What Motivates Employees to Learn:

Survey Insights

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Introduction

To reinvent workplace learning, we must understand what employees really want. That's why we surveyed 263 L&D managers and 425 employees at organizations globally to better understand the learning challenges and motivations of employees. What we discovered were **4 key workplace learning moments that drive employees to learn**.
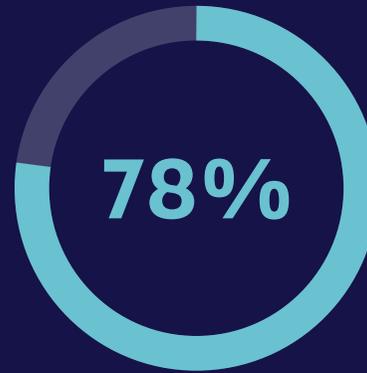
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What you'll discover in this report
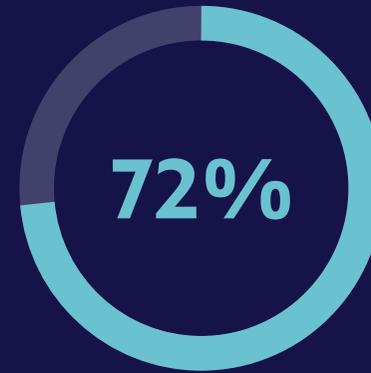
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L&D'S CHALLENGE

Keeping up with change

Not surprisingly, **78% of L&D managers said their top priority is keeping employee skills up to speed with change**. But at the same time, L&D leaders are also struggling to get employees to actually learn.

Top L&D priorities for 2017–2018*

78%
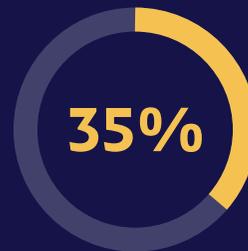Keeping employee skills up to speed with rapid change

72%
Improving employee engagement
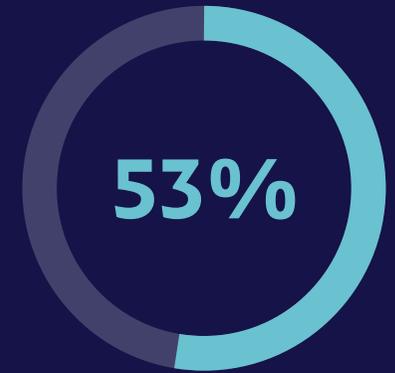
53%
Leadership & management training

35%
Scaling & reducing the cost of learning
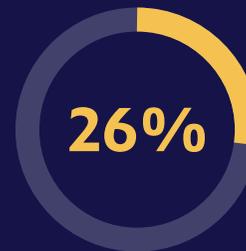
26%
Improving L&D metrics & analytics
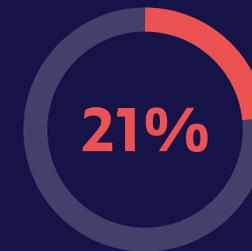
21%
Adapting learning to better suit Millennials and Generation Z
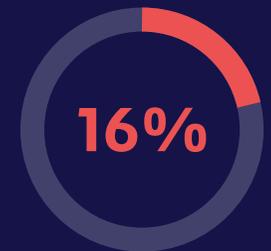
16%
Showing the value of L&D to the C-Suite

Source: Udemy survey data

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What employees feel would help them learn more effectively

