5 Workplace Learning Trends and 5 Predictions for 2017

Udemy
for Business

The learning revolution is here.

The world is changing rapidly and few organizations feel like they have a good way to even keep up, let alone get ahead. Think of all the positions in an organization that didn't exist just ten years ago—social media manager, digital marketer, SEO specialist, app developer, or cloud services specialist.

Now more than ever, people are an organization's biggest value proposition. How an organization nurtures its talent will determine its future and differentiate it from competitors. Employees that are given the opportunity to continuously learn and adapt will drive the business forward. But it's not enough to just provide training anymore. Companies must deliver new technology that pushes learning to the forefront, engages today's employees, and transforms workplace culture.

The good news is that organizations recognize that learning & development (L&D) plays a new critical role and they have increased their L&D spending. However, while 84% of executives rated learning as important, only 37% feel these corporate training programs are effective, according to the Deloitte Human Capital Trends in 2016.[1]

Top-down approaches to learning with rigid training models just aren't working anymore in today's fast-paced work environment. In order to succeed in L&D's elevated and strategic role, CLOs must reinvent themselves and how they deliver learning. **Yesterday was about instructor-led classes and web-based e-learning platforms, but today's workforce increasingly demands next-gen learning that's engaging, personalized, mobile, and immersive.** It's no longer about L&D creating formal training courses, but blending a range of formal and informal learning experiences such as in-person training, mobile online learning, social discussion forums, or even Virtual Reality (VR).

To help L&D professionals shape a next-generation learning environment, we took a deep dive into the profile of the modern online learner based on our Udemy platform of 13 million students to distill key learning trends and what to expect in 2017.

This report highlights:

5 key learning trends

1 People around the world increasingly learn online

2 millennials are addicted to learning and It's reshaping L&D

3 Mobile video on-the-go is the new normal

4 Optimal learning occurs mid-week

5 Technical skills across industries continue to be in-demand

5 predictions for L&D in 2017

1 L&D will become a strategic business asset

2 L&D will establish learning metrics that matter

3 Automation will give rise to the importance of soft skills

4 The business world will get serious about VR

5 Organizations will shift from push to pull learning that's personalized

Darren Shimkus

GM of Udemy for Business

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Three key trends are converging and elevating the importance of L&D in organizations. First, the rapid rate of technological innovation requires an agile, adaptive workforce. Second, tight skilled labor markets are making it challenging to fill new positions and companies realize this talent must be nurtured internally. Finally, the rise of the 'employee experience' as well as Millennials' desire for learning opportunities to stay engaged at work are also reshaping L&D.
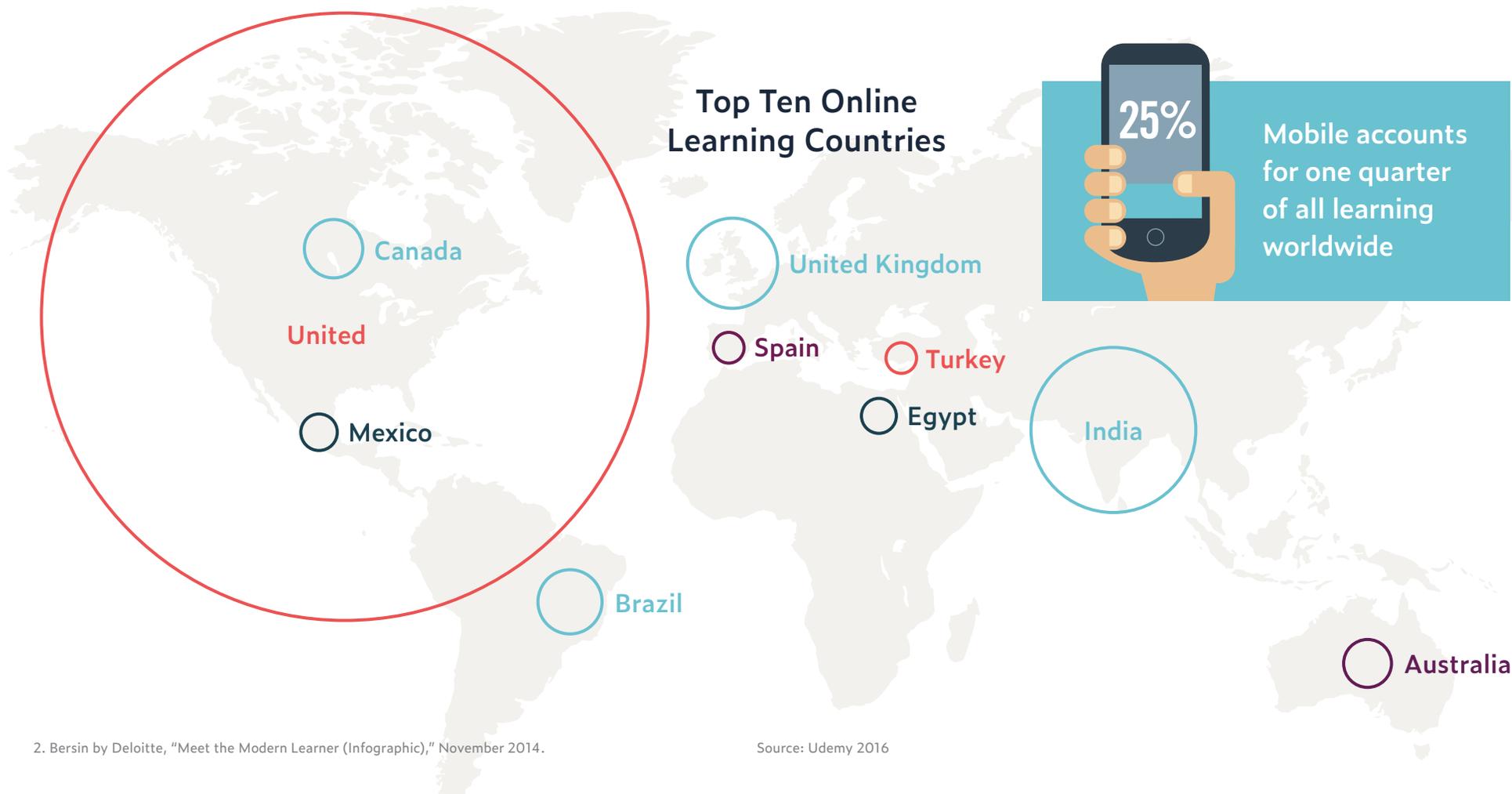
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Key learning trends

