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NIIT

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Research Report

"

Don't get set into one form, adapt it and build your own, and let it grow, be like water. Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless — like water. Now you put water in a cup, it becomes the cup; You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle; You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot.

"

BRUCE LEE

A Note from
SAILESH LALLA

Executive Vice President, NIIT

For many years, we, at NIIT, have embraced and implemented the idea of "Running Training Like a Business", first detailed by Edward Trolley in a book of the same title which became a seminal piece of work in our industry. To run training like a business, you have to be agile and elastic. Organizations that are able to respond nimbly to sudden disruptions display what I call the 4-Cs of Agility – Capabilities, Capacity, Customer-centricity, and Cost-control.

CAPABILITIES

L&D is becoming ever more complex, and the need for specialized capability sets required to take advantage of the latest technologies and methodologies is exploding and putting an enormous amount of pressure on L&D organizations to keep up.

CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

In a world where profound changes are occurring rapidly, a deep understanding of customer needs and commitment to delivering world-class customer experience seamlessly is vital.

CAPACITY

Disruptions cause surges in demand, and the ability to flex organizational capacity up and down in response to rapid changes in demand become critical.

COST-CONTROL

Massive learning organizations often carry huge, fixed costs which go back as allocations to businesses struggling to manage volatility. It's never been more important to not just reduce costs but also move fixed costs to variable and implement "pay-for-what-you-use."

In recent times, we started to hear forward-looking learning and business leaders talk about a learning function that was more proactive, that could use data, such as Office Network Analytics (ONA) to predict the learning needs of a business or team, much before the business saw it as a capability requirement. Many such conversations shaped the notion of a learning organization that is highly adaptive.

We got really excited about this idea and decided to research this further.

We commissioned this research in early 2020, a little before the pandemic totally changed the magnitude of adaptivity required for any business to survive in this very fluid environment. Earlier in the year, when we started discussions with learning leaders, we thought we were gathering best practices that would be more widely implemented in the future. But as we continued our discussions through the year, we found numerous examples of best practices that learning organizations had already successfully implemented to future proof themselves and to continue to deliver value to their business stakeholders. Becoming adaptive represents a transformative stage in L&D.

This research is part of our commitment to our clients that we will continue to push the boundaries of innovation and bring them cutting-edge insights on how to make learning more efficient, effective, engaging, and value-creating for their businesses.

2021 will probably continue to be a year of changes and rapid transformations. Through this research and subsequent discussions, we hope to continue our dialog towards finding innovative solutions to common challenges and transforming L&D.

Always Learning,

Sailesh Lalla

RESEARCH TEAM

Pooja Singh Mehta

Principal Consultant, NIIT

Pooja leads the Consulting and Advisory Services practice for NIIT and is based in Atlanta, USA. She has more than 20 years of experience in strategy, design, development, deployment and impact measurement of learning programs and a rich experience of working with global companies, across industry verticals.

Al Johnson

Director, Consulting & Advisory Services NIIT

Al is the director of consulting and advisory services at NIIT and has extensive experience in advising organizations as they reimagine their HR, learning and talent ecosystems. Al has led several learning transformation engagements, enabling business and employee experience optimization.

William (Bill) Pelster

Cofounder, Josh Bersin Academy

Mr. Pelster is a retired Principal in Deloitte and former US Consulting Board member with over 25 years of industry and consulting experience focused on learning, leadership and integrated talent management. He has developed and deployed talent solutions for top 50 companies globally in financial services, life sciences and consumer products.

Josh Bersin

Industry Analyst and Thought Leader, Josh Bersin Academy

Josh Bersin is an analyst, author, educator, and thought leader focusing on the global talent market and the challenges and trends impacting business workforces around the world. He studies the world of work, HR and leadership practices, and the broad talent technology market. He is often cited as one of the leading HR and workplace industry analysts in the world.

Executive Sponsor: Sailesh Lalla

Design Team: Shivani Chakravarthy, Harshil Gupta, Rohit Sharma, Bridget Vandenbosch

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01
Chapter

AN INTRODUCTION TO ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

1A

INTRODUCTION: WHY BE ADAPTIVE?

Businesses have experienced significant change largely bought on by digitization and evolving customer expectations. However, the year 2020 has been particularly disruptive. As companies deal with the Pandemic along with a variety of other business issues, learning has become an urgent priority. Every employee, manager, and leader is being forced to learn, and learn in new ways, driving L&D organizations to move faster than ever.

As we have studied corporate training over the years, we have always found that the ability to adapt to an everchanging landscape of business and talent priorities is key to L&D's success. Our initial research on Adaptive Learning Organizations (ALOs) indicates that those companies outperform other organizations in both business and talent outcomes.

This research, which involved in-depth conversations and surveys with more than 100 large, global companies, found that companies with adaptive learning teams spend 27% less on L&D and deliver far greater business outcomes. For example, highly adaptive companies are 53% more likely to have experienced growth during the last year, they have 14% higher reported career opportunities, their senior leaders are rated 15% higher by their employees, and their overall Glassdoor ratings are 13% higher. These are very significant variations.

Given the fact that the L&D market is more than USD 240 Billion in size and large companies spend an average of USD 1,400 per employee on training annually, the return on being Adaptive is very high.

We also found that ALOs share a common set of learning practices. They are far ahead of their peers in digital design and delivery strategies, learning in the flow of work, highly targeted programs, learner experience, collaboration, personalization, and understanding the future of work. These firms have the capability to sense market changes and flex learning structures, operating models, planning, and resources to serve the learning needs of the business quickly, efficiently, and effectively.

The external world will continually change and disrupt businesses and the employee capabilities that are required to perform well in the new environment. The current pandemic is obvious in its disruptiveness and impact on learning, however change is always occurring, whether it's an economic recession, technology upheaval, or climate change, the ability to adapt is now a key requirement for businesses and the learning function.

Resiliency has become a key human skill across HR departments as businesses and employees are forced to adapt to new environments.

1B

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION MODEL – WHAT IS IT?

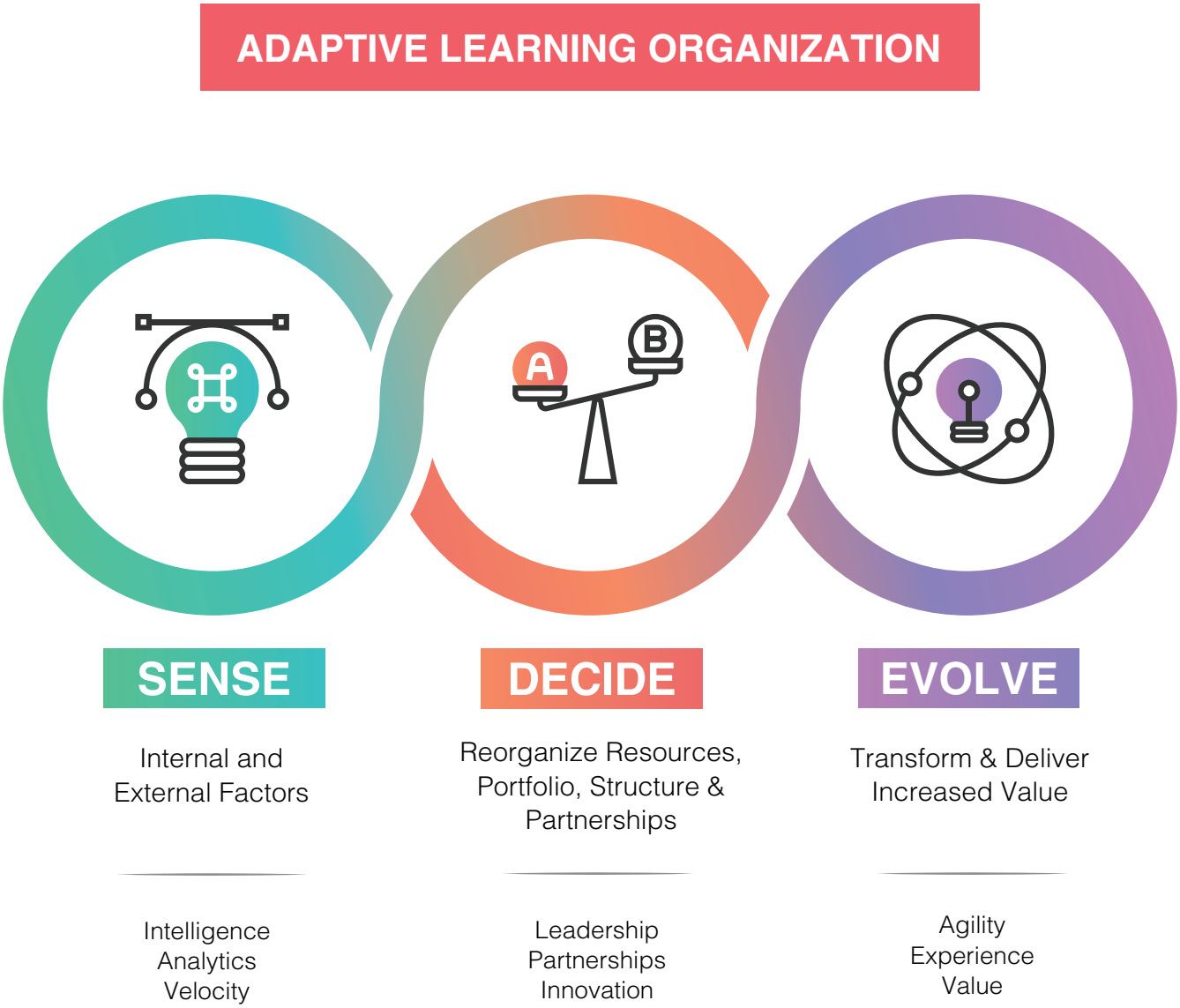
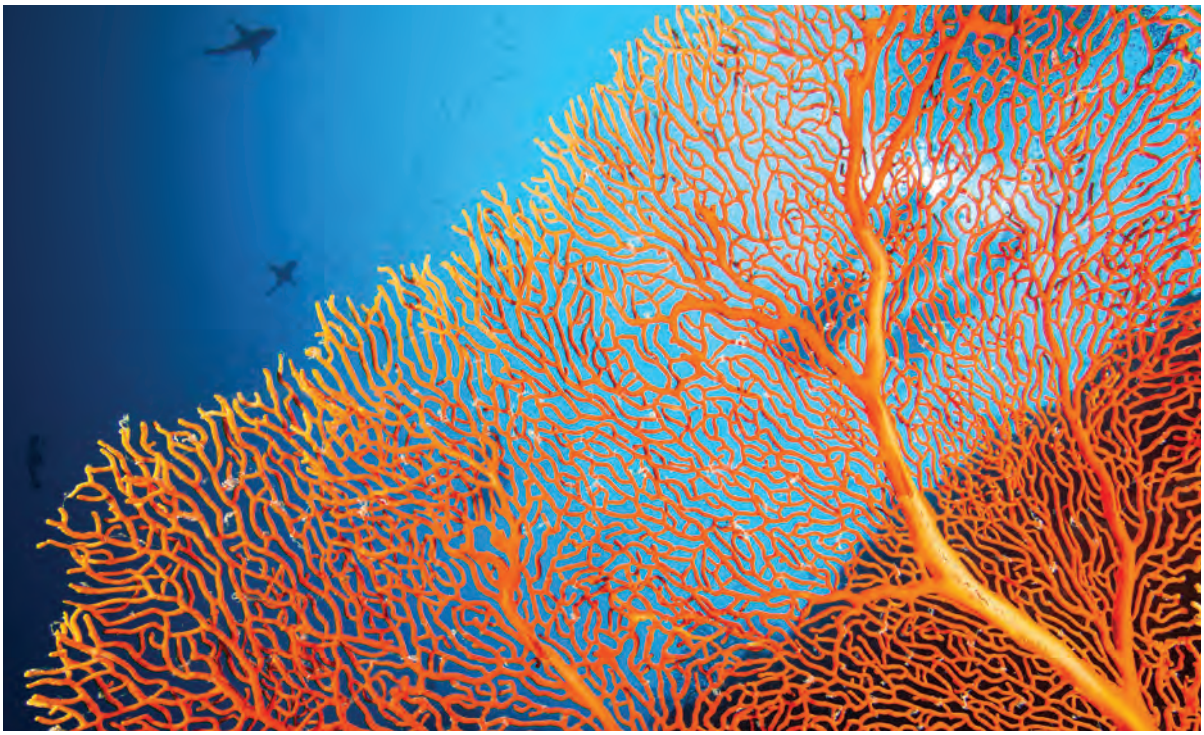


