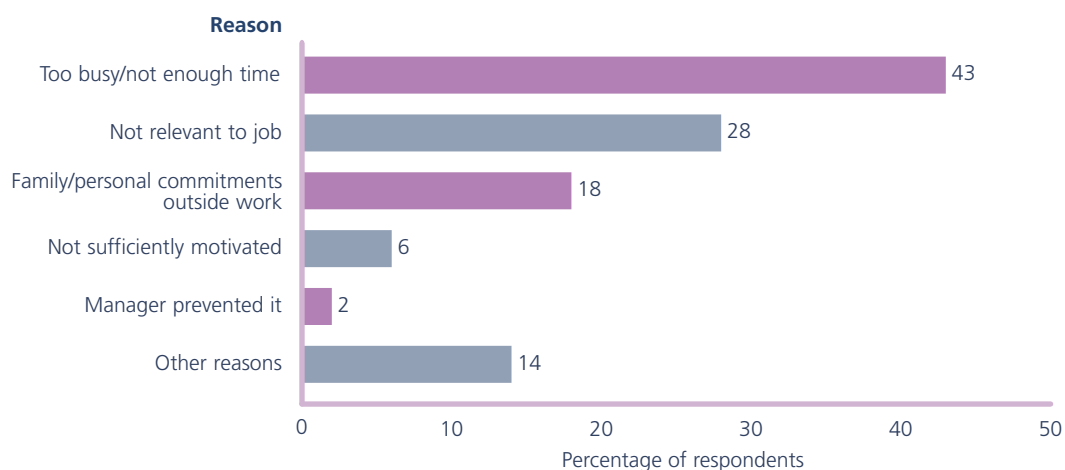
As Figure 8 shows, the main reasons given by people for turning down the offer of training are that they are too busy (43%) or that the training is not relevant to their job (28%).

Eighteen per cent of women decline training compared to 15% of men. Interestingly, women are no more likely

than men to cite family/personal commitments outside work as a reason for turning down training. Women, however, are slightly more likely to give lack of time as a reason.

Those groups who have received the most training in the past 12 months (full-time employees, those working in the public sector, those in companies with 500+ employees and those with a degree) are also the groups that have declined more training opportunities.

Figure 8: Why training is not taken up



Base: 121 (all who had declined training in the past 12 months)

Learning outside work

Twenty per cent of respondents have undertaken training in their leisure time.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who have undertaken training outside work in the past 12 months

Gender		Highest qualification			Working status		Age				
Male	Female	Degree or above	GCSE/A level	None/CSE	Full-time	Part-time	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
20	20	34	19	6	18	25	23	24	20	17	17

Base: 750 (all respondents)

The breadth of learning opportunities available to individuals means that there are considerable amounts of learning taking place outside the workplace. Interviewees were therefore asked whether they have done any courses or other training outside work in the last 12 months and, if so, whether this training was work-related, purely for personal interest, or both.

Twenty per cent of respondents have undertaken training, whether personal or work-related, in their leisure time. The 148 who have undertaken training outside work explained that it was as likely to be purely for personal interest (39%) as it was to be purely for work-related reasons (38%); 24% say that the training was for both reasons.

Table 1 confirms that those with qualifications are considerably more likely to undertake training outside work than those without. There is small decline by age in the likelihood of individuals to undertake training outside work.

Training in small firms

Interviewees working in firms with more than 100 employees are more than twice as likely to receive training as those working in smaller organisations.

Previous studies have suggested that those working in small businesses are less likely to receive training from their employers. The experiences of respondents who work in firms employing less than 100 people confirm these findings. Interviewees working in firms with more than 100 employees are more than twice as likely to receive training as those working in small organisations.

It also confirms that interviewees in small businesses who have received training in the past 12 months are more likely to receive on-the-job training. But this is not a negative result as respondents across the board indicate a clear preference for on-the-job training. There is also little difference of opinion by size of organisation in terms of the success of the training.

People working in businesses with less than 100 employees are no less or more likely to turn down training opportunities, but they are slightly more likely to feel that they are not offered sufficient training opportunities.

Table 2 compares the experiences of people working in small businesses with those working in larger businesses.

As might be expected, there is a close correlation between the size of the organisation – and therefore the likelihood of having an HR/training department – and whether respondents have the opportunity to explore if their training has been successful. This is clearly an issue for owners/managers in small organisations as there is the possibility that the training activity that is taking place might not be meeting organisational objectives.

Table 2: Individuals' learning experiences, by size of employing company percentage of respondents answering 'yes'

	Company size (employees)			
	1–19	20–99	100–499	500+
No employer-provided training in the past 12 months	44	29	18	16
Training in a meeting room or classroom undertaken	29	37	45	64
On-the-job training undertaken	33	47	52	42
Training/coaching one-to-one from a coach or mentor undertaken	13	16	27	25
Training/coaching one-to-one from a line manager undertaken	8	16	25	32
Training received electronically	8	8	18	26
Training 'very' or 'quite' successful	90	92	94	93
Whether anyone explored if training was useful	40	45	63	71
Training offered but not taken up	12	9	12	15
Not enough training opportunities	27	21	22	25
Course/other training undertaken outside work in the past 12 months	9	17	22	24

Who has the learning opportunities?