1 People around the world increasingly learn online

Online learning is key to how people learn today across the globe. 70% of modern learners rely on search engines like Google and 50-60% access online courses for knowledge.[2] So it's not surprising that today's workforce prefers online learning sources instead of traditional L&D training. On-demand online learning is accessible, mobile, and fits into our fast-paced digital environment.

The accessibility of online learning has also enabled people in far corners of the world to acquire new skills. On our Udemy platform of 40,000+ courses and over 13 million students worldwide, we continue to see this global appetite for learning expand with 66% of Udemy's students residing outside the U.S.

Top Ten Online Learning Countries

Canada

United Kingdom

United

Spain

Turkey

Egypt

India

Mexico

Brazil

Australia

25% Mobile accounts for one quarter of all learning worldwide

2. Bersin by Deloitte, "Meet the Modern Learner (Infographic)," November 2014.

Source: Udemy 2016

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Millennials are Addicted to Learning and It's Reshaping L&D

Millennials are driving the reinvention of L&D at organizations and this will benefit all generations. Millennials account for more than one–in–three U.S. workers today and have surpassed Generation X in 2015 as the largest segment of the workforce, according to the Pew Research Center. Millennials are digital natives and what they value at work is different from previous generations. They have introduced a whole new way of thinking in the workplace that's revolutionizing company culture, engagement, and learning.

Millennials and Gen X are the Largest Online Learners

48%

39%

9%

4%

Gen Z
(18-20)

Millennials
(21-34)

Gen X
(35-54)

Boomers
(55+)

Source: Udemy 2016

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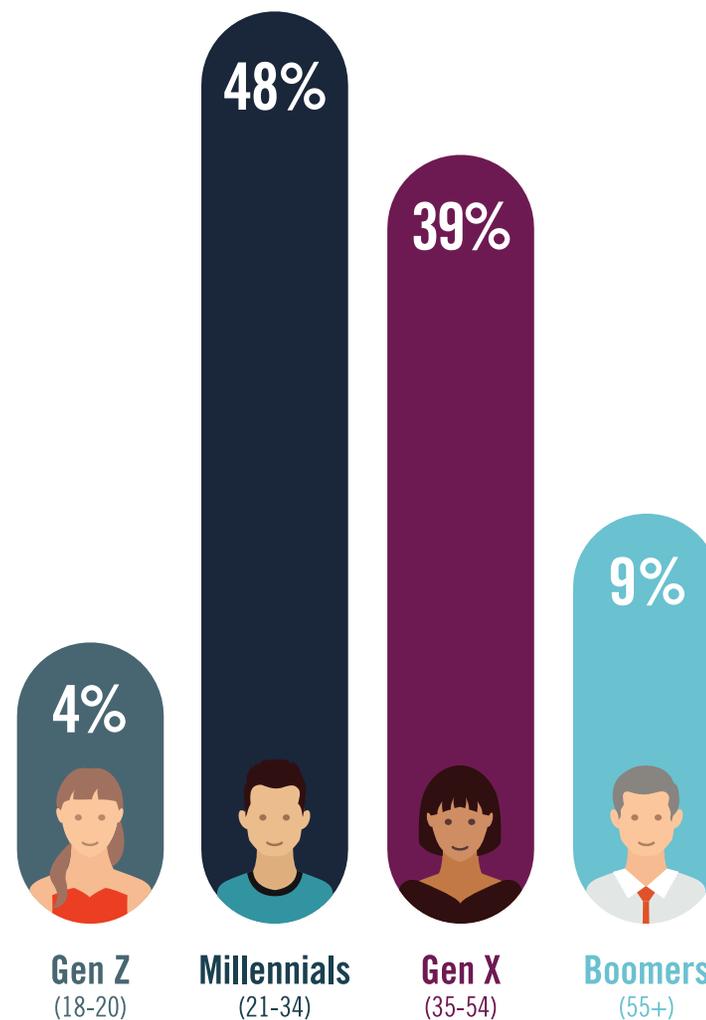
Millennials are more disengaged at work