Figure 1.1 Adaptive Learning Organization



Three characteristics of adaptivity that enable a proactive and fluid learning ecosystem are:

SENSE

The ability to harvest, measure, analyze, and draw actionable insights from multiple information and data sources to create forward looking internal and external views.

DECIDE

The ability to make accurate short-term and transformational decisions based on known information, collaboration, and with built-in pivot points that allow for quick and efficient course correction.

EVOLVE

The ability to implement changes and transform both for the immediate and sustainable future.

SENSE

As a strategic partner to the business, ALOs are committed to advancing business strategy. They are forward looking, gathering data from multiple sources to create planning scenarios and proactively preparing themselves to cater to an emerging future. Having a forward looking lens is at the core of ALOs that are ultimately sourcing information that will impact talent and the capabilities needed currently and into the near future. It is a never-ending journey.

Fortunately for learning departments, the ability to collect, store, aggregate, analyze, and visualize data in a near real time and automated way is here (or getting here).

“Sensing” requires a whole new way of thinking and tools and practices that are looking forward at the beginning and not backward as we have traditionally thought of learning measurement.

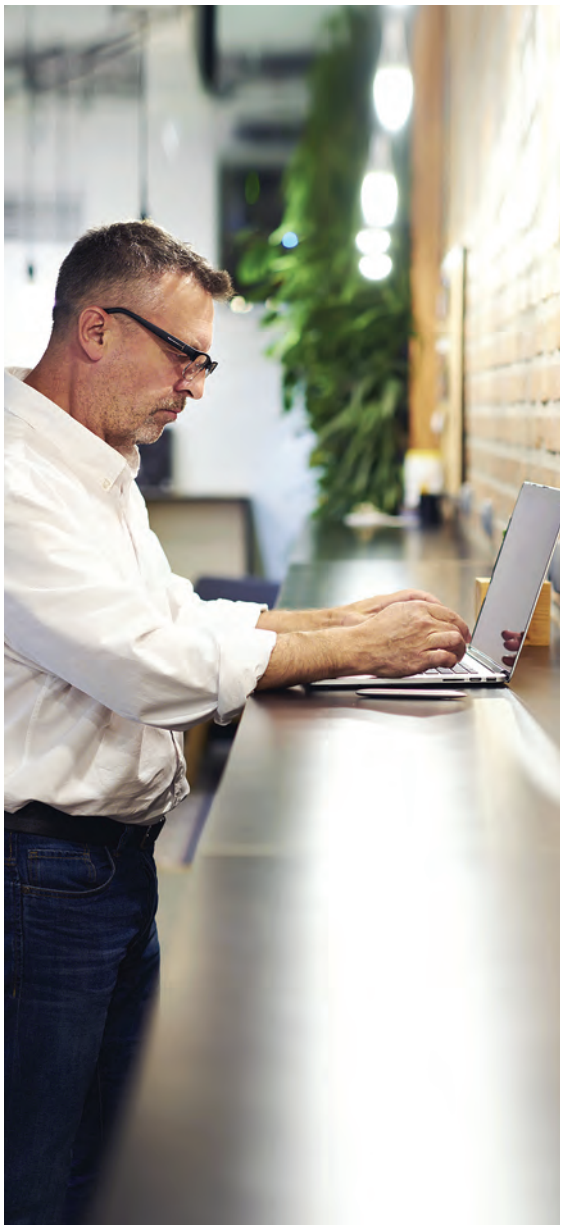
The ability to sense allows L&D to forecast future needs more quantitatively and in a way that makes it easier to build a business case and align stakeholders.

For example, analyzing Salesforce activities and output provides real time performance data on strengths and challenges client facing staff have. A “Sensing” model where L&D is harnessing this Salesforce data would allow L&D to start at the actual performance need and build capability based on real talent and business data. This real time data can also be used for workforce planning and forecasting longer term talent needs.

The depth of data and the ability to continually assess, learn, and act changes the game for how learning departments will operate and make investment decisions. Real time data flows are now available from the LMS, LXP, LRS, HRMS, Financial, Sales, and operations platforms, to name a few, to build a picture of how learning can, and does, create value for the business and enhance the performance of learners. This type of data collection and analysis is seamless, unobtrusive to the business, and can be real time. The adoption of data and analytics, AI, and machine learning are proving to be key components in ALOs. It allows the learning organization to make faster, better, and more effective decisions.

As an example, Microsoft Cortex will utilize AI to capture information across Microsoft 365 and organize it into topics and knowledge networks, bringing together related topics, people, and content inside of Microsoft tools, delivering learning in the flow of work based on leading and emerging knowledge and practices both internally and externally.

Add to this the upcoming learning app for MS Teams, and its curated content solution, creates a learning experience platform. Knowledge management, combined with collaboration, workflow, and AI is a fast-growing trend that will significantly impact L&D, as other vendors like Google G Suite, Slack, Trello, and Box build out this market.



DECIDE

The second capability of an Adaptive Learning Organization is its ability to make highly relevant decisions quickly and plan, accordingly, knowing that the initial plans will change over time.

Having a continual flow of meaningful and insightful data at hand allows the learning organization to make proactive decisions and escape being reactive.

In other words, when things happen, it is prepared to make quick sense of the changing world and leverage the resources already in place (capabilities, processes, skillsets, technologies, budgets, etc.) to adapt to the new conditions.

ALOs were noticeably more prepared to adjust to the drastic changes required for learning during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were better able to analyze data and make realistic, viable, and difficult decisions faster. These organizations have been continuously learning and adapting and have the infrastructure and communication channels to adjust more easily. The organizations also relied heavily on their vendor/partners to bring thought leadership, augment capability, and efficiently pivot learning solutions to meet learners in their new working environments.

In contrast to these ALOs, many learning teams within the US were simply caught off guard, even while they watched their Asian and European offices closing under the onslaught of COVID-19. They were slow to make decisions needed to implement new formats of learning and struggled to respond as they scrambled to put forth band-aid remote learning solutions.

EVOLVE

The next element of ALOs is their ability to evolve and sustainably transform their existing ecosystems.

Learning organizations that are adaptive are continually seeking innovation and testing new technologies and practices.

In other words, they are continually advancing their capabilities and practices. To do this well, ALOs build highly efficient, agile, and scalable operating models that anticipate and enable shifts in priorities and learning needs.