67%
More opportunities to practice what they learn

54%
Having more time to learn

46%
Learning paths personalized to their goals

40%
Blended in-person and online learning

26%
Learning that's like a game with friendly competition

14%
Virtual Reality learning experiences
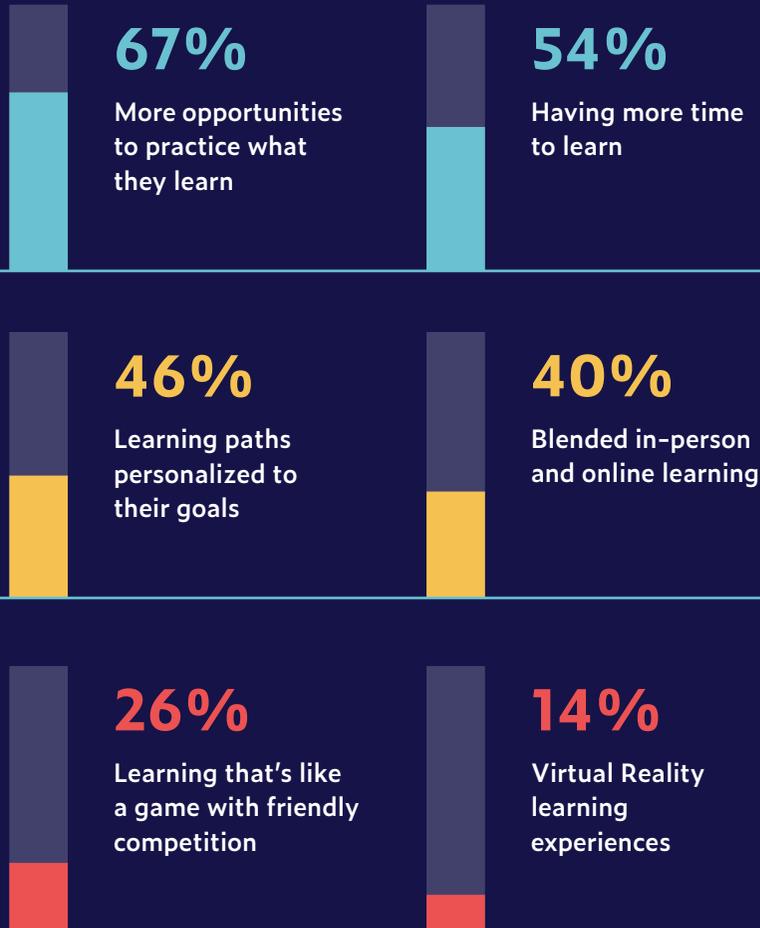
Source: Udemy survey data

L&D'S CHALLENGE

Time is precious

There are a host of reasons why boosting learning engagement is a challenge. First and foremost, time is scarce.

54% Employees felt having more time to learn would help them learn effectively

73% L&D managers rated finding time for learning during workplace hours as their top challenge

Aside from time, employees felt **having more opportunities to practice what they learn (67%) and more personalized learning paths (46%)** would also help them learn more effectively.

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The information gap

There's also a troubling information gap between employees and L&D. Neither seems to know what the other wants. Our survey revealed that **40% of employees felt they don't get enough guidance from their L&D department**. People aren't sure what companies or managers want them to learn while **28% of L&D managers said they aren't clear on what their employees need**.

40%
employees feel they don't get enough guidance from L&D

28%
L&D managers said they aren't clear on what their employees need

Source: Udemy survey data

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Top L&D challenges*

73% Finding time for learning during workplace hours

37% Keeping up with the speed of change

32% Lack of budget

28% Hard to know what employees need or want to learn

26% Employees aren't interested in learning

23% Aligning L&D metrics with business performance & outcomes

14% Feeling overwhelmed by too many new learning & HR tech

14% Low collaboration from lines of business leaders

13% Antiquated LMS systems

9% Lack of executive support

4% None

L&D'S CHALLENGE

Strapped for cash

Despite L&D's new mandate to keep their workforce relevant, L&D departments are still strapped for cash with **32% citing lack of budget as one of their top challenges**.

Source: Udemy survey data

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Creating better value for learners

Applying a proven marketing framework

What can L&D do to get inside the heads of their learners and really get to the heart of what and why they want to learn? And how can L&D create better value in the workplace so people actually make time to learn?

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Product, design, and marketing teams at well-known brands like Airbnb and Amazon have perfected ways of getting inside their customer's head to create better value–without breaking the bank.

L&D should consider borrowing a page from their playbook.

The latest approach known as the

▸ **Jobs-to-be-Done theory** was introduced by Harvard Business School Professor, Clayton Christensen[1].

1. Clayton Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon, David S. Duncan, Competing Against Luck: The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice, HarperCollins, 2016.

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The Jobs-to-be-Done framework

Situation-driven v. person-driven

The Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD) theory essentially says when a person "hires" or uses a product or service, they are doing so in a situational context.[2] This framework goes beyond personas and demographics by adding a multi-dimensional approach to how a business thinks about its customers. For example, when a person buys the New York Times, the Jobs-to-be-Done approach states that an individual's motivation for reading this newspaper is not about the type of person, e.g. whether he or she is a business executive in a certain age group. **It's more about the situation** New York Times readers find themselves in when they decide to read the publication in the first place. The individual may want to read something to pass the time on an upcoming flight, or maybe she wants to read the latest New York Times Book Reviews to stock up on books for a trip.

2. Clayton Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon, David S. Duncan, Competing Against Luck: The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice, HarperCollins, 2016.

In order to really motivate people to learn, we must design and market our L&D products and programs for the situation, not just a persona.