In our recent 2016 Udemy Workplace Boredom Report, we surveyed 1000 US office workers and found that Millennials are twice as likely to be bored and disengaged at work than Baby Boomers. Those at entry to mid-level jobs are also more indifferent than those at senior and executive levels.

When asked the top reason for their boredom, workers cite a lack of opportunity to learn something new. Employees, increasingly made up of Millennials, yearn for more stimulating learning opportunities and career pathing to stay excited and passionate about their jobs.

Profile of today's disengaged worker

48%

39%

People in entry to mid-level jobs are more bored (46%) than those at senior levels

43% of U.S. office workers confessed they are bored or disengaged at work

Zzz

More women are bored at work than men

Millennials are nearly 2x as likely to be bored at work than Baby Boomers

Over 51% of bored workers felt this way for more than half of their work week

Source: 2016 Udemy Workplace Boredom Report

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Millennials care more about career development than pay

This generation shift is one of the main forces reshaping how L&D is delivered and designed. Not only do Millennials prefer a more fun and addictive digital learning environment, they also deeply care about their future career and personal development more than previous generations. More than six in ten Millennials say their "leadership skills are not being fully developed," and as a result many have one foot out the door, according to Deloitte's 2016 Millennial Survey.[3]

In fact, Millennials rate career development and learning as 2x more important than compensation, benefits, and the work environment according to research by Glassdoor and Bersin by Deloitte.[4]

As L&D professionals redesign learning to engage Millennials, they will need to take into account what uniquely inspires them. For example, Millennials—social media naturals—are highly visual and are curators and sharers of content, according to KPCB.[5]

Millennials rate career development and learning as

2X

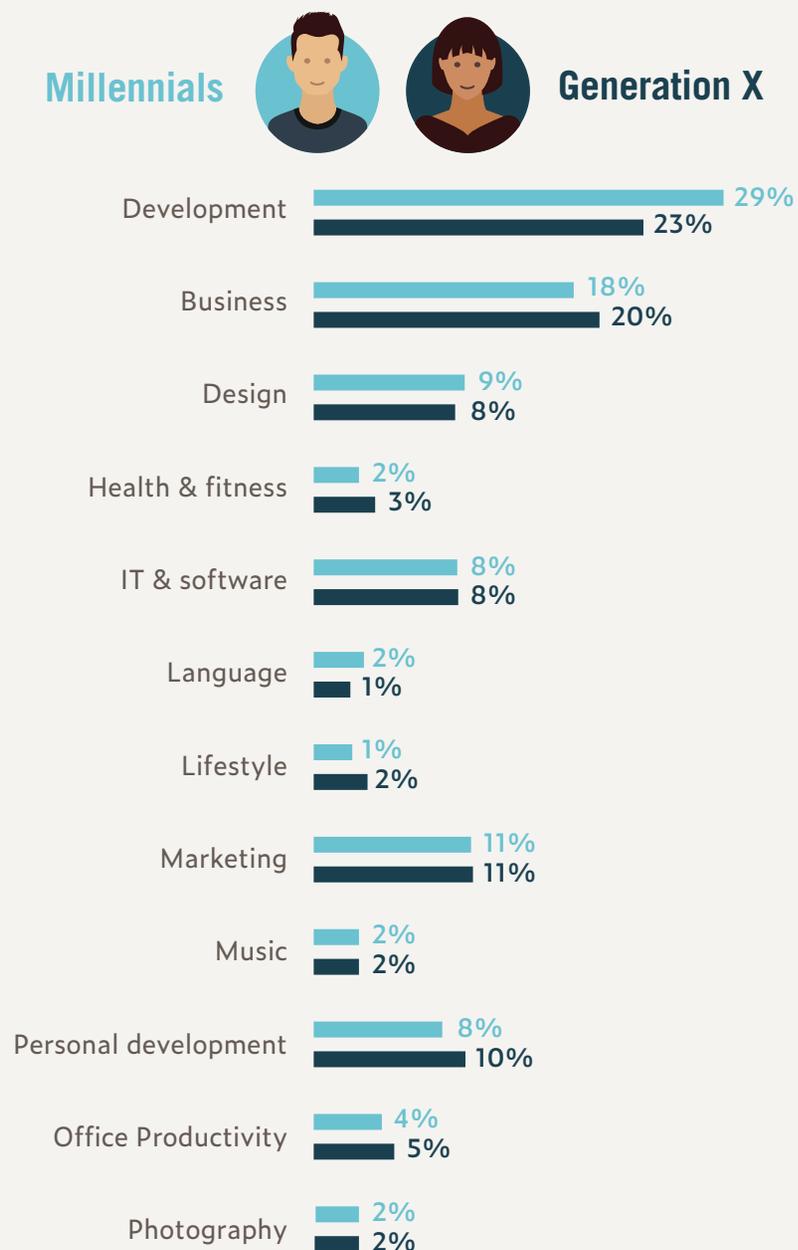**more important than compensation, benefits, and the work environment**