ALOs take a business-centric vs. L&D-centric view of the world, which allows them to better understand and support the business. Their service delivery model leverages design thinking, agile practices, and leading technologies to craft, test, deploy, and adjust solutions based on feedback data. Their operating models and processes are well thought out, documented, communicated, and integrated with the business. That doesn't mean that ALO systems are rigid, in practice, it is just the opposite. Flexibility, the ability to pivot, is built into the operating processes, resources, and structure to allow for dynamic and changing environments, giving L&D the ability to act with velocity.

For example, we found that ALOs have adapted to how employees work today. Most employees of large, global organizations work in highly connected and digitally enabled environments. The learning ecosystem of these organizations replicates the work environment. It is multi-modal, blended and anytime, everywhere. We rely heavily on digital tools regardless of our roles. Our social platforms, mobile devices, and online tools play a vital role in our daily jobs. Every production platform (Microsoft Teams, Salesforce, Google, Workday, SAP) is becoming more content-rich, so we must adapt our company-specific learning programs to embrace these new platforms. Having an agile service delivery model enables ALOs to anticipate and transition more easily to these new ways of delivering learning.

LARGE OIL & GAS COMPANY L&D ADAPTABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

STRATEGIC PLANNING TRANSFORMATION

This leading oil and gas company began a transformation journey with a focus on being less reactive and more proactive. In the past, the L&D organization would hear about things too late and did not have the time to plan and deliver the learning impact needed. L&D was seen as a support function, and it was a struggle to get a seat at the table when it came to key strategic initiatives. The L&D organization set a broad goal of doing more and being a catalyst for transformation instead of an adjunct support function.

PORTFOLIOS

The L&D organization created a learning transformation team that identified six critical elements which would pertain to the core of learning, interactivity across the company, and breaking down silos. For example, one of the focus areas combined the compliance training, portfolio management, user experience and accumulation-based learning portfolios. These areas were not treated as traditionally independent projects but as part of critical workstreams that were integrated as part of a large project.

ROLES & CAPABILITIES

There was a need to develop capabilities in the learning team that would enable them to provide more business impact. This organization understands that learning is only a part of the overall solution and effectiveness requires connection of learning with the overall solution. For example, achieving impact for the commercial organization required a solution that combined creating time for people to work more autonomously, adding highly specialized resources across the organization, and identifying and developing key proficiencies much faster.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

To bring together multiple business learning organizations, this organization created a decision-making body made up of business unit learning leaders and one overall leader of learning. The learning team obtained buy-ins and received full support from this body which cascaded information to their teams. The body prioritized learning initiatives based on sponsorship by at least two members of the governing body.

VENDOR PARTNERSHIPS

As a mechanism to expand its capability pool and flex its cost model, this organization invested in strategic partnerships with learning vendors, relying on the partners to bring expertise and innovation. Besides flexible pool and access to wide range of capabilities, this organization was also able to leverage the vendors to provide learning support from lower cost locations thus adding efficiency to learning operations.

1C

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION?

As we started this research, we knew that adaptability, sensing, and flexibility was important. So, we put together a methodology that would specifically identify the practices that matter and then correlate these against various outcomes. As this report details, there are 15 key practices to ALOs, and we looked at them all in detail.

We surveyed and interviewed some of the largest companies in the world. These included global leaders in healthcare, energy, pharmaceutical, consumer goods, technology, financial services, and consulting. What we found is that the learning functions of some of these companies are "highly adaptive" and others are far less. We looked at these firm's self-reported financial results, their growth rates during the last year, and a variety of their Glassdoor ratings. What we found was astounding.

01

First, we found that ALOs spend 27% less on L&D and deliver far greater business outcomes. As many of you know, it's very easy to waste money on training – companies have duplicative and redundant programs, many tools and platforms, unoptimized processes and non-business aligned programs that don't always drive high value. By focusing on agility, feedback, and change, an ALO can quickly cut or reduce investment in underperforming programs and suboptimal operating models, focusing investments in creating "higher value" in the process.

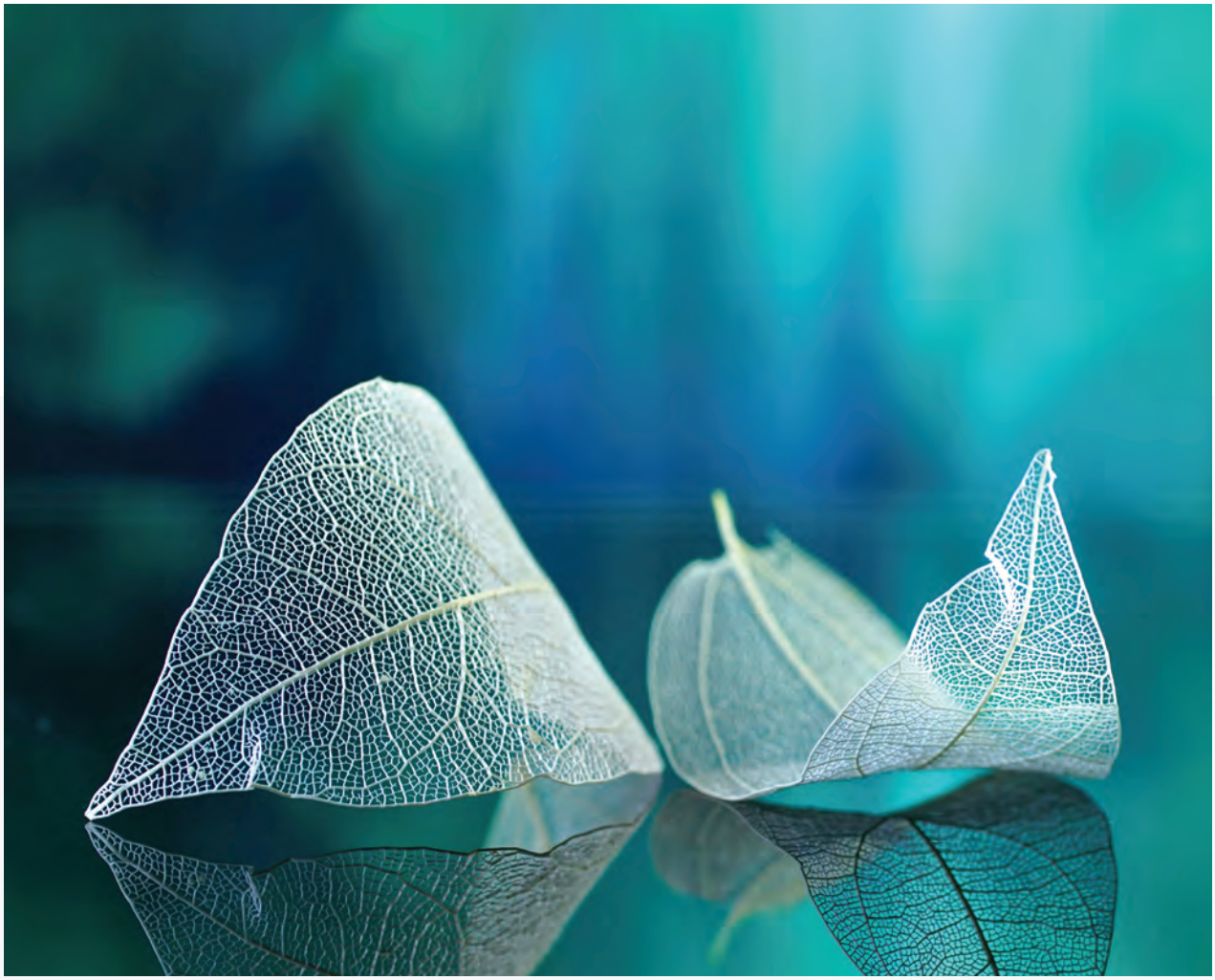
02

Second, when we looked at financial results, we found that companies that have highly adaptive learning organizations are 53% more likely to have experienced growth during the last year. We can't be sure if having an ALO is a cause or an effect, but the correlation is very significant. In fact, when we looked through the data and focused on some of the fastest growing companies, we immediately saw that they're far better at sensing, adapting, pinpointing, and measuring their learning.

03

Third, ALOs have a much better employee experience, which means they have lower turnover, stronger employee productivity, and stronger customer culture. When correlating our data against Glassdoor ratings, for example, we found that ALOs have 14% higher reported career opportunities, their senior leaders are rated 15% higher by their employees, and their overall Glassdoor ratings are 13% higher. These differences are some of the most important measures of success, because when employees and leadership are highly respected, the company grows and thrives under change.