The survey enabled differences to be identified between respondents based on education, whether they were in full- or part-time employment, and age.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents who had received training in the past 12 months

Gender		Highest qualification			Working status		Age				
Male	Female	Degree or above	GCSE/A level	None/ CSE	Full-time	Part-time	16–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
74	82	84	80	67	78	78	85	81	83	73	71

Base: 750 (all respondents)

There remains inequality in learning provision. Those with higher levels of qualifications are more likely to receive training, as are those in younger age groups.

receive marginally fewer days per year (a mean average of 4.3 days compared to 5.1 days for full-time employees).

Women are also more likely to receive training than men. Relatively high levels of training are taking place across the board, however, and it is encouraging, although not the ideal, to see that 71% of respondents over 55 are receiving training.

Full-time respondents are more likely to receive training held in a meeting room or classroom than part-time respondents (55% and 49% respectively). Both groups receive almost equal amounts of on-the-job training.

Table 3 illustrates that there is no difference between full- and part-time employees in the percentage that had received training, yet the evidence suggests they

When asked if their employer provided enough training opportunities, there was little difference by education, working status or age (Table 4).

Table 4: Whether their employer provides enough training opportunities (percentage of respondents answering 'no')

Gender		Highest qualification			Working status		Age				
Male	Female	Degree or above	GCSE/A level	None/ CSE	Full-time	Part-time	16–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
23	19	17	23	18	22	20	18	24	21	21	19

Base: 750 (all respondents)

Conclusions

Large amounts of training is taking place in the workplace and it is well received by employees.

Training works. The results of *Who Learns at Work?* present a positive picture of the effectiveness of training, with an overwhelming 94% of respondents believing that the training they receive helps them to do their job better.

Employees are very positive about taking up learning opportunities. Only 16% of respondents had declined the offer of training in the past 12 months. Time remains the main barrier to taking up training. Ensuring that employees have enough time to learn at work should therefore remain a priority for training and development professionals.

The role of the line manager is critical to training and development in organisations. Line managers initiate a high percentage of the training that takes place. They are also responsible for over half of the discussions with employees on the effectiveness of training that takes place. Ensuring that line managers have the skills for and are committed to support learning and development is essential.

Training and development professionals may agree that employees should take more responsibility for their own learning and development, but this is clearly in the early stages, particularly for those with low levels of qualifications, and high levels of organisational support are still required.

Learners prefer active to passive methods of learning. On-the-job training is the favoured method of learning for all categories of employee. This could be seen as a mismatch to the amount of classroom-based training that is currently taking place.

Training is widespread, but there remains an inequality in the amount of training received between the 'haves' and

the 'have-nots'. Those with higher levels of qualifications continue to receive more training, as do those in younger age groups. The results confirm that those with degrees are also more confident in initiating training, and they undertake more learning outside the workplace. There is no evidence, however, that those with lower levels of skills are more likely to turn down training opportunities. In fact, the opposite is true. The CIPD Think-piece, *Basic Skills in the Workplace* (2005), demonstrates that workplaces need to think about the skills of all their employees and encourage them to improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills at a range of levels, with training and development professionals providing additional support for those with lower levels of skills. The results of this survey indicate that there is some way to go before this is the case.

Small organisations still don't train as much as larger organisations. Interviewees working in organisations with more than 100 employees are more than twice as likely to receive training as those working in small organisations. Where training does take place in small organisations, it is likely to be on-the-job training, which we know is well received by employees. Any government interventions targeted at small businesses should therefore focus on on-the-job training.

The CIPD has long argued that a system based on rigid qualification structures and targets, often linked with classroom training, does not sit well with employers' need for flexibility and responsiveness. The evidence gathered as part of this survey confirms that employees believe that the majority of training undertaken is successful, but they express a strong preference for on-the-job learning. Government interventions must take account of the preferred learning interventions of both individuals and organisations.

Background to the survey

To gather the information, 750 telephone interviews with people in employment were carried out across Great Britain. Those not in jobs or those who were self-employed were excluded. The sample (breakdowns shown in Tables 5 and 6) was representative of employees in the public and private sectors and of full- and part-time employees. Respondents were also divided to make them representative of employees within different sizes of private sector organisations in terms of numbers of employees. The company sizes were 1–9, 20–99, 100–499, and 500+ employees. The sample was almost equally split between male and female respondents.

The data were weighted to ensure accuracy and all the figures in this report represent the weighted data.

Training was defined in the interviews as ‘any form of planned instruction or tuition, whether it was carried out at the workplace or elsewhere, which was provided by your employer with the aim of helping you do your job better’.

The interviews took place in October and November 2004 and were conducted by Plus Four Market Research Limited. This Survey Report was written by Victoria Gill, CIPD Adviser, Learning, Training and Development.

Table 5: Respondent breakdown (%)

Gender		Highest qualification			Working status		Age				
Male	Female	Degree or above	GCSE/A level	None/ CSE	Full-time	Part-time	16–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
50	50	21	49	24	78	22	5	19	34	35	8

Base: 750 (all respondents)

Table 6: Organisation details (%)

Type of organisation			Company size (employees)				Region				
Private	Public	Non-profit	1-19	20-99	100-499	500+	North	Midlands	South	Scotland	Wales
43	35	22	18	20	14	43	28	12	41	13	8

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The interviews took place in October and November 2004 and were conducted by Plus Four Market Research Limited. This Survey Report was written by **Victoria Gill**, CIPD Adviser, Learning, Training and Development.

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