Source: Glassdoor and Bersin by Deloitte

3.Deloitte, 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey, October 2016.
4. Josh Bersin, "The Learning Curve is the Earning Curve," Forbes, April 11, 2016.
5. Mary Meeker, "Internet Trends 2016," Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers (KPCB), (lecture, Code Conference, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, June 1, 2016).

What are they learning?

Millennials

Generation X

Category	Millennials	Generation X
Development	29%	23%
Business	18%	20%
Design	9%	8%
Health & fitness	2%	3%
IT & software	8%	8%
Language	2%	1%
Lifestyle	1%	2%
Marketing	11%	11%
Music	2%	2%
Personal development	8%	10%
Office Productivity	4%	5%
Photography	2%	2%

Source: Udemy 2016

We must be mindful of each generation's different learning needs

Millennials and Generation X make up the largest segment of online learners on our Udemy platform. However, there are nuances to the types of learning preferred by each demographic segment.

Millennials show a keener interest in software programming, mobile apps, web development, and game design—most likely reflecting a younger workforce on development teams. Millennials are also focused on nurturing their business leadership skills as they take on new managerial roles. On the other hand, Generation X is busy keeping up to date with new technologies by acquiring business skills like digital marketing or data science. Gen Xers are also drawn to personal development learning from stress management to relationship advice.

③ Mobile video on-the-go is the new normal

Video-based mobile learning is on the rise. Globally there are 5 billion mobile subscribers, with the Asia Pacific, Africa, and Latin America accounting for the most growth, according to the Ericsson Mobility Report 2016.[6] Smartphones have increased access to content for people worldwide, with video being the most popular type of content consumed from entertainment to online learning.

Mobile video traffic accounted for over half of the total mobile data traffic in 2015, more than social networking, web browsing, or audio.[7] And mobile video is expected to keep on climbing to account for over 60% of mobile data traffic in 2018.[8] Moreover, mobile video is forecasted to grow by around 55% annually through 2021, when it should account for over two-thirds of all mobile data traffic.[9]

Mobile video traffic is the fastest growing category

Mobile traffic by application category CAGR 2015–2021 (percent)

19%	25%	35%	37%	41%	55%
File Sharing	Web Browsing	Software Download	Audio	Social Networking	Video
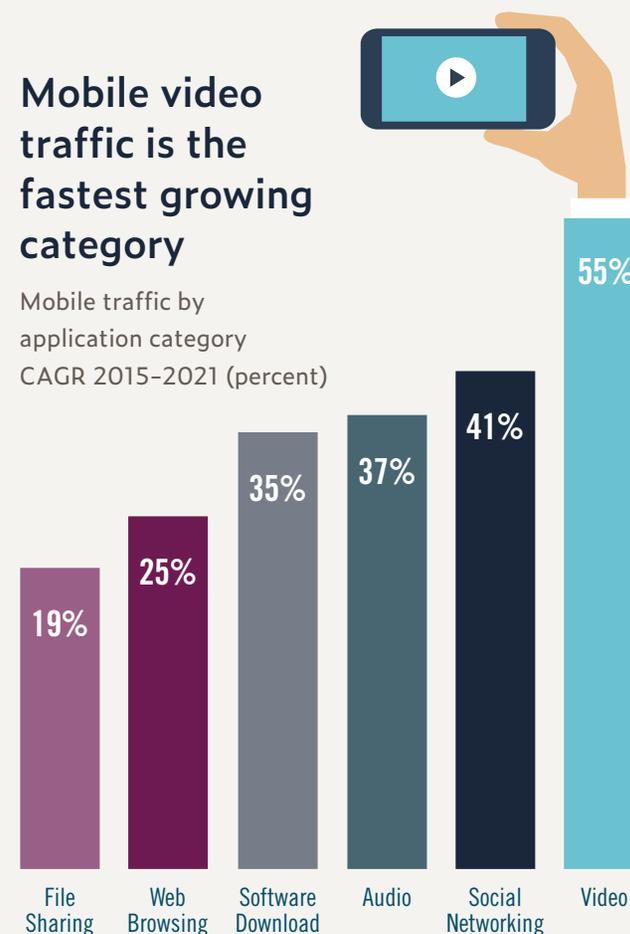
Source: Ericsson Mobility Report 2016

6. Ericsson, Ericsson Mobility Report, June 2016.
7. Ibid.
8. "What's Driving Mobile Data Growth?" Gartner, Inc., press release, February 5, 2015.
9. Ericsson.