02
Chapter



AN INTRODUCTION TO ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

2A

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW DESCRIPTION

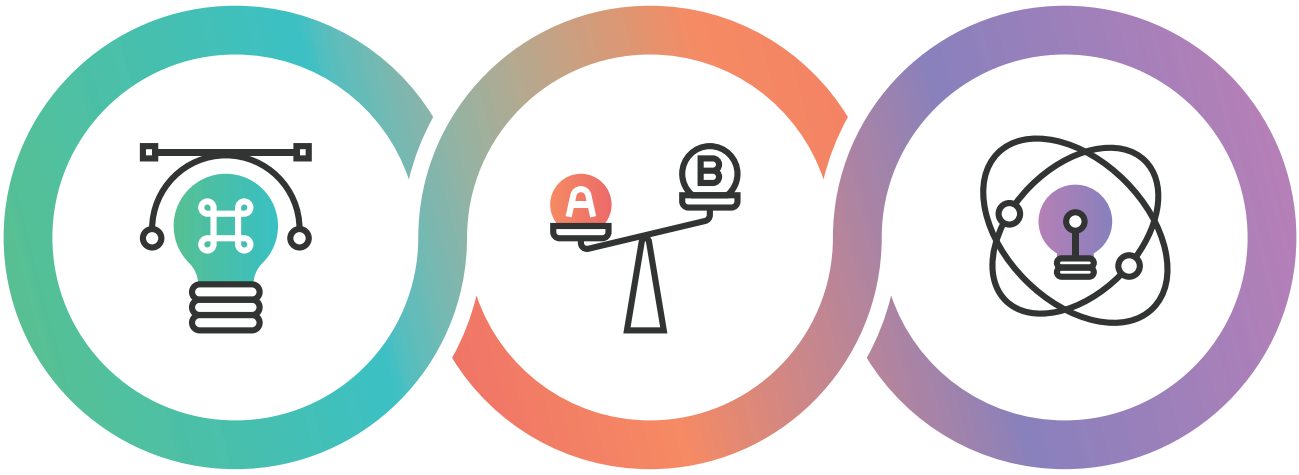
A clear picture of what ALOs are doing and how they are differentiating themselves emerged from the survey and interviews. We found specific examples of thought-leadership and best practices that can help organizations build their elasticity and ability to adjust to changing talent and development needs with confidence and velocity.

Adaptability enables learning organizations to adjust and transform to continually evolving skills, an increasing digital landscape, and learning everywhere and anytime with greater ease. It also enables L&D to focus accurately and invest in key structured programs that develop critical organizational capability and performance. Agility, execution, personalization, sensing, and analysis all become part of L&D's DNA and change becomes the norm, and anticipated, versus a shock to the system.

THE ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION MODEL

DIMENSIONS, PRACTICES, & ALO INSIGHTS

The accelerated changes of the 21st century on life, business, and L&D, such as Big Data, digital transformation, crowdsourcing, collaboration, Agile, and design thinking, nurtured a new model that had flexibility, transparency, and speed at its core. Organizations began building practices that fell into three dimensions, Sense, Decide, and Evolve.



SENSE

Rigorous Data Gathering & Analysis

Trusted Advisor to the Business

Digital Strategy

Trend Analysis

Learning Impact

Discovering Learning Needs

Personalization

DECIDE

Leadership Culture

Future of Work

Roles & Capabilities/ Talent Mobility

Flexible Capacity

Capability Academies

Enterprise Governance

Boundaryless Collaboration

Value of External Partnerships

Flexible Planning

EVOLVE

Emerging L&D Technologies

Structured Learning

Learning in the Flow of Work

Design Thinking/ Experience

Agile Practices

Transforming & Executing

Learners Owning their Development

Figure 2.1 Adaptive Learning Organization Model

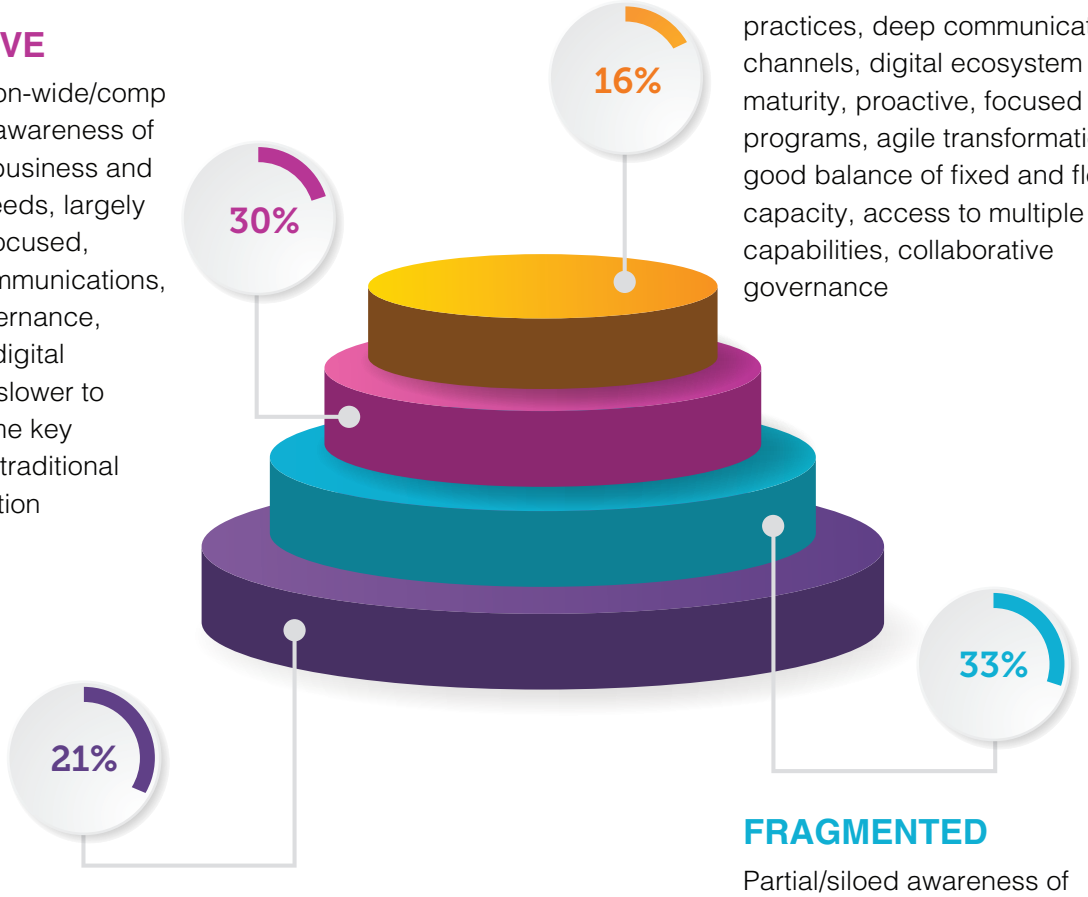
THE ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION MATURITY MODEL

ADAPTIVE

Highly aware of internal needs and external trends and best practices, deep communication channels, digital ecosystem maturity, proactive, focused programs, agile transformation, good balance of fixed and flexible capacity, access to multiple capabilities, collaborative governance

COHESIVE

Organization-wide/comprehensive awareness of changing business and learning needs, largely internally focused, mature communications, stable governance, emerging digital platforms, slower to adjust, some key programs, traditional transformation



FRAGMENTED

Partial/siloed awareness of changing business and learning needs, reduced communication channels, disparate technology and transformation, limited governance, duplicative key programs, fixed and siloed capacity with limited ability to pivot

REACTIVE

Limited awareness to changing learning landscape, chaotic response to change, inconsistent communications, unorganized, redundant systems and resources, responsive vs. proactive transformation, unclear resource capacity

Figure 2.2 Adaptive Learning Organization Maturity Model

We found that L&D organizations in the Reactive or Fragmented states typically were either highly decentralized, entrenched in outdated learning models, or lacked a viable governance structure to communicate across the enterprise, to learn from each other, and to adjust to broader and scalable changes in unison. They had disjointed technology ecosystems, a high degree of duplicative resources, traditional structures and learning solutions, and despite being well aligned with the businesses that they served, had a general lack of a leadership culture to enable enterprise L&D transformation when it was needed. They tended to be risk adverse or played a 'wait and see' game with the future. Often when enterprise transformation is attempted in these types of organizations, it loses momentum and falls flat, as the disparate groups continue their own practices and leadership cultures.

As L&D moves up the ALO maturity model, good things happen. L&D organizations within the Cohesive and Adaptive levels gain technology and analytical prowess, and an openness to explore, share, and communicate across L&D groups and with the business. They are increasingly seen as a 'trusted advisor' to business leaders and HR, as they bring insights and solutions that map directly to changing talent and capability development requirements.

We found that more mature learning organizations have both the digital capability and the ability to personalize learning to the learner's needs through intelligent recommendations. This asset enables more of a consumer-grade experience, presenting highly relevant micro and macro learning opportunities at the point of need. Mature learning organizations also rely heavily on external partners to help guide, shape, and do the heavy lifting during transformational times, as well as provide scalable day-to-day solutions and forward-thinking market insights.

THE COST OF ADAPTABILITY

Enhancing the adaptability quotient of your learning organization requires implementing a combination of learning transformations. Throughout discussions with ALOs, we found that building adaptability is a journey and the time and investment required to enhance adaptability increases with the size of the business organization.

Cost of Adaptability Increases with Scale

Figure 2.3 The Cost of Adaptability

L&D ADAPTABILITY HIGHLIGHTS FROM A LEADING, LARGE GLOBAL HEALTHCARE COMPANY

EXTERNAL TRENDS

Highly decentralized, a few years ago, the learning organization was very inward-looking. In the last few years, this organization has made concerted effort to focus on having a continual window on outside perspectives and understanding emerging trends. The learning leaders are active participant in cross-sharing events that provide opportunities for them to share and discuss common challenges.

FLEXIBLE PLANNING

The L&D organization believes that it needs to strip out core processes that have been ingrained in the healthcare industry. For example, the L&D organization now executes activities in sprints with a focus on being more agile. They also utilize short and long-term planning with intentional pivot points and a clear vision. The L&D organization utilizes flexible approaches including the use of Agile sprints for planning, solutioning and execution.

DIGITAL STRENGTH/ADAPTIVE LEARNING

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the organization had already 'reimagined' learning. Therefore, there was little or no impact on L&D practices. The organization was ready to manage the crisis based on planning, alternative ways of learning, and agility.