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Applying Jobs-to-be-Done to L&D

We often rely on personas when developing and marketing learning. Personas tend to focus on demographics, job type/level, and other descriptive factors. These are important, however, personas only go so far to explain the complex motivations and attitudes towards learning. It's not enough to claim we know our learners if all we know is the person is male, age 35–40, in engineering, and loves Javascript. These male engineers are not learning based on age or department. Instead, they are learning to get promoted to a management role or perhaps scrambling to ensure their programming skills stay fresh.

This is why L&D must consider the unique situations that are motivating employees to learn in the first place, or the "Jobs-to-be-Done".

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Four key learning moments in the workplace

At Udemy for Business, we applied the Jobs-to-be-Done approach to understand why people are learning at work. All of the qualitative and quantitative data resulted in a simple, yet profound discovery.

People don't learn at work based on who they are, what their title is, or what industry they're in. Instead, employees are motivated to learn because of specific situations that arise at work. Here are four key workplace learning moments that drive employees to learn.

1 Learning to grow

Almost half of the surveyed employees (45%) said they desired an exciting challenge or project to tackle and wanted to learn a new skill. Employees in this learning moment have positive and optimistic feelings towards learning.

2 Learning to catch Up

A third of employees said they were learning because they were in a new role and needed to fill in missing skills (31%). In this learning moment, employees are a bit more anxious, but they are still keen to learn.

3 Learning for external change

8% of those surveyed turned to learning because of an external change out of their control. For example, their company may have decided to change development languages, re-organize, or introduce a new tool.

4 Always learning

An even smaller group of employees, 6% of those surveyed, were learning simply for the sake of learning, not for any specific project or promotion. These individuals are your constant, motivated learners and natural evangelists for L&D.

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As work and personal lives evolve, individuals cycle through the 4 key learning moments.

L&D managers who are aware of these learning moments can better tailor their employee development programs—serving up the right learning experience at the right time.

Meet Monica

Wants a career change

She is in Customer Success but wants to move into Marketing. She learns to grow by taking digital marketing courses on her company's learning platform.

Improves her marketing skills

Monica struggles in her new role and realizes she has gaps in her skills. She learns to catch up by taking courses on SEO and social media marketing.

Department adopts new tool

The new marketing analytics tool slows Monica down as she's unfamiliar with it.

Becomes a lifelong learner

Monica sees the value of learning and engages regularly in up-skilling.

Moves into a marketing role

Monica communicates her desire to move into marketing with her manager. Her manager helps identify a role for her.

Learns new analytics tool

Monica must learn how to use the new analytics tool. She learns due to external change.

- LEARNING TO GROW
- LEARNING TO CATCH UP
- LEARNING FOR EXTERNAL CHANGE
- ALWAYS LEARNING

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Address the 4 key learning moments at your organization

The foundation of the Jobs-to-be-Done framework focuses on 3 steps

STEP 1
Understand the learning moment

STEP 2
Create the right experiences

STEP 3
Integrate internal processes

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Creating experiences and processes around the 4 learning moments

Here we will outline each learning moment at a typical organization, and then discuss the kind of experiences and processes you can create to engage your learners.

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1 | Learning to grow

Jessica wants to grow by working on challenging new projects outside her area of expertise. When she hears about a new Android app project, she jumps at the chance and quickly acquires Android development skills.

Jessica
Python Developer

Jessica wants to grow by taking on new and challenging projects. She's excited but also worried she doesn't have all the required skills.

Jessica is excited to learn and acquires Android development skills by taking courses on her company's learning platform.

Jessica is chosen for the project and begins to use her newly acquired skills.

She hears about a new Android app development project and wants to work on it, but first she needs to prove she has the skills.

She then applies for the project role and hopes she gets selected.

- LEARNING MOMENT
- FEELINGS OF ANXIETY

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1 | Learning to grow

CREATE THE RIGHT EXPERIENCES

- Ensure your employees have opportunities to grow, advance, or change careers. Have managers give stretch assignments or projects and work with your HR/People team to encourage horizontal or vertical movement.

- Offer career development programs like job shadowing, mentoring or internal social media channels dedicated to career advice.

- Invest in a learning platform that can provide personalized learning recommendations based on learning behaviors or career goals.

- Offer a learning platform with easily accessible practice assignments and real–life projects so employees can apply what they learn quickly.

- Supplement your learning content with peer–to–peer coaching and mentorship.

INTEGRATE PROCESSES

- Integrate learning to grow as part of individual performance reviews and career development plans—with visibility into key learning steps to reach career goals so employees see the immediate value of learning.