69%

Growth of mobile offline usage between 2015 and 2016

With this explosive growth of video traffic on mobile phones, in our analysis of Udemy's 13 million global online learners, we found that mobile offline usage grew by 69% between 2015 and 2016—indicating that users are increasingly downloading videos of courses to consume on their mobile devices while on the go. Mobile use is also the platform of choice for learning in developing countries due to the higher percentage of mobile versus personal computer ownership.
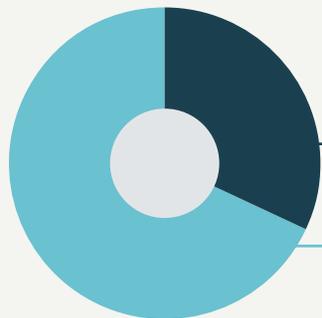
Mobile vs. web

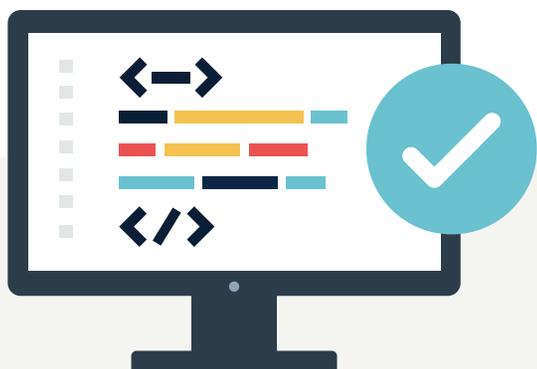**32.3%** of all Udemy users that use mobile and mixed consumption

67.7% are web only

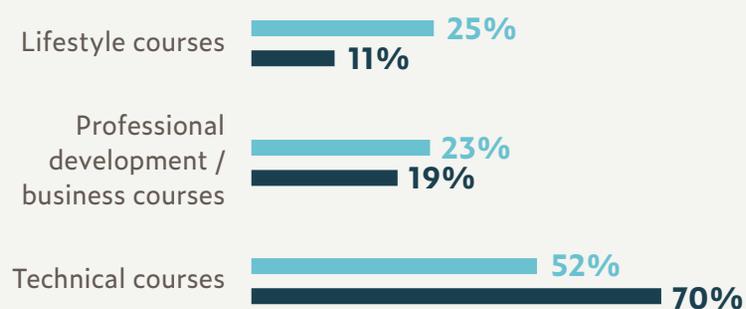## Global mobile learning

Developing countries **51.82%**[*]

United States **25.91%**

Developed countries **22.26%**[*]

*Developing countries includes emerging economies such as Brazil and less industrialized economies such as Egypt. Developed includes industrialized economies such as Western Europe and Japan.
Source: Udemy 2016

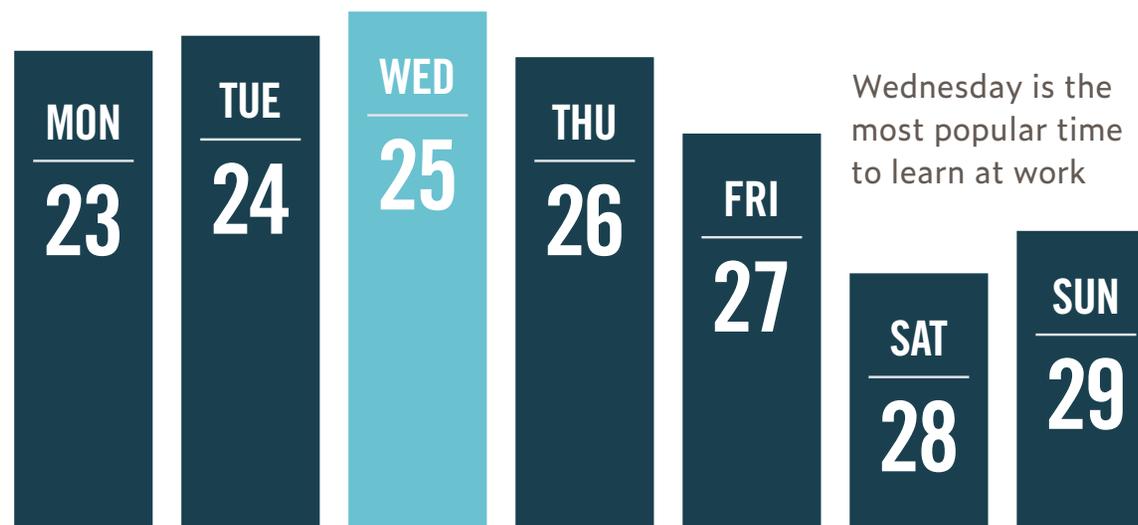## Technical learners prefer web-based learning over mobile

Mobile   **Web-based**

Lifestyle courses   **25%**   **11%**

Professional development / business courses   **23%**   **19%**

Technical courses   **52%**   **70%**

Source: Udemy 2016

To be mobile or not? It depends on what you're learning

When we took a closer look at our Udemy students, we discovered the popularity of mobile learning actually depended what they were learning. Technical courses like IT, software programming, and web development are more likely to be consumed on personal computers via the web. This is due to the need for a larger screen and keyboard for accessing detailed coding information and hands-on coding practice. In contrast, more lecture-based videos like marketing and management or fun lifestyle topics like meditation and cooking are more often accessed via smartphones when learners might be on the subway, in the kitchen, or on the beach.