LEADERSHIP CULTURE

The organization focuses on building a strong leadership culture. The intent is to capture people's hearts and minds and understand the "Why" of Change. The organization utilizes storytelling with compelling, powerful stories from the C-suite along with one-on-one conversations as pervasive ways of learning.

CORE SKILLS

The organization manages capability development through three centers of expertise (COE) with a focus on Core/Critical Skills.

> "Adaptability is a transformational capability that organizations need to have."
>
> **CLO**

HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATIONS ARE ADAPTIVE

We spoke with several ALOs, all of which had their unique journey and business needs to becoming adaptive, and some are still in process. While as with any maturity model, parts of the organization can be recognized at various levels of maturity. However, what we found consistently was that high performing organizations have a higher adoption of ALO practices versus their relatively lower performing counterparts.
The following graph illustrates the differences in adoption of ALO practices between high performing and lower performing companies*.

*based on the business and talent outcomes we reviewed in the study.

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS DRIVE PERFORMANCE

SENSE

	Low Performers	High Performers
We use a learning analytics portal and learning analytics team.	40%	60%
We leverage AI and curation to create highly personalized learning experiences.	40%	60%
We pioneer digital solutions and constantly seek out of best practices.	40%	60%
Utilize data sensing & analytics to continually monitor business/talent impact.	25%	75%
We utilize a wide variety of external and internal data to analyze trends.	45%	55%
Have defined skills and capabilities and leverage analytics to determine skill needs.	22%	78%

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS DRIVE PERFORMANCE

DECIDE

	Low Performers	High Performers
We have set up capability academies led by business leaders and supported by L&D.	38%	62%
We have a robust internal movement policy and move people across roles.	0%	100%
Continuous learners & change leaders able to quickly adapt to changing business conditions.	0%	100%
Each business unit/function has a learning business partner responsible for content ownership.	38%	62%
Our capacity is very dynamic and can adapt to the changing priorities quickly.	29%	71%
We are actively engaged in FoW strategy, planning and implementation.	27%	73%

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS DRIVE PERFORMANCE

EVOLVE

	Low Performers	High Performers
Most learning solutions guide learners through structured journeys.	40%	60%
We have implemented, or mostly, implemented a learning in the flow of work strategy.	0%	100%
We have a rich, modern learning technology landscape.	40%	60%
Use design thinking for most of our learning solutions & business support design/development.	0%	100%
We continually experiment with many new learning tools, technologies, and approaches.	25%	75%
We are very focused on incorporating agile ways of working in learning and all functions.	38%	62%

2B

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

SENSE	TREND ANALYSIS	LEARNING IMPACT	DISCOVERING LEARNING NEEDS	DIGITAL STRATEGY	PERSONALIZATION
DECIDE	LEADERSHIP CULTURE	ROLES & CAPABILITIES/ TALENT MOBILITY	FUTURE OF WORK	FLEXIBLE CAPACITY	CAPABILITY ACADEMIES
EVOLVE	EMERGING L&D TECHNOLOGY	DESIGN THINKING	LEARNING IN THE FLOW OF WORK	AGILE PRACTICES	LEARNING JOURNEYS

Figure 2.4 Characteristics of Adaptive Learning Organizations

L&D ADAPTABILITY HIGHLIGHTS FROM A LEADING, LARGE GLOBAL AUTOMATIVE COMPANY

STRATEGIC DISCIPLINE/DECISION-MAKING, QUANTITATIVE DATA

The L&D organization utilizes design thinking and has launched a think team. They follow a rigorous process of critical thinking and drawing insights. Because of the robustness of the process, the perspectives that come out of design thinking are respected and help align stakeholders. Once they have agreed on the direction, they create rapid prototypes and test impact, collecting quantitative data during the testing process.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

The Global L&D team collaborates closely with the rest of the organization to decide common needs, develop global solutions and share best practices. Regional needs are identified by regional teams at the local level. The biggest challenge is managing and balancing the tension and dynamics or competing priorities - Global vs regional, short-term vs long-term. The organization believes that robust communication channels are critical to success.

DESIGN THINKING

Design Thinking is a core capability and is ubiquitous throughout the organization. They have had very positive experiences and results with design thinking. They follow a collaborative process and get robust inputs from the “think” phase of the design thinking process by looking in and looking out.

CHANGE DISCIPLINE

The L&D organization spends a significant amount of time in change management and skilling. In the past, the organization had ODI development institutes where each learning plan ended with a capstone change management project. Change management is a muscle that L&D actively focuses on developing for all its staff.

VENDOR PARTNERSHIPS

The organization leverages the expertise and guidance of partners. They have been reimagining their leadership development strategy, working with a partner to accomplish this goal.

03
Chapter

ADAPTIVE LEARNING ORGANIZATION DIMENSIONS – A DEEPER DIVE

This chapter provides deeper insights into the 15 ALO practices. We have included a compelling question, survey question response highlights, leading practices of ALO's, and relevant examples.

3A

DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS: SENSE

SENSE

Trend Analysis

Why is it important for L&D to continually source and evaluate both internal and external information?

Today's world is forward thinking, agile, and continually 'listening' to what is happening to determine trends that could impact learning. Our interviews illustrated the importance of learning leaders' participation and sharing in global roundtables, events, and other avenues. Opportunities to engage with peers outside their organizations helps broaden perspectives on trends, gather best practices and test their own thinking and practices.

Broadening access to trends outside of the L&D community is also something that ALOs are doing. Participating in world events such as Davos, SXSW, CES, for example, speak to wider economic and social trends impacting the workforce and L&D, helping L&D connect the dots to the business. Following thought leaders, listening to industry podcasts, and speaking with L&D's 'clients' are valuable investments. Being aware and open to emerging business and talent trends helps build credibility with L&D's key stakeholders. It establishes L&D as a thought leader and helps demonstrate connectedness to the business. It also illustrates a commitment to continual improvement and a willingness to adapt to market and skill changes as needed, helping to solidify being a trusted advisor.

SURVEY QUESTION

How do you determine internal learning trends to inform your learning strategy, manage learning portfolios, and learning investments?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.2x

Use stakeholder inputs, synthesize data from our performance, HR, and learning systems, and participate in world events and conferences to stay current on trends and technologies.

High performers have 1.2x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

31% of respondents have a robust ability to analyze both internal and external trends, which includes leveraging data from work productivity tools (e.g. MS Teams, Salesforce), HR, and multiple learning systems. An additional 19% that regularly pull internal systems data, however, are less focused on broader global events and conferences to assess learning trends.

Adaptive Learning Organizations have a commitment to participate in external learning and business events to gather and share best practices. They believe that while learning is a strategic differentiator, there are common challenges and best practices that are relevant across industries and are best solved together by sharing experiences.

Learning Sharks is a community started by Christopher Lind, GE Healthcare. It includes a video livestream designed to close the gap between the companies that build learning technologies and the leaders responsible for selecting, implementing and managing them. The group critically evaluates the latest technologies that influence the future of learning by candidly discussing the challenges organizations face.

Learning Impact

Do current learning measurement models still work in the context of an ALO?

Learning professionals have spent a considerable amount of time and resources implementing measurement models such as Kirkpatrick and Brinkerhoff to determine the impact and behavioral change outcomes from learning solutions. In many ways, these models perpetuate a L&D centric view of the world vs. a modern business or capability driven approach. Also, implementing any of these models is a significant task for L&D.

We found that ALOs relied more on real time measurement models. Starting with the question “What business challenges are we trying to solve?” They then identify specific metrics to target and utilize a wide range of data collection and analytics to determine impact, leveraging a digital analytics infrastructure already in place. For example, they measure level 1 metrics not through learner satisfaction surveys, but through content ratings, downloads, and follows, or other platform access data metrics that are already being captured and require no additional intervention.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following statements best describe your learning impact measurement model?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

3x

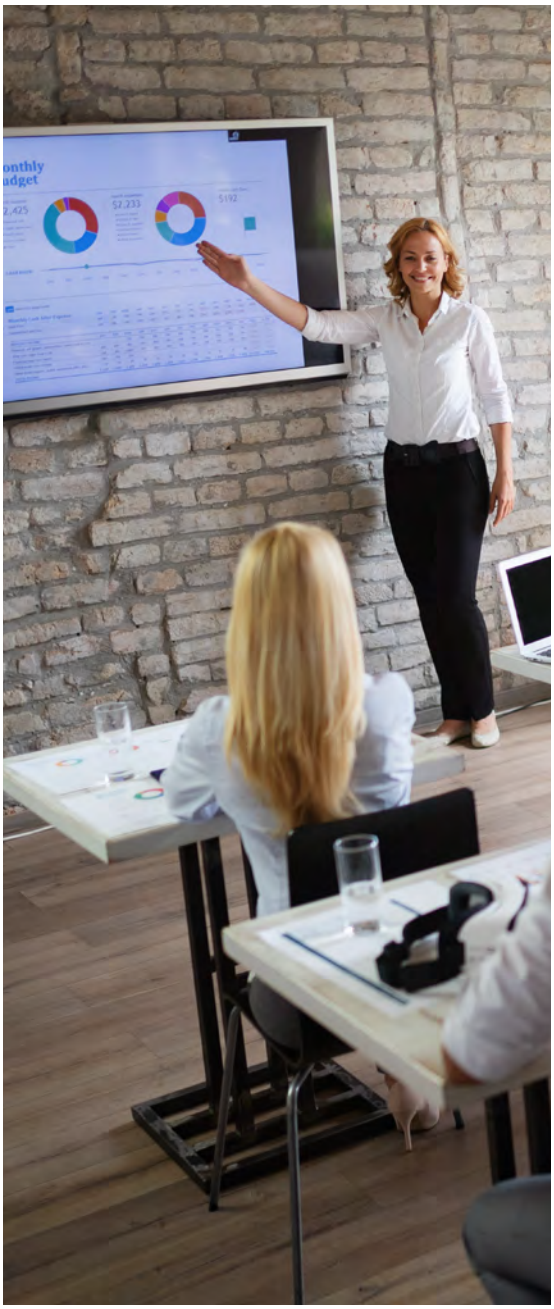
Utilize data sensing analysis (e.g. operational, sales, HR/Talent, network analysis, Business Intelligence/Analytics) to continuously monitor business/talent impact and learner engagement.