- Measure the outcome and not the learning. Don't focus on how many hours an employee spent learning in a given week or month. Focus on whether the employee achieved their career goals through learning, e.g. whether an employee got a promotion, took on a new project, or made a career change.

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Jack has recently been promoted to Manager.
He is stressed because he has a lot to learn and his
performance as a new manager is suffering.

Jack
Director of Engineering

Jack is promoted to a manager role.

Jack struggles as a new manager and his performance suffers.

One of Jack's direct reports leaves his team citing "Jack is a bad manager."

Jack needs to learn to catch up. He takes management courses on how to give feedback and how to delegate effectively.

Jack is anxious about his performance and wants to become a better manager.

As he masters managerial skills, Jack becomes more confident in his new role and sees improvement in his management feedback.

- **LEARNING MOMENT**
- **FEELINGS OF ANXIETY**

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2 | Learning to catch up

CREATE THE RIGHT EXPERIENCES

- Create a culture that embraces mistakes and doesn't penalize employees for failure.

- Use a consumer-like learning platform that makes it easy and fun to learn.

- Build in post-training follow-up so that employees can practice and apply what they learn.

- Practice situational cues and "if-then" statements to help change behavior in real life during post-training.

- Introduce gamification or Virtual Reality into your L&D programs to help engage learners and reinforce learning.

- Make time for learning by scheduling regular company-wide "Learning Hours" each month.

INTEGRATE PROCESSES

- During performance reviews, have managers and direct reports identify gaps that can be addressed through learning.

- Integrate feedback loops so people always know what they need to work on.

- Measure the outcome (e.g. increased performance), not the learning consumption.

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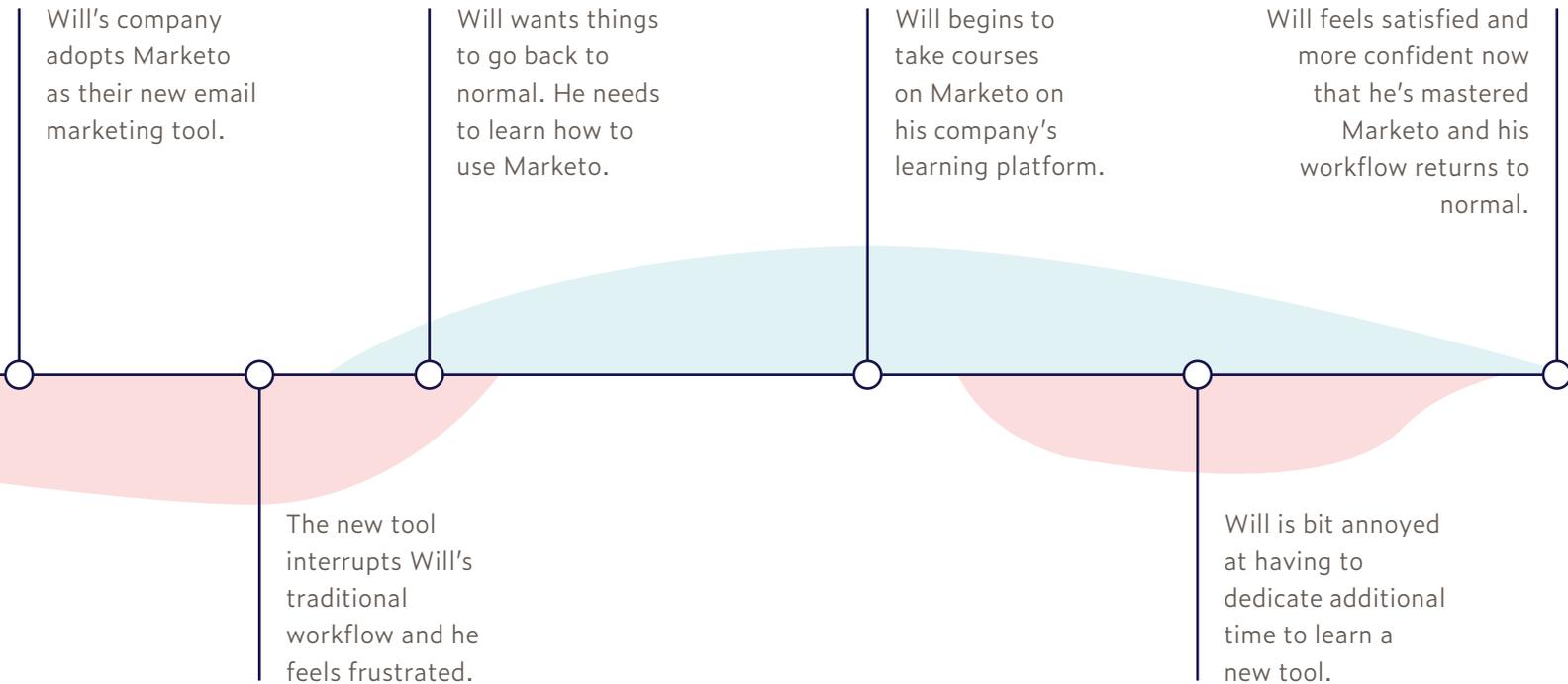for Business