4 Optimal learning occurs mid-week

| MON 23 | TUE 24 | WED 25 | THU 26 | FRI 27 | SAT 28 | SUN 29 |

Wednesday is the most popular time to learn at work

Employees expect to be given time to learn new professional skills while at work. Today's employees value work/life balance and prefer not to spend time studying on their weekend. Instead, Wednesday mid–afternoon tops the chart as the most popular time to learn. However, a few night owls—particularly those taking IT, software programming, and web development courses—burn the midnight oil when it comes to learning.

3:00 p.m. is the most popular time of day to learn at work

Technical learners have a second peak at 10:00 p.m. at night

Source: Udemy for Business 2016

A day in the life: employees learn on mobile during the morning commute

Even though business–focused learners generally preferred learning on mobile over technical learners, mobile learning consumption for both groups spiked during the morning commute hours between 6:00–9:00a.m.—reflecting employees' desire to learn while riding the subway or stuck in traffic. But once at their desks, using smartphones for learning dipped during the daytime hours, with mobile diving even lower for those taking IT and software courses—suggesting technical learners switched to their PCs while in the office. At the end of the day, mobile learning tapered off as tired employees took a break on their evening commute. But a few night owls, particularly IT and software programming students, took up learning again in earnest after 9:00pm.

Mobile learning peaks during the morning commute

Mobile learning is popular on the morning commute 6:00am–9:00am for all learners, peaking at 9:00am

Mobile learning tapers off during work hours and evening commute

Technical learners pick up mobile learning again at night, peaking at 12 midnight

Source: Udemy for Business 2016

Technical skills across industries continue to be in-demand

While IT, software development, and office productivity continue to top the list of popular workplace courses in 2016, new learning trends are emerging that are worth watching.

Hot course topics trending and to keep an eye on in 2017

IT & Software

↑ **42%** Network & Security

↑ **32%** Operating Systems

↑ **26%** IT Certification

Business

↑ **59%** Data & Analytics

↑ **13%** Communications

Design

↑ **36%** 3D Animation

↑ **22%** Web Design

Development

↑ **60%** Development Tools

↑ **55%** E-Commerce

Office Productivity

↑ **37%** Excel

Marketing

↑ **32%** Advertising and Digital Marketing

Photography

↑ **23%** Digital Photography

Sources: Udemy and Udemy for Business 2016

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5 Predictions for L&D in 2017

Keeping up with current trends isn't enough to chart a course for success; you also need to have an eye toward the future. We've made some predictions for what we think will be focal points for corporate learning in 2017 and how we expect L&D to evolve in response.

1 L&D will become a strategic business asset

For too long, L&D has been viewed as an offshoot of the HR function, pushing out mandatory compliance training and ineffective, one–size–fits–all tutorials. 2017 will be the year more companies wake up to the reality that L&D programs can be true differentiators delivering competitive advantage. Technology is changing the nature of just about every job out there, and smart companies have already recognized they can stay ahead of the curve by ensuring their workers continue to have the right skillsets.

It will take a different kind of L&D leader to champion this new thinking around corporate learning and sell it up to the C–suite. Some companies will appoint Chief Learning Officers for the first time, while others will elevate this role to be more closely aligned with business needs. To be effective, the new breed of CLO will need to demonstrate how L&D programs have a positive impact on the bottom line.

2

L&D will establish learning metrics that matter

HR has adopted data analytics, but L&D is still in the early stages of experimenting with collecting and analyzing relevant data. In 2017, we expect L&D to define and master learning metrics that matter. It's no longer about measuring course completion rates and test scores. Given the importance of continuous skills development in the 21st-century workplace, companies in 2017 will finally focus on metrics that assess whether an employee has actually learned and how they're putting their new knowledge to use.

In this era of big data, what matters in learning analytics are behavior change and how it affects the bottom line. For example, if sales teams are struggling to close deals, tracking sales data before and after the training will help you understand whether your L&D intervention increased sales revenue or not. Knowing your customers needs—from your end-users and line managers to the executive team—will help you shape the learning metrics that matter for your organization. Organizations will hold the CLO and L&D team accountable for fostering an effective learning environment and delivering outcomes that drive business results.