High performers have 3x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

43% of organizations are primarily focused on post event learner satisfaction or knowledge tests, while 45% address some level of business impact.

Adaptive Learning Organizations are designed as open systems that transform to changing conditions in a fast, capable, and efficient manner. Therefore, the purpose of measurement is not to prove the effectiveness but gather insights for increased impact. Therefore, they adopt a dynamic measurement model that integrates learning's impact on leading and lagging performance indicators.

MetLife's Distributor Advantage Platform is an excellent example of a learning ecosystem that makes collection of learner feedback redundant and demonstrates the impact of training in real time. This award-winning learning ecosystem is linked to the sales performance system and allows for learning recommendations based on individual performance and assessment of correlation between learning and performance.



Discovering Learning Needs

Will traditional needs assessment conducted once a year and reviewed quarterly meet the changing needs of the business in today's volatile environment?

Traditional needs analysis has remained constant and often includes annual executive level stakeholder discussions, HRBP feedback, reviewing annual engagement survey data, competency assessments, collecting data from performance development conversations and manager requests. 56% of organizations utilize competencies and traditional needs assessment to support business learning needs. ALOs focus on defined skills and capabilities and leverage analytics, crowdsourcing, data sensing from collaboration and productivity tools, search term analysis, workforce planning insights, etc. to analyze in real time what the organization or key roles are searching on, the content they are viewing and topics they are discussing, and the emerging organizational capability requirements. This creates a living, dynamic taxonomy of skills and capabilities created by the learners and the market.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of these statements best describes how you assess talent-driven learning needs?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

3.5x

Have defined key skills and capabilities accross the organization and use learning analytics to identify skills in demand and priortize learning needs.

High performers have 3.5x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

Traditional competency models and assessments are most prominent despite the need to rapidly learn new skills, reskill, and upskill in today's digital business environments.

Adaptive Learning Organizations focus on analyzing current business, social, and learning data against a set of key skills and capabilities to address learning needs.

It includes using unobtrusive data collection that pulls data from multiple internal and external sources.

A leading global technology firm has a large digital ecosystem allowing it to collect and store internal and external data from multiple learning, sales, engineering, HR, operations, and financial systems in a 'data lake', where it leverages analytics and visualization tools to build powerful insights on learning needs and impact.

Digital Strategy

Can a learning organization truly be adaptive without considerably leveraging technology?

Overall, digital adoption is still emerging in HR, learning, and talent management. For all the focus on digital transformation from a business and consumer perspective, there is still opportunity in the HR space to drive deeper digital strategies and ecosystems. The learning and talent vendor space is still fragmented with more modern digital capabilities often available in smaller, non-enterprise solutions. While platforms such as Workplace, Microsoft and Workpday are expanding their capabilities, we found that ALOs are not waiting. They are actively pursuing their plans to leverage technology for enriching learning experiences and creating higher impact.

While some ALOs are leveraging what's available and integrating those in their learning ecosystem (e.g. solutions such as VR, AR, Chatbots,and conversation analysis), others are building band-aid extensions of their core platforms to enable additional functionality that can help them deliver more value. For example adding additional functionality to better manage competency assurance in Workday.

SURVEY QUESTION

How would you describe your enterprise-wide digital strategy for HR, learning and talent management?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.5x

Pioneer digital solutions and constantly seeking out innovation.

High performers have 1.5x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

Organizations are evenly split between those that indicated that they had either a well defined digital strategy and those that did not.

Virtual Reality immerses employees into 'real-life' situations that heighten their senses and makes them experience a close to real environment. VR learning provides a unique and memorable learning experience unlike a classroom or online program.

The VR Gowning Simulation uses the Vive Pro headset, trackers, and controllers to achieve full-body mirroring in VR. Learners complete critical gowning techniques in a virtual environment, and can "see" contamination they cause while practicing, before entering a real pharmaceutical manufacturing environment where contamination can mean, in the worst case, death to users of tainted drugs, and in the best case, millions of dollars of lifesaving drugs down the drain. This approach allows learners to "fail in the headset" so that they don't "fail in the real world."

Personalization

How can organizations better understand learning needs?

Workplace learning is about developing a set of capabilities, whether those capabilities solve immediate work challenges, strengthen skills for a current role, future roles, or help enable an employee's career aspirations.
In a traditional, hierarchical organization, roles are more clearly defined and role-based training solutions work well. However, in a modern, more network-driven organization, employees work in more fluid roles and in a more project-based structure. Each project might require a different capability mix. A broad sweep of role-based training is not as effective in a network-driven organization. A significantly higher level of personalization is required to make learning effective, contextual, relevant and just in time for the learners.

ALOs recognize the need for ultra personalization of learning. They also recognize that ultra personalization is only possible by leveraging technology. They have set up or are in the process of setting up learning ecosystems that leverage learner persona and AI algorithms to create personalized learning journeys. They are using tools that allow for dynamic needs analysis and dynamic allocation of learning resources and scheduling of synchronous learning initiatives.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of these statements best describe the extent to which learning content and learning experiences are personalized for learners?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.5x

Leverage AI and curation to create highly personalized learning experiences based on a learner's profile.

High performers have 1.5x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

Only 14% of organizations are using AI to drive personalization of learning content, representing a significant opportunity for L&D in general. 54% of L&D teams tend to cater content to a large, generic audience.

This award winning Virtual Reality (VR) learning used by a large pharma is helping learners practice gowning in a sterile environment. VR immerses employees into 'real-life' situations that heighten their senses and makes them experience a close to real environment. VR learning provides a unique and memorable learning experience unlike a classroom or online program.

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L&D ADAPTABILITY HIGHLIGHTS FROM A LEADING, LARGE GLOBAL PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

FLEXIBLE STRUCTURES

The L&D organization is distributed and structured around the business with different models for different business needs. Each divisional learning lead reports into the CLO through a dotted line, creating a single organization with defined points of accountability all rolling up to the CLO. Capability leads are in place for key areas.

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM/COES

The organization created a digital Capability COE and responded quickly with the new model to cover the enterprise (e.g. curated playlists, channels to market) quickly. A new portal created to manage the impact of COVID received 15,000 hits in a few weeks. The COEs cover digital capability, learning and curiosity, and learning administration and are distributed globally or offshore. The organization focused on strategy and innovation through experience, technology, ecosystem, and design. In the last quarter of 2019, the L&D engagement score was 69%. After COVID, this score has increased to 74% in six months. The organization focuses on the availability of learning options to meet learning needs.

LEADERSHIP CULTURE

There is a commitment from the executive leadership committee for a large impetus on learning and creating a learning and business culture of 'Inspired, Curious, Unboxed', to drive empowerment. The divisional bonus was removed and there is one business performance factor so that the organization thinks as one team and shares resources including talent, teams, and funding.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

The organization created a collaborative leadership council and operating model, with an approach to enable learning leaders to identify where boundaries exist between local and enterprise groups with a learning shared services team. This approach enabled teams and self-organizing leadership that let the learning leadership create balance between local and enterprise groups and the learning shared services team, ensuring a consistent conversation across the market while understanding regional nuances and establishing clear channels of communication.

PARTNERSHIPS

The L&D organization stepped in to support employees through the pandemic with many learning solutions. The organization extended courses to friends and family of employees. The L&D organization spent the past five years designing and consolidating playlists in a single learning platform. With these curated playlists, employees could quickly leverage relevant content already in place in real time. There was a massive 7X uptake in online learning over three months.

3B

DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS: DECIDE

DECIDE

Leadership Culture

How important is leadership culture to becoming an Adaptive Learning Organization?

To adapt is to change, and change requires leadership. The four common themes that we founda across ALOs are:

> They have a strong learning culture driven by a focus on continuous learning at its core. The leaders of these organizations unquestionably understand that value of learning in meeting their business objectives. They openly and often share their commitment to learning.

> The leaders have a connected vision that percolates from the CEO to the CHRO and the CLO. They also have a robust learning strategy that is lead by the CLO, but very actively and openly supported by the CHRO and the CEO.

> The learning leaders are strongly connected with the key business and cross functional leaders within their organizations. Their strategic learning initiatives include strong participation from the business, HR and other leaders.

> Their leaders are cautious but certainly not risk adverse. They have ambitious goals for the value they want to create for their organizations and are willing to be the first to try out new tools and approaches to learning. They are not afraid of failing but they also have robust mechanisms to control the impact of failure.

Executive leaders of ALOs empower and value learning and make room for it and invest in it as part of their business strategies.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of these statements best describes your organization's leadership culture?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

6x

Encourage a leadership culture that can quickly learn and adapt to changing business conditions.

High performers have 6x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

37% of organizations were moderately flexible and open to continuous learning, while **17%** were fully dedicated to continuous learning and having the right change leadership capability to be adaptive. **46%** of organizations indicated that they do not have the necessary leadership culture needed to be adaptable.