Learning for external change

Will previously used Mailchimp but his company recently purchased Marketo as their email marketing tool.
This slows down his ability to get things done and frustrates him.

William

Email Marketing Manager

● LEARNING MOMENT

● FEELINGS OF ANXIETY

Will's company adopts Marketo as their new email marketing tool.

Will wants things to go back to normal. He needs to learn how to use Marketo.

Will begins to take courses on Marketo on his company's learning platform.

Will feels satisfied and more confident now that he's mastered Marketo and his workflow returns to normal.

The new tool interrupts Will's traditional workflow and he feels frustrated.

Will is bit annoyed at having to dedicate additional time to learn a new tool.

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3 | Learning for external change

CREATE THE RIGHT EXPERIENCES

- Roll out new systems and tools with training to help employees get up to speed quickly, minimizing any frustration or negative feelings.

- Make sure employees have access to bite-sized online learning videos to get answers for troubleshooting problems.

- Assign "accountability partners" so employees can remind each other of the new skills they've learned and hold one another accountable.

- Schedule company-wide monthly "Learning Hours" to encourage people to make time to learn.

- Integrate gamification in your L&D programs to help engage employees as well as reinforce learning.

INTEGRATE PROCESSES

- New tools and systems should be introduced with a step-by-step training process to ensure quicker adoption and usage.

- Before purchasing new tools, get feedback from employees during trial periods to ensure their buy-in and eventual adoption.

- Ensure there are processes in place to check the new tool or system is used correctly.

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4 | Always learning

Amy loves to learn for the sake of learning. She doesn't need a specific career goal or missing skill gap to motivate her to learn. She is a constant learner who is passionate about expanding her knowledge.

Amy
Data Scientist

● **LEARNING MOMENT**

Amy is naturally curious and enthusiastic about learning new things.

Amy learns everything from Python programming and Artificial Intelligence to yoga and Spanish language skills.

Amy wins an award for being her company's most active learner.

Amy tells her colleagues how much she loves to learn and recommends courses to take.

Amy loves to learn and takes courses on her company's platform on the weekend, evenings, and during her commute.

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4 | Always learning

CREATE THE RIGHT EXPERIENCES

- Provide an engaging and accessible online learning platform with a wide diversity of courses so your avid learners can learn anywhere, anytime.

- Rely on learning platforms to offer personalized learning recommendations on what to learn next.

- Organize "Course Clubs" with your avid learners to let them share and discuss what they learned with others.

- Create Learn Festivals–a dedicated day for learning with music and food. These are natural draws for your avid learners and can also attract your reluctant learners.

- Leverage your constant learners as peer-to-peer mentors and coaches: they love to share what they learn.

INTEGRATE PROCESSES

- Reward your avid learners and expose them to senior leadership. It's not about badges or more compensation, but recognition.

- Create success stories highlighting your avid learners to engage others to learn.

- Tap into your avid learners as evangelists and rely on them for feedback, advice, and grassroot ideas for L&D programs.

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Conclusion

Blueprint for Employee Success

The Jobs-to-be-Done framework highlights your employees' learning moments as they strive to reach their goals and address their skills gaps at work. Rethinking L&D programs around the 4 learning moments can help boost learning engagement at your organization.

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About Udemy for Business

Udemy for Business offers an accessible and engaging online learning platform that helps organizations upskill their workforce and foster a culture of learning. Our mission is to help employees do whatever comes next. We offer a curated selection of 2,000+ high-quality courses taught by the world's leading experts that are updated in real-time. Our algorithms can identify trending topics and provide personalized learning recommendations. In addition, we offer a platform to host your organization's proprietary courses as well as provide intuitive learning analytics tools. Leading organizations including Booking.com, PayPal, ON24, Lyft, Prudential Financial, and many others use Udemy for Business to drive learning forward.

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