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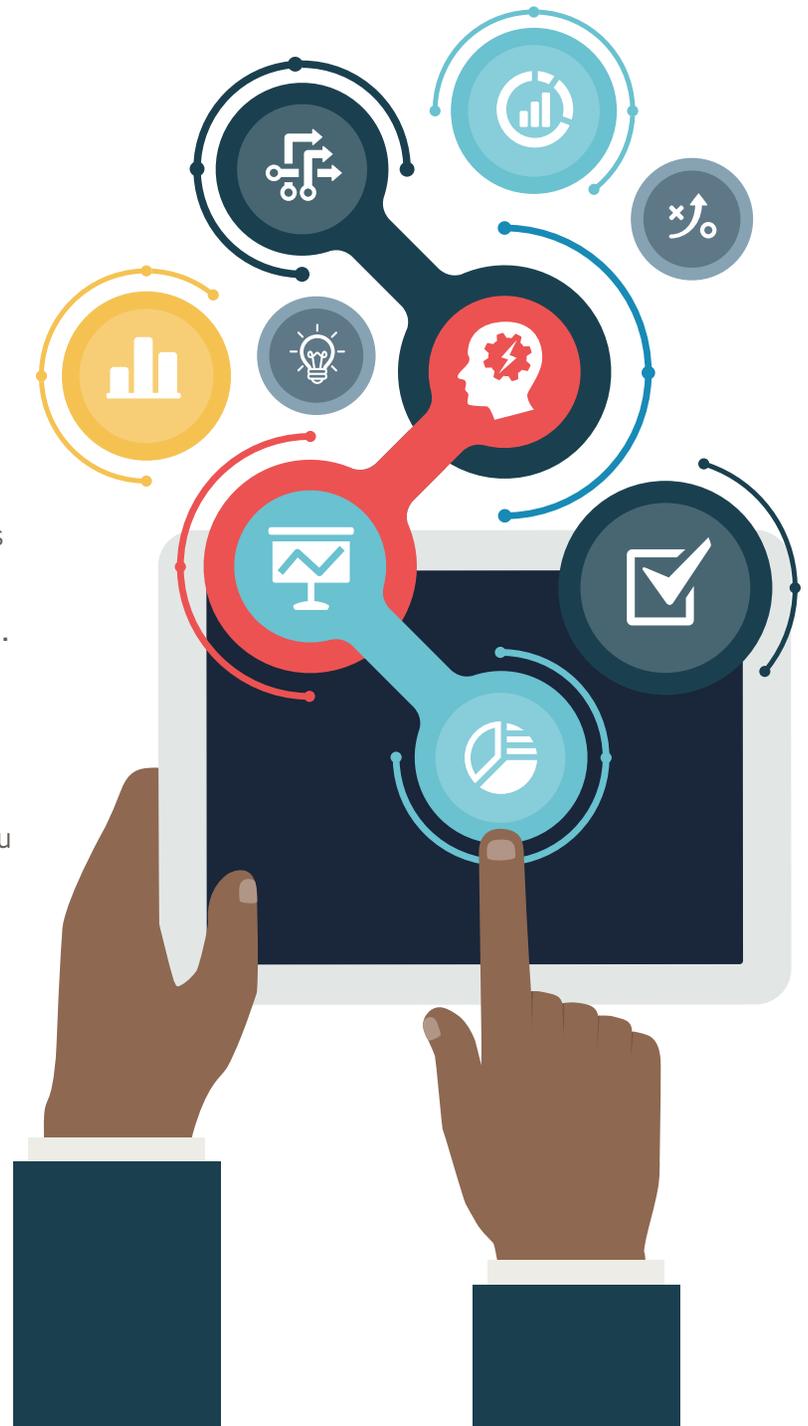
Automation will give rise to the importance of soft skills

Robots and technology won't eliminate every job, but they'll change many of them, and companies are recognizing it's more important to value professionals with key soft skills—like those that think critically, work effectively with others, make sound decisions, and adapt to changing business conditions without missing a beat.

With the rise of machine learning and robotics, the workplace is becoming increasingly automated from the assembly line to white–collar jobs. And robots aren't just threatening blue–collar workers. Artificial intelligence (AI) can now detect cancer cells on x–rays more effectively than human doctors. This trend in automation is spreading quickly across all industries and will affect many different jobs from truck drivers and customer service reps to doctors and attorneys.
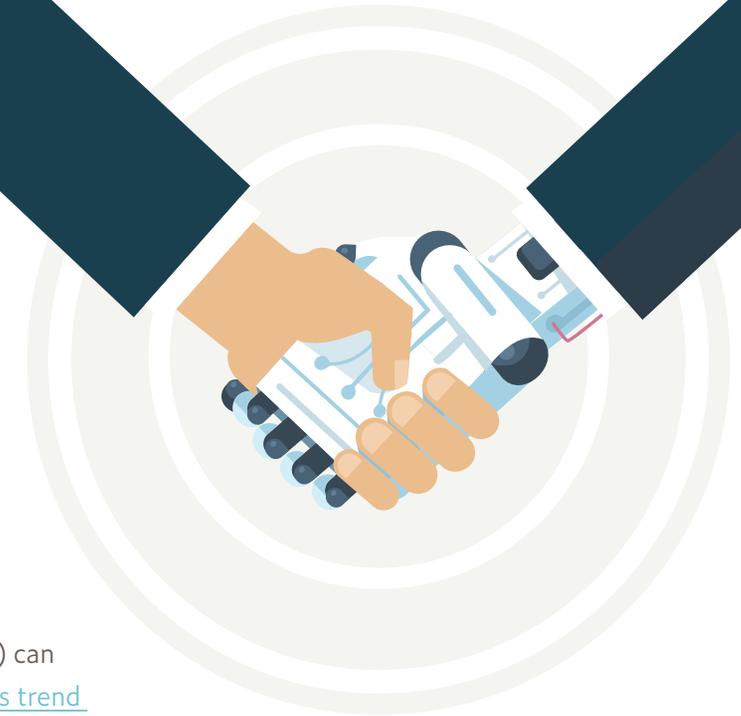
Soft skills will become increasingly valuable in 2017