A strong leadership culture makes learning a priority, enabling, and encouraging learning to support both in-role and career development.

Sanofi, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies, launched its Corporate University, just around the time when employees started working from home. They were hesitant about the launch timing. The CEO reached out to emphasize the importance of learning and urged employees to make time for learning. Employees completed a million hours of learning in just the first four months of the launch.

Roles & Capabilities/Talent Mobility

Why is talent mobility critical to adaptability?

Heavily hierarchical organizations are slow to adjust their practices and resource structures, making them much less adaptable. It is far more of a command and control model that tends not to share resources widely across the organization or to pursue talent mobility as a strategic business driver. As more organizations adopt a flatter, flexible, and agile teams-based operating model, the need to access a wide net of resources quickly becomes increasingly important. Likewise, as employees continually develop their skills, they need to have opportunities to utilize their capability and provide value back into the business. This need for internal talent mobility applies to the learning organization as well. We found that ALOs practice talent mobility for their learning teams as well and carry a mix of generic and specialized capabilities.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of these statements best describes the structure and capabilities in your learning function?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

5x

Have a robust internal movement policy within the learning organization as well.

High performers have 5x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

L&D has done a sufficient job in building out a strong mix of roles and capabilities to provide flexibility, laying the foundation for advanced adaptability across the enterprise. 85% of organizations have a good mix of specialists and multi-skilled roles that can be flexibly deployed as needed.

"Think about how a dynamic company operates. When a hiring manager wants to staff a role, they look for an internal candidate to help. When an individual wants to learn something new, they look for an opportunity inside the company. It's all a problem of matching demand with supply, something a marketplace does very well."

Pitney Bowes is an excellent example of a learning organization that practices internal mobility. Their business-learning partner role is often staffed from the business and rotated out back to the same or different business in a couple of years.

Future of Work

Has L&D's investment in Future of Work planning increased its readiness to adapt?

The Future of Work presents unique opportunities and challenges for each organization. Augmentation and automation will significantly impact the configuration of job roles and the human capabilities required to work alongside bots and robots. L&D organizations need to balance addressing the here and now learning needs while also building capabilities that will help their businesses succeed in the future. We found that ALOs are well out in front of their peers in having a Future of Work strategy that is aligned with the business. These ALOs have mechanisms to determine the impact of technologies on their job roles, determine the skills that will be needed in the future, have a mechanism to track current skills and capabilities and learning ecosystems to enable mass reskilling and upskilling environments. We also found that ALOs have tighter integration with workforce planning vis-à-vis their peers and are actively collaborating with their workforce planning colleagues to make 'build/buy/bend/bot' workforce decisions.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following statements best describe your L&D function's role in enabling the Future of Work (FoW)?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

2.7x

Are actively engaged in future of work strategy, planning and implementation.

High performers have 2.7x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

54% of organizations are actively engaged in Future of Work activities, either at the planning, strategy, or implementation phases.

Organizations that have invested in Future of Work scenario planning (change brought on by heightened digitization, automation, and artificial intelligence) and talent implications had an adaptability model that could be quickly pivoted to address the new ways of working that are continuing to evolve.

Amazon's Upskilling 2025 addresses the FoW by launching Machine Learning University, Amazon Technical Academy, and the Associate2Tech program. It is also offering a pre-paid tuition program for fulfillment center associates and expanding Amazon Apprenticeship and AWS Training and certification programs.

Flexible Capacity

What allows learning organizations to be more “elastic/flexible” in pivoting learning focus, funding, resources, and portfolio?

Modern learning operating models utilize agile thinking and practices to adapt quickly to changing environments. ALOs build intentional pivot points into their short and long-term plans that mandate consideration of new or updated plan variables. ALOs also have fewer boundaries and collaborate across the organization around goals and outcomes. They employ an enterprise learning governance strategy that improves the decision-making process and gives a voice to all impacted stakeholders.
ALOs leverage centers of expertise (e.g. capabilities), design and development centers, and vendor partner relationships that significantly increase flexibility and scalability.

SURVEY QUESTION

How flexible is the capacity within L&D function and how flexible is your program strategy?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

2.5x

Have capacity (e.g. funding, resources) and program strategy (e.g. learning portfolio) that is very dynamic. We can adapt to the changes in learning priorities quickly.

High performers have 2.5x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

Organizations are building adaptability in their capacity. 44% are are leveraging learners partners to convert fixed staffing models to variable staffing moels where they have access to an adaptable combination of learning skillsets.

Learning organizations that have access to multi-disciplinary capabilities through partnerships have more elasticity in their resources, capacity and capabilities. As the pandemic impacted the volume and type of learning activity, organizations that had flex pools of resources via learning partners found it much easier to alter the capability mix of their learning teams. For example, replace some of the facilitation activity with digital asset creation.

In 2018, Pitney Bowes made the decision to work with a learning partner who could bring multi-faceted capabilities to transform the learning organization. As Pitney Bowes embarked on this new partnership, Johnna G. Torsone, EVP and Chief Human Resources Officer commented, "Learning and development is foundational to the value we offer to our employees and how we embed those values and culture in what we do. NIIT will be our strategic partner in providing that learning and development to our employees as we continue our journey of transformation."

Capability Academies

What value do capability academies generate over traditional models of learning delivery?

Capability Academies are L&D vehicles that help build competitively differentiating strategic capabilities that an organization considers critical to its success. Most effective academies are holistic, business-driven and sponsored by a senior business leader. In many cases, the academy is owned and managed by the business itself, with L&D playing an enabling role.

Our research shows that ALOs use the vehicle of Capability Academies to focus on skills that are strategically important for the organization. Their view of an academy is a mechanism to bring concerted effort towards building the targeted capability. For example, a large Canada-based retail organization shared how they were thinking of setting up a "pop-up" academy to build digital skills. They identified that digital skills would be a key focus area for them in the coming two years and setting it up as an Academy would enable them to align resources in a much more targeted way.

Characteristics of an effective Capability Academy

Provide a place where learners and the business can:

- Build common knowledge, skills and experiences for a strategic topic
- Learn through multiple ways including structured learning, experts, whitepapers, online content, and from each other
- Have a strong sense of community and purpose
- Continually advance the topic and identify new capabilities that create strategic advantage
- Share best practices, experiences and insights

By developing Capability Academies, organizations focus development growth in highly strategic areas, create a common language and direction, and build momentum within the organization.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following statements best describes your company's use of capability academies/centers of excellence/portfolios to build critical capabilities for your company?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.7x

Set up capability academies/centers of excellence/portfolios that focus on building critical capabilities. These capability academies are led by business leaders and supported by L&D.

High performers have 1.7x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

51% of organizations have built capability academies. However, there are differences in the ownership of the academy. 29% are owned by L&D, whereas 22%, those in the adaptive learning segment, are owned by the business with L&D playing a support role. Another 20% have identified a core set of company-wide capabilities with learning content dedicated to those capabilities.

Organizations are redefining their business models and will require new core capabilities. Vehicles such as academies/capability institutes enable L&D to harvest knowledge, best practices and actionable insights, package and disseminate them across the organization and create an advantage.

A industrial products company with 35,000 IT employees needed to shift to cloud computing. With L&D support, the IT leadership created an academy that focused on critical capabilities. Using Design Thinking, it developed an LXP and delivered content, coaching, and structured programs based on a set of personas and learning pathways

LARGE GLOBAL FOOD & BEVERAGE COMPANY L&D ADAPTABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Followed the “lone nut” leader model to permeate a culture of learning across the organization. Starting with the CLO’s personal learning journeys, leaders across the company demonstrated their commitment to continuous learning and encouraged all employees to be curious and personally experience the power of learning.

PORTFOLIOS

Created an academy structure that helps drive focus on developing capabilities that are strategically important to the organization.

EXTERNAL TRENDS

Enhanced participation in conferences, roundtables and opportunities to engage with learning leaders across organizations to have a stronger pulse on the external trends and actively look for best practices and innovation in learning.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

A federated operating model with dotted-line reporting to CLO. The structure allows for geographical and business alignment of L&D while sharing best practices and investing in innovation at a more centralized level.

3C

DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS: EVOLVE

EVOLVE

Emerging L&D Technology

How elastic is your digital ecosystem?

L&D technology traditionally centered on the LMS and a few development and delivery tools. This is changing with increased digitization. Cloud computing and interoperable systems are replacing the need to implement massive technology infrastructures that are in and of themselves rigid, highly integrated, customized, and slow to change. About 12% of the 240 Billion USD corporate training spend is on learning technologies[1]. In the last decade, there has been an explosion of learning platforms, tools, and apps. Taking advantage of these new tools and platforms to optimize learning operations, create a connected learner experience, and strengthen alignment with business and other HR functions requires an appetite for considerable experimentation.

We found that ALOs continually monitor, test, pilot, and utilize new technology as a core capability. They have mechanisms to stay informed of the latest learning technologies, have an appetite to conduct proofs of concepts, along with a strong governance to maximize utilization of their existing learning investments instead of cluttering their technology landscape.

1. Learning Technology Evolves: Integrated Platforms Are Arriving, Josh Bersin

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of these statements best described how you adopt and apply emerging learning technologies and trends?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

2x

Have a charter that allows for broad innovation, budgeting and investing in proofs of concepts to test new technologies and learning solutions.

High performers have 2x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

3x

Experiment with many new learning tools, technologies and approaches and constantly try to stay ahead in efficiency, effectiveness, and employee experience.