So what does this mean for L&D professionals? Your job will need to increasingly focus on two important goals: continuous learning to upskill and retrain key segments of your workforce, and shifting the focus to soft skills like critical thinking, creativity, and people leadership—skills that robots can't so easily replace.

One of the most desirable traits cited among employers is the ability (and willingness) to learn and stretch beyond a static job description. Companies benefit from having workers they can shift into different roles—the kind of workers who pursue learning to keep their hard skills current but also strive to maintain soft skills they can leverage in leadership positions. These soft skills will become increasingly valuable in 2017.

4

The business world will get serious about virtual reality (VR)

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are still closer to the bleeding edge than mainstream when it comes to business applications. But VR and AR are moving out of the realm of hobbyists, and more companies are starting to pay attention.

By immersing people into a real-time learning experience, VR recreates an apprenticeship style of learning at scale. Use cases include ER training for healthcare teams, fire fighting practice, or evidence gathering training for police workers.

A few things to consider in VR

As L&D professionals experiment with VR in the workplace, there are a few challenges to consider. First of all, it's expensive to design the animated and video-based immersive worlds that will be your virtual classroom. It may only be cost effective for very specific industries where a real-world experience is essential for learning like healthcare, fire protection, or law enforcement. Second, although VR is a game-like environment that can track metrics, this VR data is not yet integrated with your LMS and analytics systems. With no benchmarks, embarking on this new technology can be risky and its effectiveness relatively unknown. Finally, VR technology is evolving rapidly and still has a few side effects such as motion sickness. These issues and others will need to be addressed before widespread adoption occurs.

Although business applications of VR are still in the early pilot stages, L&D can begin imagining how these technologies will enhance the corporate learning experience in new and exciting ways. Companies need to keep an eye on the VR space and be ready to act as the technology evolves and costs to operate VR decrease.

5

Organizations will shift from push to pull learning that's personalized

With all these innovative, new ways to learn—from on-demand mobile videos and social discussion forums to Virtual Reality—corporate learners will be drawn to learning where and when it's the most effective for them. L&D needs to shift from creating formal training that is often pushed onto the employee, to drawing employees into learning with great tools they can access for continual informal learning. Traditionally, L&D has been a push training culture where learning is top-down, but today's workforce requires a pull-learning environment.

Pull learning is learner-centric and empowers your workforce to take ownership over their learning. It involves embedding informal learning at the right time into your employees' workflow so they can find what they want, when they need it. The reality is if L&D doesn't provide this avenue for learning, employees will seek it out themselves from other sources. Companies are recognizing this and many are experimenting with more engaging ways of learning including consumer-like video-based platforms and immersive, all-day learning festivals. Organizations are also blending informal and formal learning by supporting training classes with videos, online games, coaching, and other learning tools.

Empowering the learner

For L&D professionals, curation and personalization will be the bread and butter in 2017. The same training will no longer be assigned to entire teams. Instead, employees will control their own learning experiences, and L&D will serve as guides and facilitators. HR leaders and managers will need to work harder to understand employees' career goals and interests and collaborate with L&D to ensure people feel empowered to pursue learning that helps them satisfy their professional goals, not just what the company dictates.

Conclusion

2017 will be a pivotal year for corporate learning, as more companies strive to close their skills gaps, stay ahead of the technology curve, and keep employees engaged and productive. While the challenges are significant, there's never been a better time for L&D leaders to step up and show how they're uniquely positioned to address business needs while also building a happy and productive workforce.

About Udemy for Business

Udemy for Business is a next-gen learning solution that consumerizes learning by bringing a more engaging and intuitive learning experience to the workplace. Built for businesses striving to be at the forefront of innovation, Udemy for Business offers fresh, relevant learning anytime, anywhere. The 2000+ high-quality courses taught by the world's leading experts cover a wide range of topics from development, IT and design to leadership and stress management. In addition to its curated content collection, organizations can also securely host and distribute their own proprietary content.

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lyft   BARCLAYS   Century 21   Volkswagen   PayPal   SIEMENS

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