High performers have 3x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

65% of L&D teams tend to play a wait and see approach to technology, while 35% are more open to exploration, experimentation, and embedded innovation when it comes to their learning technology ecosystems.

AI will continue to play a vital role in learning making it more personal, efficient, and focused on the learner's need, based on their role, the work that they do, and people they connect with on a daily basis.

Valamis has an AI Assistant called Valbo that recognizes current skills, what has been learned, and suggests new learning. Based on the data it collects, it can offer learners information they need before they even know they need it.

Design Thinking

How is design thinking impacting the learning experience?

Corporate learning was traditionally designed to deliver “essential” learning to employees. It was a “push” system where the corporate determined what it thought was needed by the learners and the L&D function delivered on the ask. One of the biggest changes, besides learning technologies, that has impacted L&D is changing employee expectations. Consumer experience has driven employees’ expectations as learners. If Banking can be anytime, anywhere, why not learning? Design thinking emerged from the product design world and has increasingly made its way into L&D as an approach that enables learner-centric thinking. This is further being driven by the need for highly personalized, relevant, and efficient learning delivered in ways that resonate with the learner persona. ALOs understand the value of learner-centricity and have adopted design thinking practices as their core design approach. Our research showed that ALOs have ditched the traditional ISD models and adopted agile, learner persona-based design thinking models that enable them to create rich learning experiences versus courses or curricula.

SURVEY QUESTION

To what extent do you leverage design thinking in your L&D function?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations

4x

Leverage design thinking for most learning solutions with learner personas and pathways to guide design, and engaging members of the persona group in the persona and solution design.

High performers have 4x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

80% of organizations are using, or are experimenting with, design thinking. 11% of organizations have fully adopted design thinking as a practice, all being ALOs.

Leading organizations look at learning as product design and marketing, where learners are consumers to design around and market to, whether the solution is elegantly simple or complex.

A major consumer products company has integrated the latest in design thinking and co-creation of content with SMEs leveraging techniques used by the most advanced marketing programs. The company has designed a co-creation center that let's learning designers and subject matter experts work in parallel to design content while SMEs use design thinking to solve the learning challenge. This process has reduced the cycle time of developing leading-edge content by 90% with a much higher impact on users.

Learning in the Flow of Work

How can you bring learning closer to where people work?

Organizations are gravitating to 'Learning in the Flow of Work' (LFW) and are currently building broad-based solutions and ecosystems that enable learning where learners often need it most, within their day-to-day work lives.

Some key drivers for LFW include digital transformation, where access to a vast amount of learning resources (people, blogs, video, etc.) is immediately at our fingertips. The ability to obtain credible information on any topic within seconds is extraordinary. Content consumption habits brought on by the digital age also drives our personal need to search and find needed information.

The future of work also drives our need to learn rapidly as tasks and roles change continuously, forcing us to unlearn, reskill, and upskill quickly as needed. Real or perceived, the lack of time to learn is a compelling factor in the changing approach to learning and bringing learning seamlessly to the work environment only makes sense.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following statements best describe your approach towards integrating learning in the flow of work?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

2x

Have implemented. or mostly implemented, a learning in the flow of work strategy by levaraging microlearning and technologies such as an LXP.

High performers have 2x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

There is strong evidence of an emerging LFW wave. 30% of organization in the ALO study have defined or implemented a LFW strategy, while 50% are considering implementing LFW.

The digital revolution and the future of work changed learning consumption habits driving our need to continually learn, reskill, and upskill quickly, as needed.

Bringing learning seamlessly to the work environment only makes sense in a digital world with little time to learn.

A leading insurance provider enabled learning in the flow of work offering its employees easy to access microlearning and coaching support. It also created a LFW framework, and a unique set of metrics with a calculator that captures the value generated through learning in the flow of work.

Agile Practices

How can L&D operate with greater elasticity and velocity?

The Agile methodology provides L&D with the greatest opportunity to transform its existing thinking, practices, and processes to become more elastic. Speed, consumer-driven focus, business-centricity, and the digital revolution are all pushing L&D to adopt some form of Agile into its daily practices. The concept of deploying a minimally viable product (MVP) to learning solutions is revolutionary. L&D has often been saddled with having to launch near perfect and complex solutions that take a long time to design, develop, and deliver. Today's consumer just needs the learning today, to fulfill either a short-term need or their long-term development. Even compliance training is being rethought and enabling shorter, bite-sized microlearning solutions that both teach and reinforce learning.
Leveraging 'sprints' versus a traditional 'waterfall' transformation approach allows L&D to move much faster and build out MVPs that the organization can start using faster, gain feedback, and then continuously build from there. Daily huddles, prototypes, and alpha and beta testing are other examples of how Agile is permeating L&D in its solution development. ALOs tend to think about learning solutions as products and employees as consumers. The role of the Learning Business Partner in many ways is shifting to that of a Product Manager.

Agile was devised to address adaptability.

> **The modern history of Agile methodology starts in 2001 with Agile Manifesto postulated by the leading software developers who needed to** create a clear-cut approach to the contemporary challenges offered by the ever-changing environment. **With their novel principles** offering continuous delivery, short development cycles, high level of communication and adaptability to the environment, **Agile methods have become a breakthrough for software developers.**

A Brief History of Agile methodology,

Alexander Sergeev

https://hygger.io/blog/a-brief-history-of-agile-methodology/

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following statements describe the agile work practices of your learning function?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.6x

Focused on incorporating agile ways of working in learning and across all other functions.

High performers have 1.6x higher adoption of this practice than low performers.

Agile has come to L&D. It may not look exactly like it does in IT, however the philosophy, concepts, and many practices are being adopted in L&D. 80% of organizations in this study have enabled some form of Agile into their thinking and ways of working. Only 20% of L&D remains in a mostly 'waterfall' approach mode to work and change.

Structured Learning

What is happening to formal, structured learning in the digital age?

Despite the drive towards 'learning in the flow of work' and digital content being everywhere, structured solutions are still being used by ALOs, and that's because they work. The real difference is around the use of learning journeys vs. traditional curricula. Utilizing the power of design thinking has enabled L&D to craft highly relevant, less time and location constrained, and persona-driven learning journeys around key capability development areas.

There is also an emphasis in modern learning programs on the entire learning experience, which a learning journey accommodates well. This often includes not only the content, but also coaching, collaboration with peers and experts, simulations, and the actual work itself. As a 'journey' it may involve the application of that skill in the workplace and reporting back on progress. For example, if the goal is for sales to do better account planning, the program could include building and managing a plan in the CRM over a specified period. Learners could come back and share their experience and progress with others, while learning analytics could correlate actual sales activity based on data in the CRM related to that plan.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following best describes your learning solutions?

Leading practice of an ALO in relation to high performing organizations.

1.5x

Have most of their learning solutions designed as learning journeys to guide the learners through a series of programmatic content.

High performers adopt this practice 1.5x more than low performers.

54% of L&D organizations are building some, or most, of their content as learning journeys, reshaping how individuals learn. 46% of learning solutions remain as more point solutions leveraging large catalogs of learning content.

Learning Program management tools offer end-to-end platforms that manage entire learning programs. This part of the market is hugely important, because without these program management features there is really no "place to learn." – Josh Bersin

A leading mining company had a traditional leadership program that primarily comprised of 5 days of immersive experience with leaders from other organizations at an executive education institute. While the learner feedback was extremely positive, impact analysis showed that the impact of the program was not sustained. Also, nearly 80% of the cost of the program was "non-learning" activities such as travel. The company decided to convert the 5-day immersive experience into a continuous learning journey that includes a variety of learning interventions such as assessments, curated resources, eLearning, short workshops, collaboration opportunities with leaders from other organizations, etc. The program is now much more impactful in creating a community of forever learning leaders.

3D

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This research is an ongoing study of how leading L&D organizations continually transform themselves to meet the everchanging needs of the business. The research analyzed insights and data from over 100 leading global businesses around the Adaptive Learning Organization.

The research data sources include.

- NIIT/Josh Bersin Academy 2020 Adaptive Learning Organization online survey
- 1:1 Interviews with CLOs/Learning Leaders from large, global organizations
- Market insights from Josh Bersin Academy and NIIT's Consulting & Advisory Services group
- Business data reporting and Glassdoor talent data indicators

ABOUT NIIT

Established in 1981, NIIT offers Managed Training Services to market-leading companies in over 30 countries worldwide. Our comprehensive suite of Managed Training Services includes custom curriculum design and content development, learning administration, learning delivery, strategic sourcing, learning technology, and advisory services. With a prolific team of experienced learning professionals, NIIT is dedicated to helping customers increase the business value of learning and development. Built on the sound principles of 'Running Training like a Business', NIIT's Managed Training Services and best-in-class training processes enable customers to align business goals with L&D and demonstrably improve learning effectiveness and efficiency to create transformative business impact.

ABOUT JOSH BERSIN ACADEMY

The Josh Bersin Academy, the world's first global professional development academy for HR, includes world-class programs, curated resources, and an engaged community. Its mission is to keep HR professionals continuously updated with research-based, future-focused learning to solve the critical issues impacting the future of work.

LEARN MORE

Visit us at **https://info.niit.com/alo** for more information regarding this research and to download additional resources related to Adaptive Learning Organizations.

You can also reach out to our team at **businessimpact@niit.com** if you would like to participate in ongoing dialogs on 'Adaptive Learning Organizations' or to schedule time with NIIT Consulting and Advisory Services team to discuss more.

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